

The Annotated Bible

New Testament

Arno Clement Gaebelein

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The Annotated Bible

by

Arno Clement Gaebelein

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THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

The Gospel of Matthew stands first among the Gospels and in the New Testament, because it was first written and may be rightly termed the Genesis of the New Testament. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, contains in itself the entire Bible, and so it is with the first Gospel; it is the book of the beginnings of a new dispensation. It is like a mighty tree. The roots are deeply sunk in massive rocks while its uncountable branches and twigs extend upward higher and higher in perfect symmetry and beauty. The foundation is the Old Testament with its Messianic and Kingdom promises. Out of this all is developed in perfect harmony, reaching higher and higher into the new dispensation and to the beginning of the millennial age.

The instrument chosen by the Holy Spirit to write this Gospel was Matthew. He was a Jew. However, he did not belong to the religious, educated class, to the scribes; but he belonged to the class which was most bitterly hated. He was a publican, that is a tax gatherer. The Roman government had appointed officials whose duty it was to have the legal tax gathered, and these officials, mostly, if not all Gentiles, appointed the actual collectors, who were generally Jews. Only the most unscrupulous among the Jews would hire themselves out for the sake of gain to the avowed enemy of Jerusalem. Wherever there was still a ray of hope for Messiah's coming, the Jew would naturally shrink from being associated with the Gentiles, who were to be swept away from the land with the coming of the King. For this reason the tax gatherers, being Roman employees, were hated by the Jews even more bitterly than the Gentiles themselves. Such a hated tax gatherer was the writer of the first Gospel. How the grace of God is revealed in his call we shall see later. That he was chosen to write this first Gospel is in itself significant, for it speaks of a new order of things about to be introduced, namely, the call of the despised Gentiles.

Internal evidences seem to show that most likely originally Matthew wrote the Gospel in Aramaic, the Semitic dialect then spoken in Palestine. The Gospel was later translated into Greek. This, however, is certain, that the Gospel of Matthew is pre-eminently the Jewish Gospel. There are many passages in it, which in their fundamental meaning can only be correctly understood by one who is quite familiar with Jewish customs and the traditional teachings of the elders. Because it is the Jewish Gospel, it is dispensational throughout. It is safe to say that a person, no matter how learned or devoted, who does not hold the clearly revealed dispensational truths concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the church of God will fail to understand Matthew. This is, alas, too much the case, and well it would be if it were not more than individual failure to understand; but it is more than that. Confusion, error, false doctrine is the final outcome, when the right key to any part of God's Word is lacking. If the dispensational character of Matthew were understood, no ethical teaching from the so-called Sermon on the Mount at the expense of the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ would be possible, nor would there be room for the subtle, modern delusion, so universal now, of a "social Christianity" which aims at lifting up the masses and the reformation of the world. How different matters would be in Christendom if its leading teachers and preachers, commentators and professors, had understood and would understand the meaning of the seven parables in Matthew 13, with its deep and solemn lessons. When we think how many of the leaders of religious thought reject and even oppose all dispensational teachings, and never learned how to divide the Word of truth rightly, it is not strange that so many of these men dare to stand up and say that the Gospel of Matthew as well as the other Gospels and the different parts of the New Testament contain numerous contradictions and errors. Out of this failure to discern dispensational truths has likewise arisen the attempt, by a very well meaning class, to harmonize the Gospel records and to arrange all the events in the life of our Lord in a chronological order, and thus produce a life of Jesus Christ, our Lord, as we have a descriptive life of Napoleon or other great men. The Holy Spirit has never undertaken to produce a life of Christ. That is very evident by the fact that the greater part of the life of our Lord is passed over in silence. Nor was it in the mind of the Spirit to report all the words and miracles and the movements of our Lord, or to record all the events which

took place during His public ministry, and to arrange them in a chronological order. What presumption, then, in man to attempt to do that which the Holy Spirit never attempted! If the Holy Spirit never intended that the records of our Saviour should be strictly chronological, how vain and foolish then, if not more, the attempt to bring out a harmony of the different Gospels! One has correctly said, "The Holy Spirit is not a reporter, but an editor." This is well said. A reporter's business is to report events as they happen. The editor arranges the material in a way to suit himself, and leaves out or makes comment just as he thinks best. This the Holy Spirit has done in giving four Gospels, which are not a mechanical reporting of the doings of a person called Jesus of Nazareth, but the spiritual unfoldings of the blessed person and work of our Saviour and Lord, as King of the Jews, servant in obedience, Son of Man and the only begotten of the Father. We cannot enter more deeply into this now, but in the exposition of our Gospel we shall illustrate this fact.

In the Gospel of Matthew, as the Jewish Gospel, speaking of the King and the kingdom, dispensational throughout, treating of the Jews, the Gentiles and even the church of God in anticipation, as no other Gospel does, everything must be looked upon from the dispensational point of view. All the miracles recorded, the words spoken, the events which are given in their peculiar setting, every parable, every chapter from beginning to end, are first of all to be looked upon as foreshadowing and teaching dispensational truths. This is the right key to the Gospel of Matthew. It is likewise a significant fact that in the condition of the people Israel, with their proud religious leaders rejecting the Lord, their King and the threatened judgment in consequence of it, is a true photograph of the end of the present dispensation, and in it we shall see the coming doom of Christendom. The characteristics of the times, when our Lord appeared among His people, who were so religious, self-righteous, being divided into different sects, Ritualists (Pharisees) and Rationalists (Sadducees -- Higher Critics), following the teachings of men, occupied with man-made creeds and doctrines, etc., and all nothing but apostasy, are exactly reproduced in Christendom, with its man-made ordinances, rituals and rationalistic teachings. We hope to follow out this thought in our exposition.

There are seven great dispensational parts which are prominent in this Gospel and around which everything is grouped. We will briefly review them.

I. -- The King

The Old Testament is full of promises which speak of the coming, not alone of a deliverer, a sinbearer, but of the coming of a King, King Messiah as He is still called by orthodox Jews. This King was eagerly expected, hoped for and prayed for by the pious in Israel. It is still so with many Jews in our days. The Gospel of Matthew proves that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly the promised King Messiah. In it we see Him as King of the Jews, everything shows that He is in truth the royal person, of whom Seers and Prophets, as well as inspired Psalmists, wrote and sang. First it would be necessary to prove that He is legally the King. This is seen in the first chapter, where a genealogy is given which proves His royal descent. The beginning is, "Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham."* It goes back to Abraham and there it stops, while in Luke the genealogy reaches up to Adam. In the Gospel of Matthew He is seen as Son of David, His royal descent; Son of Abraham, according to the flesh from the seed of Abraham.

*We use a translation of the New Testament which was made years ago by J.N. Darby, and which for correctness is the very best we have ever seen. We can heartily recommend it.

The coming of the Magi is only recorded in Matthew. They come to worship the new born King of the Jews. His royal birthplace, David's city, is given. The infant is worshipped by the representatives of the Gentiles and they do homage indeed before a true King, though the marks of poverty were around Him. The gold they gave speaks of His royalty. Every true King has a herald, so the King Messiah. The forerunner appears and in Matthew his message to the nation is that "The Kingdom of heaven has drawn nigh"; the royal person so long foretold is about to appear and to offer that Kingdom. When the King who was rejected comes again to set up the Kingdom, He will be preceded once more by a herald who will declare His coming among His people Israel, even Elijah the prophet. In the fourth chapter we see the King tested and proven that He is the King. He is tested thrice, once as Son of Man, as Son of God and as the King Messiah. After the testing, out of which He comes forth a complete victor, He begins His ministry. The Sermon on the Mount (we shall use the phrase though it is not scriptural) is given in Matthew in full. Mark and Luke report it only in fragments and John has not a word of it. This should at once determine the status of the three chapters which contain this discourse. It is teaching concerning the Kingdom, the magna charta of the Kingdom and all its principles. Such a kingdom in the earth, with subjects who have all the characteristics of the royal requirements laid down in this discourse will yet be. If Israel had

accepted the King it would then have come, but the kingdom has been postponed. The Kingdom will at last come with a righteous nation as a center, but Christendom is not that kingdom. In this wonderful discourse the Lord speaks as the King and as the Lawgiver, who expounds the law which is to rule His Kingdom. From the eighth to the twelfth chapters, we see the royal manifestations of Him who is Jehovah manifested in the flesh.

This part especially is interesting and very instructive, because it gives in a series of miracles, the dispensational outline of the Jew, the Gentile, and what comes after the present age is past.

As King He sends out His servants and endues them with kingdom power, preaching likewise the nearness of the kingdom. After the tenth chapter the rejection begins followed by His teachings in parables, the revealing of secrets. He is presented to Jerusalem as King, and the Messianic welcome is heard, "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of Jehovah." After that His suffering and His death. In all His Kingly character is brought out, and the Gospel closes abruptly, and has nothing to say of His ascension to heaven; but the Lord is, so to speak, left on the earth with power, all power in heaven and on earth. In this closing it is seen that He is the King. He rules in heaven now and on the earth when He comes again.

II. The Kingdom

The phrase Kingdom of the Heavens occurs only in the Gospel of Matthew. We find it thirty-two times. What does it mean? Here is the failure of the interpretation of the Word, and all error and the confusion around us springs from the false conception of the Kingdom of the Heavens. It is generally taught and understood that the term Kingdom of the Heavens means the church, and thus the church is thought to be the true Kingdom of the Heavens, established in the earth, and conquering the nations and the world. The Kingdom of the Heavens is not the church, and the church is not the Kingdom of the Heavens. This is a very vital truth. May the exposition of this Gospel be used in making this distinction very clear in the minds of our readers. When our Lord speaks of the Kingdom of the Heavens up to the twelfth chapter He does not mean the church, but the Kingdom of the Heavens in its Old Testament sense, as it is promised to Israel, to be established in the land, with Jerusalem for a center, and from there to spread over all the nations and the entire earth. What did the pious, believing Jew expect according to the Scriptures? He expected (and still expects) the coming of the King Messiah, who is to occupy the throne of His father David. He was expected to bring judgment for the enemies of Jerusalem, and bring together the outcasts of Israel. The land would flourish as never before; universal peace would be established; righteousness and peace in the knowledge of the glory of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. All this in the earth with the land, which is Jehovah's land, as fountain head, from which all the blessings, the streams of living waters, flow. A temple, a house of worship, for all nations was expected to stand in Jerusalem, to which the nations would come to worship the Lord. This is the Kingdom of the Heavens as promised to Israel and as expected by them. It is all earthly. The church, however, is something entirely different. The hope of the church, the place of the church, the calling of the church, the destiny of the church, the reigning and ruling of the church is not earthly, but it is heavenly. Now the King long expected had appeared, and He preached the Kingdom of the Heavens having drawn nigh, that is, this promised earthly kingdom for Israel. When John the Baptist preached, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of the Heavens has drawn nigh," he meant the same. It is all wrong to preach the Gospel from such a text and state that the sinner is to repent and then the Kingdom will come to him. A very well known English teacher of spiritual truths gave not long ago in this country a discourse on the mistranslated text, "The Kingdom of God is within you," and dwelt largely on the fact that the Kingdom is within the believer. The context shows that this is erroneous, and the true translation is "The Kingdom is among you;" that is, in the person of the King.

Now if Israel had accepted the testimony of John, and had repented, and if they had accepted the King, the Kingdom would have come, but now it has been postponed till Jewish disciples will pray again in preaching the coming of the Kingdom, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven." That will be after the church has been removed to the heavenly places. The history of the Kingdom is given in the second chapter. The Gentiles first, and Jerusalem does not know her King and is in trouble on account of Him.

III. The King and the Kingdom is rejected

This is likewise foretold in the Old Testament, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:25, Psalm 22, etc. It is also seen in types, Joseph, David and others. The herald of the King is first rejected and ends in the prison, being murdered. This speaks of the rejection of the King Himself. In no other Gospel is the story of the rejection so completely told as here. It begins in Galilee, in His

own city, and ends in Jerusalem . The rejection is not human but it is Satanic. All the wickedness and depravity of the heart is uncovered and Satan revealed throughout. All classes are concerned in the rejection. The crowds who had followed Him and were fed by Him, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the priests, the chief priests, the high priest, the elders. At last it becomes evident that they knew Him who He was, their Lord and their King, and wilfully they delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. The story of the cross in Matthew, too, brings out the darkest side of the rejection. Thus prophecy is seen fulfilled in the rejection of the King.

IV. The rejection of His Earthly People and their Judgment

This is another theme of the Old Testament which is very prominent in the Gospel of Matthew. They rejected Him and He leaves them, and judgment falls upon them. In the eleventh chapter He reproaches the cities in which most of His works of power had taken place, because they had not repented. At the end of the twelfth chapter He denies His relations and refuses to see His own, while in the beginning of the thirteenth He leaves the house and goes down to the sea, the latter term typifies the nations. After His royal presentation to Jerusalem the next day early in the morning He curses the fig tree, which foreshadows Israel 's national death, and after He uttered His two parables to the chief priests and elders, He declares that the Kingdom of God is to be taken away from them and is to be given to a nation which is to bring the fruit thereof. The whole twenty-third chapter contains the woes upon the Pharisees, and at the end He speaks to Jerusalem and declares that their house is to be left desolate till they shall say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

V. The mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens

The kingdom has been rejected by the people of the kingdom and the King Himself has left the earth. During His absence the Kingdom of the Heavens is in the hands of men. There is then the kingdom in the earth in an entirely different form than it was revealed in the Old Testament, the mysteries of the kingdom hidden from the world's foundation are now made known. This we learn in Matthew 14 13, and here, too, we have at least a glimpse of the church. Again it is to be understood that both are not identical. But what is the kingdom in its mystery form? The seven parables will teach this to us. It is seen there in an evil mixed condition. The church, the one body, is not evil, for the church is composed of those who are beloved of God, called saints, but Christendom, including all professors, is properly that Kingdom of the Heavens in the thirteenth chapter. The parables bring out what may be termed the history of Christendom. It is a history of failure, becoming that which the King never meant it to be, the leaven of evil, indeed, leavening the whole lump, and thus it continues till the King comes back, when all the offences will be gathered out of the kingdom. The parable of the pearl alone speaks of the church.

VI. -- The Church

In no other Gospel is anything said of the church except in the Gospel of Matthew. In the sixteenth chapter Peter gives his testimony concerning the Lord, revealed to him from the Father, who is in the heavens. The Lord tells him that on this rock I will build My assembly -- church -- and hades' gates shall not prevail against it. It is not I have built, but I will build My church. Right after this promise He speaks of His suffering and death. The transfiguration which follows the first declaration of His coming death, speaks of the glory which will follow, and is a type of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:16). Much that follows after the declaration of the Lord concerning the building of the church is to be applied to the church. 15

VII. The Mount of Olivet Discourse

Prophetic Teachings Concerning the End of the Age. This discourse was given to the disciples after the Lord had spoken His last word to Jerusalem . It is one of the most remarkable sections of the entire Gospel. We find it in the 24th and 25th chapters. In it the Lord teaches concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God; Christendom is in it likewise. The order is different. The Gentiles stand last. The reason for that is because the church will be removed first from the earth and the professors of Christendom will be left, and are nothing but Gentiles and concerned in the judgment of nations as made known by the Lord. The first part of Matthew 24 is Jewish throughout. From the fourth to the forty-fifth verse we have a most important prophecy, which gives the events which follow after the church is taken from the earth. The Lord takes here many of the Old Testament prophecies and blends them in one great prophecy. The history of the last week in Daniel is here. The middle of the week after the first three years and a half is verse 15. Revelation, chapters 6-19 is all

contained in these words of our Lord. He gave, then, the same truths, only more enlarged and in detail, from heaven as a last word and warning. Three parables follow in which the saved and the unsaved are seen. Waiting and serving is the leading thought. Reward and casting out into outward darkness the twofold outcome. This, then, finds an application in Christendom and the church. The ending of Matthew 25 is the judgment of nations. This is not the universal judgment, a popular term in Christendom, but unscriptural, but it is the judgment of the nations at the time when our Lord as Son of Man sits upon the throne of His glory.

Many of the most interesting facts in the Gospel, the peculiar quotations from the Old Testament, the perfect structure, etc., etc., we cannot give in this introduction and outline, but we hope to bring them before us in our exposition. May, then, the Spirit of Truth guide us into all the truth".

CHAPTER I

The first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is divided into two parts. In the first to the seventeenth verse we find the genealogy of Jesus Christ, and in the last part of the chapter the account of the birth of the promised One. In the second half we see Him as Son of God and Saviour, while in the first, in the genealogy, His royal descent is proven. He is the rightful heir to David's throne, and thus His Kingship is legally established.

The two Greek words with which this Gospel begins are "Biblos geneleos," the book of the generation, which corresponds to a similar Old Testament expression frequently found in the Scriptures (Genesis 6:9., etc.) The very beginning of this Gospel shows clearly that this is the Jewish Gospel. The question of genealogy is an all important one for the Jew. The genealogy which appears in the Gospel of Luke does not stand there in the beginning, but it comes in with the third chapter, after the account of the Saviour's birth, and the ministry of the forerunner, and when He begins His public ministry. In the Gospel of Luke He is the Son of man, and not as in Matthew, the King. In Luke it is a going backward clear to Adam, while in the genealogy in Matthew it is the opposite; not like in Luke, beginning with His earthly name, Jesus, but beginning with Abraham, it goes forward till the end is reached in Joseph, the husband of Mary. The first verse in Matthew may be termed a superscription for the genealogy which follows, Book of generation of Jesus Christ, "Son of David, Son of Abraham." How truly He is all that, is now to be established, Son of David, because a King is promised to rule in righteousness upon the throne of His father David; but in a larger sense, Seed of Abraham, through whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed, and the nations to receive spiritual blessings. How incorrect it would have been if it had said, Book of generation of Jesus Christ, Son of Abraham, Son of David. That would have been the rendering by man, but the Holy Spirit puts David here before Abraham, though in the genealogy itself Abraham is the head, the first one. Jesus Christ is first the Son of David, and as such He is to be presented to the nation Israel, as King, and to be rejected by them. He is after that in the wider sense the One through whom the promises of blessing in Abraham to the nations are to be fulfilled. How clearly this proves the verbal inspiration! Indeed, if there is no verbal inspiration there is no inspiration at all.

It is not rarely the case that readers of the New Testament have asked themselves why all these names appear in the first chapter. We have answered many questions and have written numerous letters during the last eight years in answer to inquiries from the Jews on account of the genealogy, as it appears here, and the apparent contradictions and discrepancies between Matthew and Luke. Many a Jew has come and asked, Why must a man have two genealogies, and which is the right one? When the Jew takes the New Testament and opens it with Matthew, he finds himself upon familiar ground. It is the first question with him, if Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, Son of David, it must be proven by a genealogy. Does the New Testament, in the genealogies in Matthew and in Luke, prove this? is the important question the Jew asks. We have often asked the Jewish inquirer, Supposing Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah, not the Son of David, then you would expect the coming of a Messiah who is a Son of David, born in Bethlehem; how could that coming Messiah prove that he is really the Son of David, when your genealogical registers have been lost centuries ago? Others, too, have had difficulty on account of these two genealogies. We will state the case and what they teach in a few words.

In the genealogy of Matthew Jesus Christ is shown to be the King legally; in the Gospel of Luke we have His genealogy as the Son of Man, and as such linked with the whole race. The genealogy in Matthew proves that Joseph is a descendant of David through the house of Solomon. The one in the Gospel of Luke proves that Mary, the virgin, is likewise a descendant of David, but not through the house of Solomon; she is connected with David through the house of Nathan. The Messiah was to be born of a virgin, one who must be a descendant of David. But a woman has no right to the throne. As the son of

the virgin alone He could not have a legal right to the throne. For this reason to make the One begotten in her of the Holy Ghost, the rightful heir to the throne of David in the eyes of the nation, the virgin had to be the wife of a man who had a perfect, unchallenged right to the throne. Now the genealogy in Matthew shows that Joseph is a son of David, and thus entitled to the throne, therefore Jesus is legally in this way heir to the throne. He is the legal descendant and heir of David through Joseph, but never Joseph's Son. He was supposed by the people to be the Son of Joseph. "And Jesus Himself, when He began to teach, was about thirty years of age; being, as was supposed, the Son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23). "And they said, Is not this the Son of Joseph?" (Luke 4:22). His claim as being truly the Son of David was therefore never disputed. Now if He had been the Son of Joseph according to the flesh, He would never be and could never be our Saviour. The 51st Psalm would then have found an application. "I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." On the other hand, if He had been the Son of Mary, without she being legally the wife of a Son of David, the Jews would have rejected His claim from the very outset. We see then that legally He was the Son of Joseph; in His humanity, He is the Son of Mary, and then one step higher, as we read in the closing verses, He is the Son of God. The two genealogies show Him as King -- Son of man and Son of God -- as the One born of Mary, but begotten in her of the Holy Ghost.

The genealogy in Matthew speaks of decadence. Corruption, ruin and hopelessness is clearly brought out in it. It begins with Abraham. And as generation after generation is mentioned, it puts before us the shameful history of Israel, with their unbelief, apostasy and judgments. At last it becomes all dark and all hopeless as far as Israel is concerned. Like Sarah's womb, as she indeed stands in type for the nation, the whole nation was dead, no hope, all ruin and corruption. But God can bring life from the dead. "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, come of woman, come under the law, that He might redeem those under the law, that we might receive sonship" (Gal. 4:4). It is so with this present dispensation, for after awhile when the Lord has taken to Himself His Church, darkness, ruin and evil will prevail, and in the darkest hour of Israel's believing remnant and in the history of the world, the Firstborn will come again into the habitable world surrounded by worshipping angels (Heb. 1:6).

The division of the genealogy is threefold. From Abraham to David, from David to the carrying away into the Babylonian captivity, and from the carrying away into Babylon to Christ (verse 17). In each division are fourteen generations, twice seven in each division. This brings in perfect harmony and order, as He who has given it all is the Spirit of order and not disorder (1 Cor. 14:33). Seven is a highly symbolical number, peculiar to Israel. Much of the history of Israel is divided into seven; the seventy years of Captivity, the seventy prophetic weeks in Daniel, the last week still future composed of seven years, etc., are well-known facts to every reader of the Word. Here it is three times twice seven, which means fulfillment and completeness. A closer investigation shows at once that a number of generations have been left out. Attempts have been made to explain this in different ways. Many poor, shortsighted men have put it down as an error, and higher critics and unbelievers have pointed it out as an argument against the inspiration of the Word, and as an example of the contradictions, which, according to them, exist in the Scriptures. Others have charged Matthew with ignorance, and that by not knowing any better, he left these generations out. As a Jew, he was, without question, well acquainted with the Old Testament writings. He had full access to all the collections of books which we term Old Testament. Out of the historical books it would have been a very easy matter to get together a complete register of names, such as would have been in full accord with the object in view to satisfy the Jew. Man indeed would have done that if he had to write the genealogy, but Matthew did not write according to his own taste or wish; the Holy Spirit wrote every word, and He has found it good to make a number of omissions. For this reason, that which is so often claimed to prove that there are contradictions in the Bible, and that the Bible is not infallible, is really a witness for the divinity of the Scriptures. In all this arrangement, leaving out and changing, the Holy Spirit has a wise purpose, and it does not follow, if we in our shortsightedness do not understand it all, that there must be an error involved somewhere. He has the right to do it, and it has been His pleasure to leave out generations. This is also so in the case of another Old Testament genealogy (see Ezra 7).

The most prominent omission is in verse eight. Three kings are left out. These are Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah. Who were they? They are the descendants of the daughter of wicked Ahab, Athaliah. Athaliah desired to annihilate the kingly seed of the house of Judah. This was a satanic attempt to frustrate the purposes of God. It was, like Haman's attempt, inspired by him who is a murderer from the beginning. It may be called Anti-Messianity. This is undoubtedly the reason why the Holy Spirit left out these three kings.

Another apparent difficulty is the one concerning Jechoniah (verse 11), Zorobabel and Salathiel. The last two are in the genealogy in Luke, and Zorobabel being called a son of Salathiel when 1 Chr. 3:10. speaks of him as a son of Pedaiah.

We give a few hints, which will be helpful in the correct understanding. Jehoiakim is often called by the name of his son Jechoniah. Both have the same meaning translated from the Hebrew, Jehovah will establish. Jehoiakim was carried away into Babylon (2 Kings 24:15). He has had brethren, which Jechoniah had not (1 Chr. 3:15). Thus it becomes clear that Jechoniah is Jehoiakim. In the twelfth verse we have Jechoniah, the son of Jehoiakim, because Salathiel is the son of Jechoniah (1 Chr. 3:17). Read also Jeremiah 22:30.

Upon the line of Solomon there was then a curse, and Joseph is in connection with that line. Upon the line of Nathan there was no curse, and thus in His birth from Mary He is in truth the Son of David, still in the eyes of the nation He was it legally in Joseph.

If Zorobabel and Salathiel appear in Luke we may take them as different persons. The difficulty of Zorobabel being the son of Salathiel here and the son of Pedaiah in Chronicles may be solved by the levirate law.

Other striking facts come to our knowledge when we go through the list of the generations, each one is highly significant. We mention a few only. Judah is mentioned, because the prophecy of Jacob makes it clear that from him the Shiloh would come (Gen. 49:10). We are reminded of something else in the phrase, Judah and his brethren, namely, of Judah's sin and his brethren's in selling their own brother, and all that is connected with it.

David alone has the title, the king (verse 6). Solomon's name is there, but there is no kingship attached to it. The unbelieving Jew, as he tries to reject prophecies concerning the Messiah, has always made a strong point of this, that the promises given to David concerning a son were all fulfilled in Solomon. Solomon according to them is the king, and higher than David in his rule and dominion. How striking then that the Holy Spirit gives the name simply Solomon without adding, the king, to it. David is the king and no other can have the title, till his son come: even He who came and whom David called Lord (Ps. 110:1). Thus the angel announced Him, the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

In the last fourteen generations beginning with Zorobabel, we find no more prominent names. Only two of them are recorded in the Old Testament. Zorobabel means, Born in Babel, and his son Abiud, which means, Perishing. However, the most interesting fact is the four women who are mentioned in the genealogy. Three of them are found in the first division and the fourth in the second one. Women in a genealogy is something which is very rarely the case. There were many noble, devoted and believing women in the Old Testament. Sarah, Rebekah, Deborah, and women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured not accepting deliverance (Heb. 11:35). One would naturally expect that in the genealogy of Him who is the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head, some of these women who believed the promise would be mentioned. However, we look in vain for them. Instead of them we discover four, who are only known, at least three, by their shame, and the other belonged to a race which was according to the law cursed. Let us look into the names and history of these four women.

Tamar is the first. Her shameful history of fornication is recorded in Genesis 38. What a dark story it is, full of the evil deeds of the flesh. Sin in its blackness is seen there. But how did she get into the genealogy? The answer is, by her sin. It was her shameful sin that puts her here in the genealogy of Him who has come to save that which is lost, the Saviour of men. The Holy Spirit has put her name in and shows by it that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners. He has come to save the vilest and the lowest. And the second one is Rahab. Who was she? A Canaanitess. Unclean and outcast, a harlot full of abomination. Yet here is her name too linked with Salmon (meaning clothed) and Boaz, her son, which means, "In strength." She had believed the messengers as they had come, and the scarlet thread, the sign of her deliverance from the doomed city, was in her window. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Heb. 11:31). It was faith by which she came into line. Every Jew knew her history and knew too that she had come in to share Israel's blessings. Still the proud Pharisees murmured when Jesus sat down and ate and drank with the publicans and the sinners and the outcasts gathered around Him, murmuring because He sought the lowest.

Ruth, the third woman mentioned, is an exception, for there is no stain upon her character. She was a Moabitess. The law was against her and cursed her. It is written, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever" (Deut. 23:3). But in faith too she enters into the congregation with her children, and the third after her, her grandson, is King David himself. The law

which had pronounced the curse is completely set aside in her case.

The fourth woman is not mentioned by name -- Her of Uriah, that is all it says. We know it is Bath-Sheba, the one with whom King David committed adultery. Here it is sin in connection with a believer. Did that sin committed by King David then undo him as a believer? No, he had believed and grace had full sway over him.

What a wonderful demonstration of the whole and full Gospel of Grace as it is in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ! We see sin -- Faith as it lays hold and salvation by faith -- deliverance from the law -- and then the case of the believer, the assurance of salvation. Grace -- nothing but grace shines out as nowhere else in the genealogy, in the four women, all four Gentiles. Hannah broke out in her prophetic song and said, "He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. 2:8). How truly this is seen with Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bath-Sheba. What comfort in this fact for us all!

He is Son of Abraham. Through Him the blessing is to go out to the greatest sinner, to the deepest in misery and in want, blessing to the Gentiles in the new dispensation of grace.

We come now to the account of His birth. Here He is presented as human and divine, born of a virgin and at the same time Jehovah-Saviour, Emmanuel, God with us. If Matthew 1:1-17 were all that could be said of His birth, He might then have had a legal right to the throne, but He could never have been He who was to redeem and save from sin. But the second half before us shows Him to be truly the long promised One, the One of whom Moses and the prophets spake, to whom all the past manifestations of God in the earth and the types, pointed. To accomplish the work of salvation, to suffer the penalty of sin and to put away sin He had to be divine and human.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was thus: His mother, Mary, that is having been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost. But Joseph, her husband, being righteous, and unwilling to expose her publicly, purposed to have her put away secretly; but while he pondered on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

"Now all this came to pass that that might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. But Joseph having awoke from his sleep did as the angel of the Lord enjoined him, and took to him his wife, and knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn Son; and he called His name Jesus." (verses 18-25)

How simple all this sounds; yet here are depths which no human mind can or ever will fathom. All attempts to explain will utterly fail. Faith worships here and looks with profound adoration upon the mystery made known, God manifested in the flesh. The Lord stood before Abraham, clothed in the form of a human being, eating and drinking (Genesis 18). What humiliation that was for Him even then, but how much deeper and far-reaching it is here? It is now His mother, Mary, which is prominent in the record. Born of a woman Paul says in Galatians 4. This directs our attention to the very first promise made in Genesis 3: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: He shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel." This is the first promise of a Deliverer.

We often read in the prophetic Word, I am He. The Hebrews have the word "Hu" (He) as a divine name. In the ancient book of Zohar the word "He" is applied to the eternal God bruising the serpent's head. He is to be the seed of the woman, not of Adam, the man. Interesting is the following quotation from an ancient exposition of the Jews. "The voice which our first parents heard walking in the garden was the Word of the Lord, or the Messiah. Before they sinned they saw the glory of the blessed God speaking with them, but after their sin they heard only the voice walking. The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, and they shall obtain healing in the days of the Messiah."

Mary was that elect woman, a virgin, from whom the One seed came. She was betrothed to Joseph, the Son of David, and so that there should not even be the shadow of a doubt, it is added, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost. Righteous Joseph pondering on these things and as a righteous man undoubtedly praying to God about it, is visited by an angel of the Lord. Even the little word "an" is here of importance. We hear much in the Old

Testament of the angel of the Lord. He appears often as the mediator between God and man. He has divine names and attributes. He appeared in the form of man to Hagar, Abraham, Jacob, the children of Israel, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, and to Manoah's wife. Jacob calls him the angel, the Redeemer. In Isaiah 63:9 he is called the angel of His face. Indeed all through the Old Testament Jehovah and His glory is in him revealed, so that in these manifestations we see the incarnation foretold. The very name of God was in him (Exodus 23:20). The old Jewish synagogue believed correctly that this angel of the Lord is the word of God, the Messiah. The One who appeared as the angel, is now to be born of the virgin. He emptied Himself, taking a servant's form, taking His place in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7). If the writing of the Gospel of Matthew had been the work of an impostor, he would surely have written, that the angel of the Lord came to Joseph, instead of an angel. So even the little word, an, brings out the verbal inspiration.

In the Gospel of Luke we read that the angel Gabriel (the same who announced to Daniel the coming of the Messiah and the time of the end), was sent of God to Mary, and came in to her and said, "Hail, favored one! the Lord is with thee. But she, seeing the angel, was troubled at his word, and reasoned in her mind what this salutation might be. And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in the womb to bear a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for the ages, and of His kingdom there shall not be an end. But Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I know not a man? And the angel answering said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God" (Luke 1:28-35). In reading this one almost hears the voice which spoke to Moses, Take off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Both Gospels bring it out clearly that it is the Son of God, the eternal Word, who becomes a man, truly the child of His virgin mother, flesh and blood, a real human body like ours, but a holy thing, that is absolutely without sin. His human nature proceeded directly from the Spirit of God. No other being could have saved us.

The Old Testament speaks often of this great event, the birth of the Saviour, and that He is to be divine and human in His person. He is called the Branch (Zemach). In Isaiah He is called, The branch of Jehovah, and in other prophets, The branch of David. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:7). There is a very important and remarkable passage in Jeremiah, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall encompass a man" (Jer. 31:22). This belongs to a Messianic prophecy as shown by the context. It is a new thing which is to take place, and a creation. This could never be said of the birth of a child in the natural way. Even one of the ancient rabbis acknowledges that Jer. 31:22 speaks of Messiah, and that by the woman a virgin is meant. In the Jewish writings, some of them of great antiquity, much is said on the origin and birth of the Christ. We quote but a few of the most important words of the rabbis. "Several state that Messiah is to have no earthly father." "The birth of the Messiah alone shall be without any defects." "His birth shall not be like that of other men." "The birth of the Messiah shall be like the dew of the Lord, as drops upon the grass without the action of man."

That this exposition of the Scriptures concerning the miraculous birth of the Messiah was generally believed at the time of our Lord is seen from the Gospel of John. "Is not this He whom they seek to kill? and behold He speaks openly and they say nothing to Him. Have the rulers then indeed recognized that this is the Christ? But as to this man we know whence He is. Now, as to the Christ, when He comes no one knows whence He is (John 7:27). With this they acknowledged that they believed that with the birth of the Christ a mystery is connected. They thought then they knew who Jesus of Nazareth is; "And they said, is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we have known? How then does he say I am come down from heaven?" (John 6:24). Many centuries later wicked Jews wrote a vulgar and blasphemous account of the birth of our Lord, but the early Jews, it seems never attempted to contradict the first chapter in Matthew.

The angel bade Joseph not to fear, and make known to him not only that that which is begotten in Mary is of the Holy Ghost, but he said also, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

The word Jesus is taken from the Hebrew Jehoshua, which means, Jehovah is the Saviour. It is the precious name in which the whole story of salvation is contained. The people of Jehovah are His people, because He is Jehovah, and left His eternal glory, His riches, and became poor, to save them from their sins. When Moses stood in the presence of this descended Lord, who proclaimed before him the name of the Lord, Moses said, "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O

Lord," saying this looking to heaven, "let my Lord," the One who had come down and stood before him, "I pray thee go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquities and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance." (Exodus 34:9.). And He has come, Jesus, who is able to save His people from their sins, because He is God, and gracious, as revealed to Moses in the mountain. They rejected Him and His salvation. They are scattered among the nations, blinded and hardened, but He is nevertheless Jesus who shall save His people. He has bought the field and the treasure in it. He will come again and turn away ungodliness from Jacob and remember their sins no more. Yes, He will come again and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever. Saul of Tarsus heard the voice from heaven, which said, "I am Jesus!" It is very significant that He spoke thus to the one who became the apostle to the Gentiles, and who in many respects is a type of the whole nation in unbelief and in their coming conversion. He saved Saul of Tarsus. He will save all Israel yet. For believers, His name is not simply Jesus, but for us, the church, He is both Saviour and Lord, and the right way to address Him is by His full name, as it is by the resurrection from among the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the declaration that He shall save His people from their sins the message of the angel was completed. It is now Matthew, and through Matthew of course the Holy Spirit, who continues. The most vital passage of the Old Testament is brought to the front. This is the familiar prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, which reads, "Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel." Like most all the other Messianic prophecies, this one has also been the target of "Higher Criticism." These learned (?) critics have made some very ridiculous utterances on this sublime prophecy, and said that it is anything but Messianic. They stand not alone, but are in company with rationalistic Jews and other infidels, who serve the power of darkness -- the one who is the falsifier of God's Word from the beginning. Some of this infidel trash of Wellshausen, etc., is continually being rehashed by some of the so-called professors in theological "evangelical" seminaries in this country. Alas! how true still, professing themselves wise, they became fools. Higher criticism is nothing else but infidelity and foolishness.

It is with these critics, who are the educators of the coming preachers in the different denominations, a question what Isaiah wrote and what he did not write, what is genuine and what is added to by another hand. So it is being taught that Isaiah spoke of his own wife when he uttered the words which are before us. Now beware how you treat this prophecy! Matthew 1:22 says that not the prophet said these words, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child," but the Lord Himself spoke these words through the prophet. A denial of Isaiah 7:14 that it is not a Messianic prophecy is a denial of the integrity of the New Testament, a denial of the Lord. How does any one dare to say the prophet did not utter a prophecy at all, that it is not to be understood as meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, when the Holy Spirit in the very first chapter in the New Testament declares that it is a Messianic prophecy, and that it has found its fulfillment in the person of our Lord? If there were no other evidence whatever in the Old Testament, nay, if there were many difficulties connected with it Matthew 1:22 would settle it all and would be sufficient proof in itself for what the Lord meant when He spoke these words through Isaiah the prophet.

But there is nothing whatever in Isaiah 7 which would in any way show that the prophecy is not Messianic. The Lord spoke the promise at a time when the house of David was discouraged and disheartened, and King Ahaz, instead of trusting the Lord, continued in unbelief. The prophet asks him to demand a sign from the Lord, but he rejects the offer under the plea that he would not tempt God. Upon this the prophet said that the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, and the prophecy then spoken is the sign for the discouraged king and the house of David. In other words, Messiah is to be born, He is to come from Judah, and from the house of David. How could he, the king, fear destruction and extermination? This was the comfort of the sign. The birth of Him is a sign -- something extraordinary, a miracle, and therefore the promise of comfort begins with the prophetic word, "Behold." We will not enter into fuller discussion of the seventh chapter of Isaiah, nor answer the arguments which are brought against the Hebrew word used here for virgin; all this would be of little value and profit to most of our readers.*

* "That the word *_almoh*, in Isaiah denotes an untouched virgin, sufficiently appears from the sense of the passage Is. 7:14. King Ahaz was afraid lest the enemies that were now upon him might destroy Jerusalem and utterly consume the house of David. The Lord meets this fear by a sign and most remarkable promise, namely, 'that sooner should a pure virgin bring forth a child than the family of David perish.' And the promise yields a double comfort: namely, of Christ hereafter to be born of a virgin; and of their security from the imminent danger of the city and house of David. So that, although that prophecy, of a virgin's bringing forth a son, should not be fulfilled till many hundreds of years after, yet, at that present time, when the prophecy was made, Ahaz had a certain and notable sign, that the house of David should be safe and secure

from the danger that hung over it. As much as if the prophet had said: 'Be not so troubled O Ahaz, does it not seem an impossible thing to thee, that never will happen, that a pure virgin become a mother? But I tell thee such a virgin shall bring forth a son, before the house of David perish.'" -- Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae by Lightfoot.

Some have seen a difficulty that the child was to be named Emmanuel, and instead of this name, He is named Jesus. The Jew often comes with this question. We point out to him that this apparent contradiction is really a proof of the inspiration. How easy it would have been for Matthew to have all fit in so that every word would be in harmony with the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit guided his hand in writing. The prophecy in the Old Testament says, "And call His name Immanuel." Here it says, "They shall call his name." In the first chapter of Matthew we read that Joseph called the child's name Jesus, but in Luke we read that Mary calls His name Jesus. The name Emmanuel, God with us, is only given in Matthew. He is Emmanuel, and as such Jehovah the Saviour, so that in reality both names have the same meaning. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only begotten with his Father) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He is the exalted One over all.

Joseph was obedient to the word of the Lord as it had come to him through the angel. That Mary had other children is clearly seen from the sixty-ninth Psalm, verses 7 and 8, where it speaks of His suffering: "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. I am become a stranger to my brethren, even an alien to the children of my mother."

CHAPTER II

The second chapter in Matthew relates events which are nowhere else recorded in the Gospels. For this reason, and this is the only reason, the authenticity of the chapter has been doubted more than once. All that which the second chapter contains belongs properly into the Jewish, dispensational Gospel, and would indeed be entirely out of place in the other three Gospels, therefore the Holy Spirit has seen fit to put it only in the first Gospel. The chapter contains the story of the coming of the Magi or wise men to Jerusalem in search of the King of the Jews, to worship Him, and to bring Him the gifts they had brought from afar; the wrath of Herod the king, and the flight of the child into Egypt, the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem, the return from Egypt, and the dwelling of the Lord in Nazareth as the rejected One. All these events are foretold in the Old Testament, to which we are referred and where we learn the meaning of them. The chapter is an intensely interesting one, full of important teachings. It gives us in a nutshell the story of the entire Gospel. The true King is not known in Jerusalem, the City of a great King; in His own royal residence, His people do not know He has come. Strangers from distant lands seek Him and are desirous to know and to worship Him. Still worse, the ecclesiastical authorities, the chief priests and the scribes, are indifferent, and the civil ruler is filled with hatred against Him and seeks His life, and later both combined to kill Him. Thus in one of the shortest chapters and narratives the trend of the whole Gospel is given. But it is reaching still farther. The whole history of the kingdom of the heavens in its hidden form is here outlined, and the character of the entire new dispensation is manifested.

"Now Jesus having been born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that hath been born, King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him?" (verses 1, 2.)

The first question would be to ascertain the time when these wise men came to Jerusalem. It is generally believed that it was immediately after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. The old masters have taken most of the subjects for their paintings from biblical history, but many of these productions, if not all, are unscriptural and misleading. Thus the birth of the Saviour has been put on canvas, so familiar to our readers, a stable, a manger, Mary and Joseph, domestic animals, a star shining over the building, shepherds with their staffs on the one hand and on the other three gaudily attired persons on their knees, glittering crowns on their heads, and in the extended hands the gift upon which the eyes of the babe rest. Such a picture of course is incorrect. The authorized version, too, has helped such a wrong conception along by having it translated, "But when Jesus was born." The correct reading is, But Jesus having been born, that is some time after and not immediately after. Other evidences in the chapter show that the child must have been about a year old when the visit of the wise men occurred. They had seen His star, announcing to them in their far away homes that the expected king had been born. They had to travel over a large territory, and the journey must have taken many months, and then there is nothing to show that they started at once. In the eleventh verse we read, "And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshipped Him." In Luke it says, "And she brought forth her first

born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." In Matthew it is a house where the child is found, in Luke there was no room in the inn. Perhaps the most important evidence is in the sixteenth verse. Herod had privately called the wise men and inquired of them exactly the time that the star appeared. Their answer is not given, but from the sixteenth verse we may conclude that Herod had received a very definite answer by which he knew that the child could not be over two years old.

The second question would be about these strange visitors, who came to do homage before the King. Who were they? How many of them came? They are called in the Greek, Magi from the East. Magi is the name by which in olden times a large class of people, who were occupied with occult things, were known. These were the astrologers, interpreters of dreams and omens, medical men, necromancers, etc. Among the Persians and Medes they formed a special class of priests, and were chiefly occupied with foretelling events from the stars, and preparations of medicines for bodily ills. From Magi has come the more modern word magic; in an evil sense, sorcerer. Daniel was chief over such a class of wise men. "And the king made Daniel to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel 2:48). These wise men of the East were not all impostors. Many of them were earnest seekers after the truth, and students of natural forces. They did not have the true light. What a significant fact it is that now in the beginning of the twentieth century, in the midst of so-called Christian nations, soothsayers, readers of "human destiny" through the stars, those who claim to ask the dead, others having familiar spirits, are practicing their deceptions, wickedness and abominations, and are advertising their evil things openly, and find among these so-called "Christians" thousands and thousands to consult them. It cannot be otherwise. The true Light rejected, the truth not believed, strong delusions and utter darkness follow (2 Thess. 2). The Magi here were unquestionably earnest seekers after truth. There is nothing to show how many came thus to Jerusalem. That three came and that these three were kings is incorrect. We would rather think that a larger number made their appearance in the city, followed perhaps by a large train of attendants. Their appearance in number was striking enough to startle Jerusalem, and to bring trouble into the heart of its wicked king.

They had seen "His star," the star of the born King of the Jews. There has been much speculating about the star, likewise. Many think that the star was a constellation of Jupiter and Saturn. The great astronomer, Kepler, issued in 1606 a book in which he attempted to show the year of the birth of our Lord by such a constellation. In 1463 the great Jewish teacher, Abarbanel, concluded from a similar constellation which happened then that the coming of the Messiah must be near. But it does not say stars, but it is star, and that His star. It is also incorrect to think that the star guided the Magi from the East across an immense stretch of country and brought them at last to Jerusalem. The star they had seen in the East went before them only after they had departed from Jerusalem. It says then, "When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." This shows that for a time they did not see the star. Perhaps in their ancient traditions there was something left of Balaam's prophecy (Numbers 23 and 24). Might they not have had fragments of Daniel's prophecies? It is a well known fact that throughout the East there was at that time a universal expectancy of the coming of a King, and Jerusalem was connected with this King. A similar expectancy is even now noticeable among Oriental nations. A marvelous light was seen by these men. It burst forth in a brilliant brightness, as once more in the near future the heavens will be lit up by the sign of the Son of man, returning in power and glory. With that strange light in the heavens, a brilliant star, the intelligence was conveyed to them that the King, the One who is the desire of all nations (Hag. 2:3) was born. And that light was sufficient for these seekers to make them set out with their gifts, to undertake the long and dangerous journey to find the King and bow before His royal person.

What a day it was when they arrived at last in Jerusalem, not guided there by the star, but by the knowledge that in Jerusalem the King was to reign, and where they expected to find Him! But what did they find? Jerusalem under the regime of an Edomite. Herod upon the throne and his heart filled with Edomite hatred. No question that these evil rulers, including this one, are types of the final usurper, the Antichrist, whom the Lord will find in possession of the city when He comes the second time, and whom He will destroy with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. "Where is He that hath been born King of the Jews?" Where is He? In vain they go after their long journey through the streets of Jerusalem asking the question; there is no answer. The great city with its magnificent religious institutions, its wonderful Herodian temple, then still in process of erection, its aristocratic priesthood and benevolent institutions, had no knowledge of that King; nay, they did not desire that King to come, they were self-satisfied. This foreshadows the whole story of the rejection of the King, the Lord from heaven, that there was not alone no room for Him in the inn, but there was likewise no room for Him among His own; they received Him not. Herod, the king, was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. He feared for his throne, which was not his. Jerusalem knew what Herod's fear meant -- rebellion, bloodshed, and suffering.

How true this is still, and how truly it describes the entire dispensation in which we live! Jerusalem knows not the King, has rejected Him who is their Messiah, and ever since, Jerusalem and Israel's sad history of blood and tears has begun and will surely not end till the false king is dethroned and Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is crowned as Lord of all.

And these men from the East were not Jews, they were not Israelites, but Gentiles. For months, while Jerusalem is not acquainted with the fact of the birth of the long promised One, they had knowledge that He had come. Gentiles were first to acknowledge and to worship Him. The first became last and the last became first. By their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy. He, the Saviour, is first, a light for the "unveiling of the Gentiles, but in the end, too, the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32). Still it is to be seen here likewise that not all the Gentiles came to worship Him, only a small number, and so throughout this dispensation the promise is not that the nations will walk in His light and worship Him, but only a people is called out from the nations for His name. We will see later in the exposition of this chapter that these Gentiles who came to Jerusalem are typical of all the nations going up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts.

But in Jerusalem there was not only a king who was the enemy of the right heir to David's throne, but there were the religious leaders of the people, the Pharisees, the scribes, the priests and the chief priests. The learned doctors of the law, the students of prophecy, the orthodox; had they no knowledge of Him of whom Moses and the Prophets spoke? Surely if they hear He has come they will run to meet Him and welcome Him! Far from it; they were ignorant, likewise, and all indifferent to the startling news which had come to Jerusalem from such an extraordinary source.

"And when Herod the king heard it he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and having gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for it is written through the prophet, And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art in no wise least among the governors of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth a leader who shall be a shepherd to my people Israel."

By order of the king they were called together, not in a special session of the Sanhedrin, but in a larger gathering, all the chief priests and scribes are commanded to show themselves and to produce the scrolls of the law, the prophets and the writings. And now Herod puts his question, Where is Messiah to be born? The answer comes at once from the prophecies of Micah in the beginning of the fifth chapter, "Bethlehem in Juda." There was no dissenting voice. They were all orthodox and had a perfect knowledge of the scriptures, but it was head knowledge, and their consciences were not touched by it. The quotation itself differs from the original Hebrew and from the Septuagint. They used undoubtedly the text from a Chaldee paraphrase. The meeting is dismissed and all goes on in its usual way. Nothing is said that these priests and scribes were awakened and joined the seeking strangers to find Him, who is their Messiah. Sad was their state. Knowledge sufficient, but no interest in Him, no love for Him, the living Word. Their hearts were not filled with joy, and perhaps in their indifference the incident was soon forgotten, till one day the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem reminded them once more of what had happened. It is the first time we meet these chief priests and scribes in the Gospel; they will soon stand before us in all their religiousness in another character. Indifferent they were once, and soon we shall see them in their hatred, wickedness, and at last, with a perfect knowledge of the person who is in their midst, they deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And is this not true in Christendom at this present time? How much there is of religiousness, rituals, ceremonies and creeds of men, but with all this it is nothing but profession outwardly, the heart cares not for Him and has no interest in Him. The indifference of our times in the midst of Christendom is appalling. There is no interest in the coming again of our Lord as there was no interest in the religious leaders of the people at His first coming. Indifference ends with this age also in opposition and apostasy, followed by judgment. Perhaps for the first time had these wise men from the East heard the Word of God. The flash of light, the brilliant star, that supernatural sign, was sufficient to start them on their way. The light they had they followed, and soon there is added to it. The Word of God they heard perhaps not at all from any of the scribes and chief priests. These strangers were despised by them and considered as dogs, in spite of the prophetic scriptures which speak of the salvation of the Gentiles. The presence of them in Jerusalem should have taught them the fulfillment of prophecy. No, not the scribes and chief priests acquaint the wise men with the Word, but wicked King Herod, with his wicked thoughts and intentions, transmits it to them. "Then Herod, having privately called the Magi, inquired of them exactly the time that the star appeared; and sending them to Bethlehem he said, Go and search out exactly about the child and when ye have found Him bring me back word, that I may come and worship Him also." They are obedient to the word spoken; though it came from Herod's lips, it was nevertheless the truth. Jerusalem is left behind, and

their faces are set towards Bethlehem. "When they had heard the king they departed; and lo, the star they had seen in the East went before them until it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

The question has been raised, Where did they find the child? In Luke we read, "And when they had performed all these things according to the law of the Lord, they returned unto Galilee, their own city Nazareth" (Luke 2:39). Now if the wise men came about a year later, did they find the child in Bethlehem or were they guided all the way up to Nazareth? We think they were guided by the star to Bethlehem in fulfillment of the word they had heard. Bethlehem is in a southern direction from Jerusalem and Nazareth directly north. They were put without question on the right road by Herod, when the star appeared again. But if the parents were in Bethlehem a year later with the child, why did they go there? The Gospel of Luke gives the answer. "Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast" (Luke 2:41, 42). This brings out that they were a year after again in Jerusalem for the feast, and were therefore not in Nazareth. Bethlehem was truly their city, and the very short journey was made there from Jerusalem, where the wise men now found the young child with Mary His mother.

"And having come into the house they saw the little child with Mary, his mother, and falling down did Him homage. And having opened their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh." With exceeding great joy they had welcomed the reappearing of the star; it came and stood over the place where the child was. They enter into the house and find the little child and Mary, his mother. Even the order of words teaches us something. It is not Mary, his mother, and the little child, but the one who is God manifested in the flesh stands first, and Joseph is not at all mentioned. What a rebuke to the corrupt systems in Christendom where Mary and Joseph occupy a prominent place and are worshipped. The wise men worshipped Him, there was no adoration for Mary, while Joseph was completely ignored. All the worship and bowing of knee is for Him of whom it is written that at His name every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father's glory (Phil. 2:10). The outcome of their long and tedious journey, of their searching and seeking Him who is the King, was worship. A little light was followed, and soon the increase came. The Word of God showed them the way, and there was a second outburst of light from the star which brought them to the right place. What else could they do then but do homage to Him and to adore Him? Their first business was worship. It should be so with every true believer. We often hear it said, "saved to serve." This is not strictly true. We are saved by grace to worship and adore our God and Father and His Son, our Saviour and Lord. Service comes in, too, but only after worship. Where grace is rightly understood there will be a great deal of worship and praise, followed by true service, but where there is a dim conception of what God has done for us, what He has made us in His Son, and where that blessed and comforting doctrine, the assurance of salvation, is not known, there will be much service or attempted service, with much unrest, but little worship, or none at all. May our readers understand that worship stands first and is the first thing. The Father seeks worshippers (John 4:23). We are saved by grace to be worshippers of Him. All our joy and peace as believers, as well as fruitbearing, comes from being at His feet and doing homage to Him.

How long the worship of the wise men lasted we do not know, nor how long they tarried. After their worship they opened their treasures and offered to Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. This was their service, the offering of gifts.

Prophetically, this homage of the wise men, and the gifts they brought, is of much importance. It was, of course, and still is a custom of the Orient to appear before a person of royal descent with many presents, but here we have more than a simple custom. Without knowing it, nor knowing the significance of what they did, their hands, in selecting the gifts, were divinely guided. As King they had sought Him, as such they worshipped Him, and now the presents are in full harmony with the character of the King. The gold speaks of His divine and kingly glory, the frankincense of the fragrance of His life, as Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, and myrrh, the balsamic juice of Arabian myrtle, which is used for burial, speaks of His death, that this King is to lay down His life. What lessons there come even from the gifts the wise men spread before our Lord.

Quite often we are told that this is in fulfillment of Isaiah 60:6. However, in looking at this passage, we discover that the wise men could not be spoken of there, nor that they fulfilled that prophecy. We read in Isaiah: "They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord." We notice at once that Isaiah does not say anything at all about myrrh. Why, then, is there no myrrh in Isaiah, and why is there a mention made of myrrh by Matthew? The passage in Isaiah refers to the coming of the Gentiles at the time when the rejected King has come again in power and in glory, and is

King of kings; hence there is no need of myrrh. The whole scope of Isaiah 60 brings this out. "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the nations (yet to come during the tribulation), but the Lord shall arise upon thee (Israel) and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." If we read through this chapter we find multitudes coming, and they seek not a small humble house like the wise men did, but they seek the house of glory, and there they meet the King of Glory in His beauty, and spread before Him gold and frankincense, shouting aloud His praises and the glory of His name. What a glorious chapter this is, and, oh, the joy which fills us as believers in the anticipation when all this shall be so. May it soon be when violence shall no more be heard in the land, desolation nor destruction within thy borders; but thy walls shall be called salvation and thy gates praise. We would say, then, that it is incorrect to state that the wise men came in fulfillment of Isaiah 60:6; they were but faint types of what shall take place after the Glory, when no more bloodthirsty Herod will be upon the throne, and Jerusalem and not Bethlehem will be the city to which the Gentiles journey, the city of a great King.

"And being divinely instructed in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." This is all the Word has to say about the departure of these strangers. After their worship and offering of gifts, divine guidance instructs them. It is guidance, likewise, we have as believers, but it is a guidance through the Spirit in the Word.

"Now they having departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying, Arise, take to thee the little child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee; for Herod will seek the little child to destroy it. And having arisen, he took to him the little child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and he was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord, through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son" (verses 13-15). Thus the narrative continues. The child is the only prominent figure in it. There is a spurious gospel, called the Gospel of the Infancy of our Lord, (*Evangelium Infantiae*), in which the flight to Egypt is adorned with many miracles. We mention some of them. Idols broke to pieces wherever the child came; the three-year-old child of an Egyptian priest who was possessed by demons put a swaddling cloth of the child upon his head, and the demon fled; a woman possessed by a demon was healed by looking upon Mary; robbers fled in terror before the child; all manner of diseases were healed, including leprosy, etc. The whole book shows that it is a counterfeit, gotten up by some one who favored the worship of Mary and the child. How simple the story is here in Matthew. The child is dependent upon Joseph, who is now mentioned, and in poverty, under great danger, at night, they had to flee. God could have transported His Son by a miracle, but the Son of God had become man, and now it was for Him to enter into all. He has to go the long and weary road. The cause of the flight was Herod, who under the power of Satan sought the life of the child. He shows himself here as the murderer from the beginning. Satan is that still, the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, ready to devour the man-child (Rev. 12). The place of refuge is Egypt. There He is to go, to be called back after a while in fulfillment of the prophetic Word, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

This prophecy is found in Hosea 11:1. "When Israel was a child then I loved Him, and called My Son out of Egypt." This was spoken about 700 years before and is about Israel, but here we learn through the Holy Spirit its true and full meaning. Jews, infidels and higher critics have stumbled at this, but how simple even this is, no difficulty, as commentaries sometimes say. Israel is, according to Exodus 4:22, God's first born Son, and in Jeremiah 31:9, we read, "I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first born." Christ and Israel are closely identified in the prophetic Word. Thus the Messiah, our Lord, is called in Isaiah the servant of the Lord, and Israel is spoken of there, too, as the servant of the Lord, that is Israel's Messiah is the servant of the Lord through whose obedient suffering and death Israel becomes at last in the earth the righteous servant of Jehovah. Israel is God's first born, but the Lord Jesus Christ is not alone the only begotten of the Father, but also the first born from the dead. In resurrection He will be the first born among many brethren, which is the Church, His body. But through Him and in Him alone, Israel, God's earthly people, His first born will become that for which God has called them according to His merciful purposes. Israel's history beginning with Egypt, has been a history of sin, disobedience, apostasy and shame. Therefore the true One had to come, the true servant of the Lord in obedience -- obedience unto death. He had to go through the history of His people. This is the reason why He had to go down to Egypt, the house of bondage. Of course, there was no bondage for Him. And when He is called out of Egypt, He comes to pass through the wilderness to be tested and tried, going the long journey through all in the spirit of holiness without sin, far different from that which Israel was. How blessedly He became identified with all.

In the following three verses we read of the satanic rage of Herod when he finds that the wise men did not return and all the boys in Bethlehem and in all its borders from two years and under were slain. "Then it was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying: A voice has been heard in Rama, weeping and great lamentation; Rachel

weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." The wicked deed is but a beginning of the sorrows of Israel on account of the rejection of the King. His blood indeed has been upon them and their children, the worst is still to come in the time of Jacob's trouble when the false Messiah will be like Herod, shedding their blood. The quotation is from Jeremiah 31:15. It is an application here of that prophecy. Rachel was buried near Bethlehem. Dying there she called the son who was born to her Ben-oni, which means the son of my sorrow, but his father Jacob soon changed his name, and the son of sorrow becomes Benjamin, which means, the son of the right hand. Rachel is seen here as weeping and lamenting over the slaughtered children, the children of Bethlehem. They were no more, and would not be comforted. What greater crying and lamentation there shall be in the future in the land! In Jeremiah, in the context, we read: "Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears -- they shall come again from the land of the enemy." The child had escaped the murderous onslaught of Satan through Herod, but He comes back to lay down His life, that through death He might annul him who has the might of death, that is, the devil; and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage (Hebrews 2). The return of the child, how long they stayed in Egypt is not said, is next described in our chapter and needs no further comment. The child is kept as He now keeps the feet of His saints, His church, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it.

There is one more prophecy which is to be mentioned. "And having been divinely instructed in a dream, he went away in the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a town called Nazareth; so that it should be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (verses 22, 23). It is next to the questions from the first chapter in Matthew, the most important the inquiring Jew brings in reading the New Testament: "Where is it written, or in what prophet is it written, that Messiah should be called a Nazarene?" It does not say here that it is written by one prophet, but by the prophets. Therefore all the prophets have spoken of Him as being a Nazarene. A Nazarene is an inhabitant of Nazareth. That city is in Galilee, which is called the Galilee of the Gentiles, because so many Gentiles lived there. The Pharisees and scribes in Jerusalem hated and despised Galilee, and especially was Nazareth despised. The inhabitants were called Am-horatzim, that is ignorant men. Even the Galileans looked down upon the town and despised everybody who lived there. The ruin and corruption was there the greatest. Therefore we read in another Gospel: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" To that mean, despised place the Son of God is to go, there He, who was rich in all eternity, found His abode. Now, this is spoken by all the prophets, that the Messiah, the Saviour, was to be rejected by men. The rejection began with the very start, and there in the little town He is to spend thirty years of His life, and when He comes forth and begins His ministry in Galilee, it is only to be rejected again, ending at last in Jerusalem outside of the camp. How true, He was despised and rejected of men. And our place is with Him now in rejection, outside of the camp, to bear His reproach. May this be our place, and like Him, the leader and completer of the faith, may we, for the joy set before us, endure the cross and despise the shame.

CHAPTER III

The third chapter relates the ministry of the herald of the King, who announces that the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh, and the presence of the King Himself, who is to come after him; the baptism of the King, who comes from Galilee to the Jordan to John, and the events connected with it, are given in the second half of the chapter.

"Now in those days comes John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. For this is He, who has been spoken of through Esaias the prophet saying, A voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. And John himself had his garments of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his nourishment was locusts and wild honey" (verses 1-4).

The forerunner is John the Baptist, a typical Old Testament person, of whom the Lord says later in the Gospel, "Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet, this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say to you, that there is not arisen among the born of women a greater than John the Baptist, but he who is a little one in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he" (chapter 11:9-11). In the same discourse the Lord' says, in vindication of John, who was then in prison: "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias who is to come." In the first chapter of Luke the angel announces his birth and says: "For he shall be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine or strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the sons of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn hearts of fathers to children, and disobedient ones to the thoughts of just men, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people" (Luke 1:15-17). In these words, given through the Holy Spirit, the Lord Himself and an angel of the Lord, we have

the three prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the forerunner quoted. These are: Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5, 6. That he was sent in fulfillment of these prophecies is therefore unquestionable. To this comes the manner of his dress and the nourishment. It reminds us of the great prophet Elias, the Tishbite. "He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins" (2 Kings 1:8).

John knew His personality and His mission, for he said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (John 1:23). But when asked, Art thou Elias? he answered, I am not. The Jews expected Elijah, as the orthodox Jews expect him still, as the forerunner of King Messiah. At every passover ceremony a cup is reserved for the prophet Elijah, and at the circumcision of the child a chair is placed for that person, and many are the prayers which are said, that God may send soon the prophet Elijah, for his presence would indicate to them the nearness of the King. The character and preaching of Elijah were clearly reproduced in John. He was the Elias for his day. If they had received it, he would have been Elias. In this sense, Matthew 17:12, is to be understood: "Elias cometh and restoreth all things; But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they did not recognize him, but did unto him whatever they would." He was rejected, and his rejection foretold how things would go, that the King Himself would be rejected. We would only mention that before the King comes again there will be once more a forerunner. Once more the message will be heard, The kingdom of the heavens draweth nigh. It will be the Gospel of the Kingdom preached by the remnant during the great tribulation. All we have in Malachi 4:5, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," will then be fulfilled. In Revelation 13 one of the two witnesses is, without question, one like Elijah. It is necessary to state, that no great and miracle-working preacher of repentance, in the spirit of Elijah, is promised to Christendom. We make this remark, because in our days persons stand up and declare that they are forerunners, or one of the witnesses or messengers of the covenant. These poor people err and know not the Scripture, and by their conceited claims work untold harm.

John the Baptist appears in the wilderness. He is not in the temple in the midst of the learned and the great. There was no room for him there. He is outside of the camp, and the people too have to leave Jerusalem and go out to him. This is once more significant. It shows what the end will be.

His preaching is, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh."

The phrase, kingdom of the heavens, is mentioned thirty-two times in the Gospel of Matthew. Here it is for the first time. The strangest meaning has been put upon this term. Christendom at large is all at sea about the meaning of it. Heaven or the church are the general interpretations which are given. Both are wrong, and because the meaning of this term is so grossly misunderstood, there is no conception whatever of the thoughts and purposes of God. The kingdom of the heavens is an Old Testament term. It is to be in the earth and not in heaven. It is a kingdom in which the heavens rule (Daniel 4:26). The setting up of that kingdom is spoken of in Daniel 2:44, and in the seventh chapter, verse 14. It is in the hands of One who is the Son of Man, Messiah, the Son of David, who is to rule in righteousness. In that kingdom there will be universal peace, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. His own people, the house of Judah and the house of Israel, will all be regathered into the land, Jerusalem built again and become the great center of blessing for the nations of the earth. In one word, the kingdom of the heavens is the literal fulfillment of all the prophecies and promises contained in the Old Testament, which the Lord gave to the seed of Abraham, and the blessings of the nations of the earth to come after this kingdom is set up. The Church is not known in the Old Testament, nor is it seen in the opening chapters of Matthew. _This _kingdom, the forerunner declares, now has drawn nigh, it is at hand. The King is in the earth, Emanuel, He whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and concerning whom it is said, "that of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." Not alone did John preach this kingdom to its Jewish, earthly form, but the Lord Himself declared that it had drawn nigh, and when the King sent out His disciples He told them to preach, "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh," the special Messianic kingdom power was put upon them to heal the sick, to raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons (Matthew 10).

But as the forerunner and his testimony is rejected, and the King Himself, the coming of that kingdom of the heavens is postponed. It is not set aside completely, but only postponed, and all the glories of that earthly Messianic Kingdom, which will reach from sea to sea, so minutely pictured in Old Testament prophecy, will yet be established in the earth with Jerusalem as the center, for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. The kingdom of the heavens is not the

church, and the church is not the kingdom. How great the confusion is on this point in all Christian denominations who read the "history of the church" in the establishment and glory of the kingdom predicted by the prophets.

The proper word for John to utter when appearing in the wilderness was, repent. That kingdom which had now drawn nigh was to bring judgment of all that is evil. Judgments upon all unrighteousness are associated with the coming of that kingdom. Every Jew was acquainted with that fact. It is true the earthly glories of the kingdom of the heavens had been announced by every prophet, but equally true is it that the coming judgments were announced, and at all times in past generations of the earthly people of God, the cry, "Return! Repent!" was heard. Now the greatest one of all the prophets has come, and the cry of the Law and the Prophets, Repent, sounds forth once more, so strong and clear as never before.

Before we take up the meaning of repentance here and the baptism unto repentance wherewith he baptized, and compare them with repentance and baptism which are connected with the Gospel of Grace, we must call attention to the quotation from Isaiah which follows. The words are taken from that sublime chapter which begins with, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, the fortieth chapter. In comparing Matthew with Luke we find that the quotation in Luke is complete, in Matthew it is only in part. Luke, or rather the Holy Spirit through him, adds, "Every gorge shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places smooth ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke 3:5-7)." One would look to the Gospel of Matthew as the Jewish Gospel, to find such a complete quotation from the Old Testament. Why then, is it not all quoted in Matthew, and why does it stand in Luke? The reason is easily found. Luke's Gospel is for the Gentiles, to show that salvation is to be indeed offered to all flesh. For this reason the full quotation is perfectly in order in that Gospel, while in Matthew, here in the beginning in its narrower scope, it would be out of order. It is likewise to be remarked that the testimony of John was not only the cry in the wilderness, the loud and continued "Repent!" Such is heard here, and when the kingdom hopes are not realized, we shall see him later sending from the prison to the Lord with his question. But John had a more perfect knowledge, which he imparted to his disciples. The proper place for that testimony is neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke, but the Gospel where the Holy Spirit shows us our Saviour and Lord as the only begotten of the Father, the Gospel of John. There John points to Him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. "I have seen and borne Him witness that He is the Son of God (John 1:29-34)." But clearer still is that wonderful address he delivers to his disciples when they came to him. "And John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven. Ye, yourselves, bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices in heart because of the voice of the bridegroom; this my joy then is fulfilled He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all. He who has his origin in the earth is of the earth, and speaks as of the earth. He who comes out of heaven is above all, and what He has seen and what He has heard this He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true; for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things in His hand. He that believes on the Son has life eternal, and he that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him" (John 3:27-36).

Such a testimony then was given by John, he knew of life through Christ and that the bridegroom is the Son of God.

Repentance is his foremost message to the nation. Let us consider briefly what it means. Repentance as it is found in the Old Testament, is God's request to His earthly people to return unto Him. This is the call of John the Baptist in this third chapter. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom which he preaches. The Gospel of Grace is something different. It was not known then, it could not be fully made known and preached till after the death, the resurrection, ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. To preach the Gospel of Grace from the words of John the Baptist, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh," would be misleading. Still it is being done throughout Christendom. Not knowing what the kingdom of the heavens is, what the church is, and the differences between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace, there is a constant misapplication of the scriptures and preaching of a repentance which is Jewish. Theological systems, especially Arminianism, have produced a way of salvation, which is surely nothing less, than the new wine in old wineskins. There is the demand of a repentance, a certain form of penitence, a deep feeling of being lost, grief and despair, turning away from the world and worldly pleasures, seeking the Lord, perhaps for many weary months, then at last, after such a weird experience, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. After this the receiving of what is termed, the witness of the Spirit, a good feeling, by which it is claimed one alone can know that he is saved, a feeling which can be lost, after which the person is once more unsaved. That all this is not according to the Gospel of Grace, the teachings of Romans, as well as the other epistles is evident. One who has written on the subject of repentance has done it

in such a scriptural and simple way that we desire to quote from his book:

"What then about repentance? Are faith and the Spirit's work enough? Or is not repentance no less a necessity if men are to be saved? I meet this question boldly and at once by denouncing it as based, not so much on ignorance as on deep seated and systematic error. The repentance which thus obtrudes itself and claims notice in every sermon is not the friend of the Gospel but an enemy. It is like the officious guide, who forces himself upon the traveler only to mislead him. Faith and repentance are not successive stages on the road to life; they are not independent guides to direct the pilgrim's path; they are not separate acts to be successively accomplished by the sinner as a condition of his salvation. But, in different phases of it, they represent the same Godward attitude of the soul, which the truth of God believed produces. "Salvation there cannot be without repentance any more than without faith, but the soundest and fullest Gospel preaching need not include any mention of the word. Neither as verb or noun does it occur in the Epistle to the Romans -- God's great doctrinal treatise on redemption and righteousness -- save in the warnings of the second chapter. And the Gospel of John, pre-eminently the Gospel-book of the Bible -- will be searched in vain for a single mention of it. The beloved disciple wrote his Gospel that men might believe and live, and his Epistle followed to confirm believers in the simplicity and certainty of their faith; but yet from end to end of them the word 'repent' or 'repentance' never once occurs. It is to these writings before all others men have turned in every age to find words of peace and life, and yet some who profess to hold them inspired will cavil at a Gospel sermon because repentance is not mentioned in it -- a fault, if fault it be, that marks the testimony of the Apostle John and the preaching of our Lord Himself, as recorded by the fourth evangelist. The repentance of the Gospel is to be found in the Nicodemus discourse and in the gracious testimony to the woman at the well; and, I may add, any repentance that limits or jars upon those sacred words is wholly against the truth." (The Gospel and its Ministry, By Robert Anderson.)

In Acts 3:19 we hear Peter preaching, "Repent." It is here still to the nation connected with a national hope: The restoring of all things of which God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets. After the calling out of people for His name is accomplished, and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, there will be once more the call heard, "Repent!"

But the call to repentance is associated with baptism -- the baptism unto repentance. "Then went out to Him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the country round the Jordan, and were baptized by Him in the Jordan, confessing their sins (verse 5)." Concerning his baptism He said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance." There was then a great stir, and large were the multitudes from the city who came out to hear and to follow the call to repent. Among them were many Pharisees and Sadducees, to whom He said, "Offspring of vipers, who has forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce, therefore, fruit worthy of repentance. And do not think to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our Father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And already the axe is applied to the root of the trees; every tree therefore not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire." "And all the people when they heard it, and the publicans, justified God, having been baptized with John's baptism; but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's counsel with regard to themselves, not being baptized by Him" (Luke 7:29, 30).

The baptism of John shows clearly what repentance means. Jordan is always in the Word the type of death. Thus John baptized in the river of death, which would mean unto death. (Baptism in water was known and practiced among the Jews centuries before John. Proselytes were not only circumcised but also dipped in water.) The people came, confessed their sins, seeing then their true position, what they were and what they deserved; they went down into Jordan to be buried in water, thus typifying death. They heard, they believed, they confessed and witnessed to it outwardly. In this way they justified God, as recorded in the above passage from Luke. Christian baptism is, of course, something essentially different. It is not a baptism unto repentance of deserved death, but it is unto Christ's death, who has taken our place and died for us. "Are you ignorant that we, as many as have been baptized unto Christ, have been baptized unto His death? We have been therefore buried with Him by baptism unto death, in order that even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-5). Christian baptism is not taught in the third chapter of Matthew. How much confusion has resulted from giving it such a meaning, placing believers into a sad legalism.

Many then were baptized unto repentance by the forerunner. But now for the first time we meet with the two great religious classes and leaders among the Jews, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who came out to John. These two classes play an important role in the Gospel. The Pharisees* were the strictly religious, orthodox-ritualistic class. (The name Pharisee means a Separatist. One who says: "I am holier than them.") They were well versed in the traditions of the elders,

and occupied themselves with creating new commandments and strange interpretations of the law. They are the fathers of the talmudical Jews of the present day and typical of ritualistic Christendom, having the form of godliness and not the power. The Sadducees were the rationalists, the unbelieving class. They were much given to reform. Their offspring today are the reformed Jews, who reject the greater part of the Word of God, and in Christendom they are remarkably reproduced in the unevangelical "isms," though they call themselves "Christian" (as the Sadducees called themselves Jews), who reject portions of the Word, who do not believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

"Offspring of vipers!" thus the Holy Spirit declared through the forerunner their true character. What a strong and cutting word it is, which applies not alone to the Pharisees and Sadducees, but to all ritualistic-religiousness and unbelieving criticism. They are the offspring not of God but of vipers. But still they were the proud boasters of being the seed of Abraham and as such entitled to the promised blessing. They believed that they were to be saved from the wrath of God connected with the establishment of the kingdom, and the wrath would fall entirely upon the Gentile nations. One only needs to peruse some of the tracts of the Talmud to find the reflection of their proud, self-righteous belief. When they came, they were far from taking that true position in repentance, in death. And so John demands of them that they are to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. He uncovers their false pretensions, and shows that no natural birth, no religious attainment would deliver them in the day of wrath. This is followed by the announcement of the nearness of the judgment, the axe laid at the root of the trees, ready to fell the mighty trees void of fruit. All this finds an application in the day in which we live, when the axe is once more laid at the roots to cut off and cast into the fire that which has not brought fruit. (The conditions in nominal Christendom now, immediately before the Second Coming of Christ, are the same as the conditions in professing Judaism at the time of His first coming.)

From the words of condemnation upon the proud, self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees, the herald of the King now turns to speak, as it became him in humility, of the glorious Person of the King Himself. And what a far reaching testimony it is we have in the eleventh and twelfth verses! "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire; whose winnowing fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and shall gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable."

Here we have another passage which is of vital importance. Let us understand in the first place that the words spoken refer to the first and second coming of our Lord. Let this be clearly fixed in our minds, and all will be plain. The promise connected with the first coming is, He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The second coming of the Lord will bring the baptism with Fire, as it is seen at once in the words which follow, which speak clearly of judgment and fire unquenchable. It may appear strange at the first glance that John says in one breath: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" -- that the Holy Spirit should refer to His first coming and the fire to His second appearing, but let us take into consideration that John still belongs to the Old Testament, and he expresses himself in a way as many of the prophets did, who frequently spoke in one clause of the Lord's first and second coming. However, the fifth verse in the first chapter of Acts puts into our hands the key. The Lord said then to His disciples, "John, indeed, baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." That our Lord speaks of what John said in our passage here is evident, yet He does not mention baptism with fire. If He had added, and with fire, it would clearly prove that the baptism connected with His first coming is a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. But He leaves out the fire because it stands in connection with His second coming. Thus it is seen in the entire prophetic Word, which speaks of the day of wrath and vengeance as being a day of burning and fire. How could we even undertake to mention but half of the erroneous doctrines which are more or less emanating from this passage wrongly applied? The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit, etc., has of late years been made very prominent. Conventions for baptisms, fillings with the Holy Spirit, the enduement of the Spirit for power in service, and many other topics in relation to the doctrine of the Spirit and for a so-called "second blessing" (a term which is nowhere found in the Word) are being held. But how sad it is to see the contortions of the Scriptures as well as the unscriptural, abnormal applications which have been made. A good deal comes from teaching that the believer is to be baptized not alone with the Spirit but also with fire. It is not enough to have believed, so they teach, and be saved by Grace, but there is to be a baptism with fire, a second experience which outshines all others. Hence we find the most extravagant terms which are used in connection with the Holy Spirit, such as Holy Ghost preachers and Holy Ghost fire.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit promised by the Lord took place on the day of Pentecost. By this one Spirit are we all baptized into the one body, which is the Church (1 Cor. 12:13). We are not born again by the baptism of the Spirit, but

those who are born again become by it the members of that one body. Every believer who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ hath the Holy Spirit. He the blessed Paraclete, is abiding in him. It is wrong for a believer to plead or pray for the Holy Spirit to come unto him, and equally unscriptural is it to pray for a baptism with fire, for there is no such baptism now, and no believer could pray for the flaming fire to fall upon him, for he is delivered from that wrath.

The Lord comes again, and then it will be with a baptism of fire. The wheat will be gathered into the garner, and then the chaff upon the threshing floor swept together, corresponding with the tares in the parables put together in bundles, will be given over to the fire unquenchable.

John unquestionably waited anxiously for the appearing of Him whose advent he had announced. God, who had sent him to baptize with water, had told him that upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, he it is who baptizes with the Spirit (John 1:32-34). At last the moment came. What a moment it was! It terminated the ministry of the forerunner. It was the beginning of the public ministry of the King Himself. He now steps to the front to go that path of obedience marked out for Him, to be presented as King to the nation, to be rejected, and to do that work which no Prophet, no John, no Angel or Archangel could do, but He alone.

"Then comes Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized of him." The Lord, He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire, He who is greater than John, to whom the Baptist bowed in humility and worship, He who is the creator of all things, comes to the preacher of repentance and presents Himself to be baptized. What a scene! John stood amazed. "He forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" In other words, I am the sinner, I need repentance, I deserve to go into that river of death, but Thou art holy -- no evil in Thee, nothing worthy of death.

Thus in the very beginning of His public ministry we have the testimony of His holiness. He is the one who alone is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; He knew no sin, who could not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. When at last the prince of this world came he had nothing in Him. But why then should He, the holy one, this spotless, pure being, present Himself to the preacher of repentance? Why should He go into the river of death and take His place in death? Where there is no sin there need be no confession. Where there is no sin there can be no death. How could He, the King, that holy thing born of the virgin, God manifested in the flesh, ever confess sin when there was no sin? Yet He not only came to be baptized, but He was baptized. The question has had many answers. We said above that His baptism marks the beginning of His public ministry, He enters upon His work, and there can be only one meaning to His baptism, which is in fullest harmony with that work He came to do. Baptism means death and resurrection. He had no sin, but came to be the substitute for sinners, and so He takes in the very beginning their place, the sinner's place in death. He knew His work before. It is not to be understood as if now He had learned for the first time who He is and what His work is. But publicly He declares in presence of men, angels, demons, and in the presence of God that He is here to fulfill all righteousness. "Suffer it now, for it thus becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (verse 13). No confessing or repenting on His part, He was fulfilling all righteousness. As one has said, "He saw His sheep struggling in the dark waters of the river of judgment, the meaning of the Jordan, and He must go in for their rescue. He must become identified with them, taking their place in judgment that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him, bringing in "the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all and upon all those who believe" (Rom. 3:22). He knew no sin, was made sin for us, and His baptism declares this. The details of His baptism are not given. Then he suffers Him. He placed Himself into the hands of John and went into the waters of Jordan. Later He said, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am strengthened until it shall have been accomplished! The man of sorrows and acquainted with grief soon reached that place, when He went into the deep waters of suffering and death, when all the billows broke over His head. His baptism was but a type of this.

"And Jesus, having been baptized, went straightway from the water, and lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him; and behold a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I have found My delight (verses 16 and 17)."

Here we have something which leads us still deeper. It is a glorious manifestation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son who has gone down comes out to be anointed by the Holy Spirit, and proclaimed as the beloved Son by the Father's voice. He is anointed for the work He had to do. He was begotten by the Holy Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. John learned now that He was the true One. The Holy

Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The dove is the type of the Holy Spirit. We are reminded of the dove which flew across the dark waters of judgment, come from the ark, lifted above all judgment, finding no resting place and returned to the ark. And when sent out the second time the dove returns with an olive branch and the third time there was no return to the ark. This speaks of the sending forth of the Holy Spirit in the different dispensations. But here is the One upon whom the Holy Spirit came to abide. We are reminded of the prophet whose book and experience is a type of Christ, Jonah the son of Amittai, translated, the Dove, the Son of Truth. The dove is, as one of the sacrificial birds, a type of Christ. And through Him and in Him we have the Holy Spirit as the abiding one, the Paraclete. He was poured out after His death and resurrection.

The heavens were opened unto Him. This is a significant word which is often overlooked. For Him alone the heavens are open. No one has gone up into heaven save He who came down out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven (John 3:13). He came out of heaven. The heavens were opened unto Him and He has passed through the heavens. In Him the heavens are opened for us, and He has taken us all, who believe, into heaven, bringing many sons to glory. And now a voice is heard. It is not the voice of an Angel, but the voice of the Father. Wonderful fact, that now after He, who is eternally the Son of God, subsisting in the form of God, and who became Son of God incarnate, after He has thus taken the place in death for sinners, that the Father speaks to approve of Him. He had seen Him, His beloved Son, go down to fulfill all righteousness, and now He vindicates Him by declaring, This is My beloved Son in whom I have found My delight. This corresponds to the word in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee. The Lord Jesus Christ is eternally the Son of God, but here in both passages we see Him as the Son of God incarnate. Never could it be said of Him as the Only begotten of the Father, This day have I begotten Thee. Equally true is it that eternally the Father's delight has been in the Son. But Romans 1:3 speaks of Him as His Son, come of David's seed according to flesh, marked out as Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the first begotten, and in Acts 13 we have the true application of that word, Thou art My Son -- "having raised up Jesus;" as it is also written in the second Psalm, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" -- it is then in resurrection, by the resurrection from the dead that He is marked out Son of God.

And thus we see it here. In going down into Jordan He typifies His own death, but His coming up straightway is the type of resurrection, and in this coming up the Father's voice is heard declaring Him the well beloved. "Therefore doth My Father love Me -- because I lay down My life that I might take it again." Well pleasing to the Father He was, and how else could it be with the Sinless One, who was made like unto His brethren. It is then seen from the baptism of our Lord that He is the Lamb of God for the sacrifice, even as John recognized it in pointing to Him, Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. He is perfectly pleasing to the Father, and by the Holy Spirit who came upon Him He is consecrated to the work before Him. It is also clear from these meditations that the baptism of the Lord is typical of His death and resurrection.

And now, after all this took place and He entered thus upon His official work -- then Jesus was carried up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil (chap. 4:1).

Many other teachings could be given in connection with the third chapter in which we tarried longer than we expected. How rich, how unfathomable is God's Word! Divine from beginning to end, a living Word, energetic, and sharper than any two-edged sword. May we praise our God for His written Word, and for Him who is the living Word, who took our place in death, delivered for our offences, but raised from the dead on account of our justification. All honor and praise and glory to Him who loveth us and has washed us, to Him the Son who has made us sons, and in whom we hear the Father's loving voice. "And because ye are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father" (Gal. 4:6).

CHAPTER IV

The first part of this chapter gives us the history of the temptation of the King. This is a most important topic, many-sided in its applications; large volumes have been written on it without exhausting it. We will therefore have to confine ourselves to the bringing out of some of the most important teachings, without attempting to go into many of the precious details and applications to the believer.

The baptism marked, as we saw in the last chapter, our Lord's entrance upon His official work. He is declared as the Son of God by His Father, and anointed with the Holy Spirit; and the third act is that He, who is declared the Son of God,

anointed with the Spirit, come to do the eternal will of God, to suffer and to die, is to be tempted by the devil. "Then was Jesus carried up into the wilderness by the Spirit" (verse 1). It came immediately after he had come out of the waters. There was no interval between. This is seen from the Gospel of Mark. "And immediately the Spirit drives Him out into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). It was the first thing to be done in fulfilling the Scriptures. He was carried into the wilderness, and in Mark it is stronger still: driven there. Some have said, as if our Lord was anxious to meet the enemy, desirous of coming face to face with that old serpent, the devil, who has the power of death, and whom to annul He had come. But that cannot be. If it had been our Lord Himself who hastens impatiently to meet the adversary, He would have been the tempter of the Evil one. Not His Spirit drove Him, but the Spirit carried Him into the wilderness. It was the Holy Spirit who took Him to meet the enemy. The Spirit, who had come upon Him and rested on Him -- He impels Him. The Christ, the second man and last Adam, meets the devil in another place, far different from the garden where Adam and Eve had their abode. What a contrast! Even the earth, though good and perfect it was, did not seem to be a good enough place for Adam and Eve. So the Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food (Gen. 2:8, 9). What a beautiful spot that garden must have been! Surrounded by all this, with all wants supplied, the enemy came to tempt, and with it came the failure. But here is the second Man, and He is not brought into a garden, but He is driven into the wilderness -- "the great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and thirsty ground where was no water" (Deut. 8:15). He was there in the wilderness with the wild beasts (Mark 1:13). In that terrible wilderness, surrounded by serpents, scorpions, adders and the wild beasts, the Messiah, the King, stands to meet the foe. And having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He hungered; His blessed body, a body of flesh and blood, felt hunger and thirst. How reduced in His outward appearing He must have been, the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief!

We would call attention to the fact, that the tempter did not come to Him for forty days, as it is often said in misquoting scripture, but afterward, when, having fasted, he came to Him.

And the tempter came to Him. It is the adversary, the accuser of the brethren, that old serpent, the devil. He is as truly a person as God and our Lord is a person. How terrible it is that in the very midst of Christendom the personality of the devil is denied. If there is no personal devil there is no need of a personal Saviour. The "new" theology, whose father the devil is himself, has no use for a belief in the personal devil. That person is simply put down as an invention of the dark middle ages, and spoken of as an old relic, which still survives in the minds of some old fogies. It is no longer a person with most of these modern theologians, but an evil principle. The Lord's temptations, according to this new interpretation, were only imaginations, they were the workings of the mind, a kind of weakness which was produced by the prolonged fastings. If we ask these men who got rid of the personal devil, how they can explain the belief of the Jews in a personal devil and in the demons, as well as the demoniacal possessions in the days of our Lord? they answer us and say, The Jews brought this superstition from the Babylonian captivity. But if we ask these "critics" Why, then did the Lord and His apostles not correct so grave an error? they give us an answer which dishonors our Lord. The denial of the existence of a personal devil, as it is becoming almost universal in Christendom, is surely the masterpiece of all the dreadful work Satan has done, and we can well imagine what fiendish joy he must have in seeing his existence denied, and by and by he will have the world in security ensnared by his delusions. Then, when he himself and with him his demons are cast out of heaven into the earth, the earth will know that there is a personal devil, for he comes on the earth and brings with it that which is his work, the great tribulation. His wrath will be great for a short time (Rev. 12). What a terrible awakening that will be for all those who denied the existence of that Evil one! The dreadful chain in denying the personality of the devil is: No devil, no sin, no judgment, no wrath, no atonement, no Saviour, and at last no God.

We do not know in what form of a person the devil appeared to our Lord. There is a scripture which tells us of a form he took that is in Genesis the third chapter. The serpent must have been perhaps the most attractive of all the creatures and not as the serpent is now, creeping upon its belly, having become this by the curse. In the New Testament we read that he goes about as a roaring lion and that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Perhaps in that subtle form he came to meet Him, whom he knew to be the eternal Word made flesh.

There is but one more word to be considered before we turn to the temptations themselves and take them up in their order. It is the word tempt. It is here where much misunderstanding comes in. The word tempt has different meanings. One of them is inciting or enticing to evil, to seduce. This always presupposes evil present in some form, the possibility that the person can be enticed and incited to evil, that in the person there is something which responds or may respond to the evil placed before the soul. This could never be the case with our Lord. There was no sin, no evil in Him. He is absolutely holy.

Therefore the word tempt in this form can never apply to Him. But the word tempt means also, put to test. To test means to bring to trial and examination; compare with a standard; in this sense only it can refer to our Lord. He was tempted means, He was tested as to His ability to do that for which He had come. The test or tempting is to bring out that He is the pure gold, the Holy One, the spotless One, the One who alone can do the work for which He appeared, to put away sin by sacrificing Himself. Therefore the Spirit led Him up into the wilderness. The word tempting or testing has also a special significance in connection with Israel. The Lord, as Messiah and King, is closely identified with His people. He goes through their history, so to speak, and fulfills all, and at last He died for that nation. Israel was tested or proved, and failed. "There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them." The Septuagint translates the Hebrew "Nissohu" with a Greek word which is used in the fourth chapter of Matthew. The Hebrew means testing, to find out if it is really so by a test. The same word is used in Deuteronomy the eighth chapter. "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God has led thee these forty years in the wilderness that He might humble thee, to prove (test) thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no" (Deut. 8:2). The Lord, the true Israel then is tested and He does not fail. And now we come to the temptations themselves. The devil begins to address Him, who has come to crush his head. It would be very interesting to make a careful study of the words of Satan we have in the Word of God. They are contained in Genesis the third chapter, the first chapter of Job, and here in the Gospel. The words he speaks in these passages establish him in his true character, the liar and murderer from beginning, the accuser. He places before our Lord three temptations, the test is threefold.

I. "And the tempter coming up to Him said, If thou be Son of God, speak that these stones may become bread."

The answer from the Lord: "But He answering said, It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through Gods mouth" (Deut. 8:3)

II. "Then the devil takes Him to the holy city and sets Him upon the edge of the temple, and says to Him, If Thou be Son of God cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give charge to His angels concerning Thee, and on their hands shall they bear Thee, lest in any wise Thou strike Thy foot against a stone" (Psalms 91).

The answer: "Jesus said to him, It is again written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6:16).

III. "Again the devil takes Him to a very high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and says to Him, All these things will I give Thee, if, falling down, thou wilt do me homage. Then Jesus says to him, Get thee away, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve" (Deut. 6:13).

First, a few general remarks. Twice Satan takes the name Son of God in his mouth. He knew that the Person before him is the Son of God, but he hates Him as such. Later this hatred is fully seen in those of whom the Lord said, "Ye are of the devil, as your father, and ye desire to do the lusts of your father" (John 8-.44). The Pharisees and elders of the people, who are seen in the Gospel of Matthew, knew Him as Son and Heir, and with this knowledge they rejected Him and delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. This was surely Satanic. Each of these temptations leads higher. In the first it seems but a small matter to turn a stone into bread. He knew this Lord had spoken in creation, and the heavens were blazing with millions of worlds, now but speak and change a stone into bread. The second demands more, but the third is the climax, when he asks Him, who is the Heir of all things, and in whose name every knee must bow, to fall down and do him homage. All the forces at Satan's command were unquestionably brought to bear in this last temptation. With one stroke of His hand He could produce before Him, who is the King of kings, all the kingdoms of the world.

Only once the tempter says, It is written. He knows what is written and he knows more of the written Word, which is forever settled in the heavens, than all the higher critical professors in the world. Higher criticism of the Word is but his child, his production. But whenever he quotes scripture it is always in the wrong way. It was so in the Garden of Eden and it is so here. He quotes from the ninety-first Psalm, but leaves out the words, "In all thy ways." Another interesting fact is that the tempter knew that this psalm was spoken prophetically of the second man, the Lord from heaven. What sneering remarks have been made on the Book of Psalms by the critics. What they deny is a denial of the truth, which the devil knows, believes and trembles. Our Lord speaks three times, It is written. What a testimony to the Word of God! He knows no other weapon than the written Word. In quoting the scriptures to the enemy He does it from but one book, that is the book of Deuteronomy. More than any other book in the Old Testament this one has been denied an ancient date. Higher criticism has declared and declares today, that Moses never wrote that book, but that it is the work of some priest living

centuries later. The late J.H. Brookes wrote very pointedly on this, saying, "Our Lord took refuge, so to speak, behind the written Word of God, quoting each time from the book of Deuteronomy, as if foreseeing the contempt with which this precious book is treated by modern higher criticism, and defending it against the attacks of the enemy. It is perilously near blasphemy to assert that He quoted from a book which this insolent criticism declares to be a forgery. For if He did not know the date of its composition He is not divine. And if He did not know but chose to humor a popular error, He connived a falsehood. Genesis tells us of election; Exodus of redemption; Leviticus of worship; Numbers of warfare in the wilderness; Deuteronomy of obedience; and hence the appropriateness of quoting from this book, which the Lord knew as divinely inspired. It is written, was enough for Him in the conflict with the devil, and It is written enough for us amid all the temptations we may encounter on our way to meet Him in the air."

We will leave it, then, as we suggest above, to the reader to make a careful comparison between the opening verses of the third chapter in Genesis and the temptations of our Lord. The Satan there is the same, that old serpent, the devil. He came to Eve with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and the same he brings to bear upon the Lord. He said to Eve, "Is it so that God said?" and to Christ he said, "If thou art the Son of God." It is doubt, unbelief with which he always advances. He misquoted the Word of God to Eve. God had said, "Thou shalt surely die," and he said, "Lest ye die." He does the same in the temptations of Christ. These hints will be sufficient to help in the comparison.

The first temptation is of course the principal one. Defeated in this one he is defeated in all. He is detected at once as the enemy and with the first victory the whole victory is won. It is the most subtle of all; it appears extremely plausible and one might think it hardly a temptation at all, while in the third it is the most blunt attempt; we might almost say a desperate, despairing attack. But what was the first temptation and what does it teach us? "If thou be Son of God, speak that these stones may become bread." That the Christ is the Son of God as He stands before the tempter was well known to the evil one. He knew it before and attempted to take the life of the child through Herod, and the demons cried out before Him in terror, "What have we to do with the Son of God -- hast Thou come here before the time to torment us?" But it can hardly be said that the temptation is to make Jesus doubt that He is the Son of God, because He is suffering hunger. The first temptation is one in which He is assailed as the Son of man. He was truly man, and this is seen here in the wilderness. He fasted and He hungered. Is there anything wrong in being hungry? Certainly not. It is in this that the subtlety of the tempter shows itself. The enemy comes with a natural want and appeals to our Lord's power to relieve Himself from that want. He is still the same evil, cunning deceiver, who begins with the most subtle temptations. Here one might ask, What wrong is there in satisfying hunger? The Lord could easily have done this, turning stones into bread. He, who spoke in the hour of creation, "Let there be light," "let the earth bring forth," He by whom and for whom are all things could have at once changed all the stones into bread. Later He fed thousands in a miraculous manner. He could have done so now for Himself, but if He had done it He would have been proven at once unfit to be our Saviour, who could die for us. He came to do the will of God. Thus it is written, "Sacrifice and offering Thou willedst not, Thou hast prepared me a body. ... Lo I come, O God, to do Thy will" (Hebrews 10:5-8). He had not esteemed it robbery to be on an equality with God; but had emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, taking His place in the likeness of men. Now the path for Him has begun. He is here as true Man, God manifested in the flesh, but the path is to do the will of God, that eternal will of salvation. The path leads downward in humiliation, suffering, it is to end in the cross, suffering death and tasting death for everything. Hunger is a part of His humanity. Was there or is there in the Word of God one word which could have told Him to change stones into bread? On the cross in deep agony He remembered but a little Scripture concerning Himself, which had to be fulfilled, and so it was by His own request so that even not one of the smallest prophecies about His sufferings might be unfulfilled (John 19:28). But had God given anywhere one word to Him, who had come to do His will that He was to end His suffering as man, His hunger by a miracle? Nowhere is to be found such a direction. If He had entered upon the suggestion of Satan He would have acted according to His own will and that would have been the will of the enemy. He would have taken His case in His own hands. All the elements of disobedience and distrust to God are in it involved. Now having failed in this one thing, having satisfied His hunger and saved Himself by using powers which were not according to the will of God, He would have been unfit to endure the cross and to despise the shame. When it came to Gethsemane He might have shrunk from drinking the cup, He might have called upon legions of angels at His command to deliver Him, and when the billows of wrath and judgment were coming He could not have stood them. Thus the changing of stones into bread would have shown that He who did it was not fit to die for us, for He had chosen His own will by the suggestion of Satan and not done the Father's will, which is that He should suffer.

This is clearly seen from His answer. He detects the old serpent at once. There is no parleying from His side as it was with Eve. He resists the devil at once. The perfect, sinless and spotless One has His "It is written" to hand and this Word,

bringing out the Father's will which He is here to do, ends this first temptation. "It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth" (Deut. 8:3). The meaning of the word He uses here is that man lives truly not by bread alone, but by the Word of God, that is, in obedience to this Word. And there is an application for us as believers. One has said on this, (Numerical Bible, New Testament, page 62), "We realize the wondrous privilege that is ours, the solemn responsibility that lies upon us. For we are sanctified into the obedience of Christ, and He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 1:2, 2:21). This principle of His life must then be the principle of our lives. If with Him the governing motive was to do the will of God, how simple is it that for us also the will of God must be our motive for action. By every word that goes out of the mouth of God doth man live. What a sustenance of the true life within us to be thus, day by day, receiving the messages of His will guided by that wondrous voice, learning more continually the tenderness of His love for us: "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear as the learner" (Isaiah 1:4). This is the utterance of the Lord Himself. How blessed to be able to make it our own, and to have the fulfillment of those words: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eyes."

For the next test the tempter took the Lord to the Holy City and sets Him upon the edge (the pinnacle) of the temple, and said to Him, "If Thou be Son of God cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give charge to His angels concerning Thee, and on their hands they shall bear Thee, lest in any wise Thou strike Thy foot against a stone."

The Psalm which Satan quotes (Psalm 91.) is a Messianic Psalm. He takes Him to the Holy City, Jerusalem, and upon the pinnacle of the temple, because the second temptation is the temptation of Him as the Messiah. Standing upon that high place the people below must have seen Him and recognized Him; Satan was hid from their view. What a test and proof of His Messiahship if slowly He had descended, the laws of gravitation completely set aside, landing unharmed on His feet before the astonished multitude. Would they not at once accept Him? Why should He be rejected if by doing this He might become in the shortest order their leader, their King and redeemer from the yoke of the Roman oppressor? Now Satan defeated had heard the Word upon which the Lord stood. He was defeated by the Word. He comes now with the Word himself, quoting scripture and that from a Psalm which speaks of the Messiah, the second man. However, he misquotes the Word and leaves out the seven words, "and keep Thee in all Thy ways." It is as subtle as the first temptation. Here he presents the Word and tries to make our Lord act in obedience to the Word by testing God's Word and by doing so to prove that He is the Messiah and the Son of God at the same time. But why did he leave out those seven words? Because the ways in which He, the Messiah, will be kept are the ways of God. "Thy ways" are indeed His ways. It was not the way of faith in impatience to test the truth of the Word and casting Himself down and to prove thereby that He is Messiah and Son of God. It was impossible that He could have even given this temptation a moment's thought. The answer is at once ready as soon as the tempter has uttered his lie. Jesus said, "It is again written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It would have been testing, proving God and as such again distrust and disobedience. We see how closely the two temptations are connected. It is tempting Him to choose His own will and not the Will of God, to act in His own behalf and to escape the suffering before Him.

It is very suggestive that Satan should demand of Him to cast Himself down from the edge of the temple, and to prove by this act His Messianity and Divinity as well. Our Lord is gone into the presence of the Father with a glorified body of flesh and bones. In a future day He who ascended upon high, will descend. The heavens will be covered with His glory, and He who is the leader and completer of faith, the great Exemplar of faith, in whom patience had its complete, perfect work, will come again in glory and majesty, seen by all eyes, the Messiah-King of Israel, the Son and Heir. Then at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father's glory. The adorable One knew the Father's will; He knew the suffering and the patience, the only road that leads to glory. He begun to go the path, and His face is set like a flint. He could not fail in what He had come to do. Again the old serpent is conquered.

Let us, like our Lord, be patient and go the way which is for us now in humiliation, never murmuring or tempting God. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into various temptations (trials), knowing that the proving of your faith works patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).

And now they stand upon a high mountain. What a picture is presented to our view! The liar and murderer from the beginning, and alongside of him stands He who is Jehovah, the eternal Word made flesh. What must have been His outward appearance with the fasting of forty days, with perhaps the tattered robes which hung upon His body rent by the thorns of the wilderness. The tempter's eyes must have beheld such a weak and frail Person -- a man of sorrows, One

who knew not where to lay His head. But the scene changes. The serpent hisses, and by his immense power still at his command the darkness of the night and the gloominess of the mountain top are dispersed. Marvelous visions of beauty! Right here is Egypt with its pyramids and wonderful buildings, treasures of art and precious things. It disappears, and in its place ancient Greece, Athens and Corinth come up in all their splendor. Once more the scene shifts, and now Rome, the mistress of the world, that great city, is revealed. Satan shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory. Yes, all the kingdoms of the world, and they are in the tempter's grasp still, are passing by, one startling vision after the other. And when the glory has passed, or perhaps while still in view, driven to the very last, Satan speaks, but now no longer mentioning the Lord as Son of God, but treating Him as mere man. He says to Him, "All these things will I give Thee if falling down Thou wilt do me homage." The very words speak of despair. All things are His -- all the kingdoms of the world and their glory shall yet be the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the prince of this world, whose eternal abode with all his demons is the lake of fire, could dare and stand by Him who is the King, the second Man, and offer all the world to Him. Perhaps the very appearance of our Lord may have brought the tempter to this despondent act. But when all the kingdoms of the world and their glory pass along and the eyes of Jesus rest upon them, what thoughts must have been His? What did He behold in all the grand and glorious scenes? Surely we can venture to say that He must have thought of this poor, benighted world under sin, death and judgment, in the grasp of this dark and dreadful being standing there at His side. And He had come to be the Lamb of God and to take away the sin of the World. He had come to annul him, who has the might of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14). That He is the future heir of all things Satan must have felt, and now he offers Him all at once to turn over all the kingdoms of the world and their glory to Him if He will but do him homage -- again if He but turn aside from the will of God. It is now clear that Satan feared Him going that path of faith as the second man -- going it to the very end where He would crush the serpent's head. Through death, through His death on the cross, the might of death in the devil's hand, and eventually the control over this world, were to be wrested from Satan's hands. All three temptations bring this out, "The tempter would keep Him back from doing the will of God." But our Lord has gone that way. He was obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross. God has exalted Him, the eternal victor, by whom we are forever separated from sin and death. He has put all things in subjection under His feet; He has left nothing unsubject to Him. He has been welcomed in heaven by the Father and taken His place at His right hand, waiting till the time comes when heaven and earth shall be shaken, when He, the First-born, is brought into the habitable world, and with Him in glory the many sons, and when at last the glorious shout shall ascend, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and forever."

With threatening, defying words the Lord might have hurled the tempter down the mountainside, but it is a majestic "Get thee away, Satan" (He calls him now by name), "for it is written, Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve." The devil leaves Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. What a ministry that must have been!

Satan could not conquer Him. He has met Him whom he could not harm, and the temptations were the tests and show that our Lord is He, the only One who is able to do the work He came to do. But the tempter has gone on with the same temptations, and how astonishingly he has succeeded in that monstrosity which calls itself Christendom! He has brought about a perfect blindness. Christendom attempts to rule, to control the world, to be on the throne; world-conquest, influence and power are its watchwords. Christendom has bowed the knee before Satan. It would not go the way the Lord went, doing the will of God, in obedience, patience and suffering, and then the glory. Hence Christendom has become the enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The remainder of the fourth chapter describes the entrance of our Lord upon His public ministry. The ministry which the Holy Spirit describes in Matthew is the Galilean. The events which show Him and make Him known as the true Messiah, the Jehovah-Jesus, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, are vividly described. As Jehovah in the earth, He does miracles, announces the kingdom of heaven to be at hand, but soon is in want, despised and rejected by the leaders of the nation and by the nation itself. The events of His Judean ministry in Jerusalem are passed over in Matthew. The fourth Gospel describes these events in detail, in which He is manifested as the only-begotten of the Father. There has been and is still a great deal of wrestling, so to speak, with these events as they are recorded in the different Gospels, to arrange them in a perfect chronological order, or, as it is said, to harmonize the Gospel records. The infidels of all ages have made the most of it to prove contradictions, and the rationalistic preachers and professors in the camp of Christendom have generally founded their accusations of numerous contradictions in the New Testament upon these apparent discrepancies, which they think exist in the different statements concerning the public ministry of our Lord. The Holy Spirit could have written a perfect account of the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ and arranged a biography of Him accounting for every

detail, but He has not done this. To charge the writers of the Gospel with ignorance of certain facts is charging the Holy Spirit with it. In each Gospel the Holy Spirit makes prominent the events which are calculated to impress the specific teachings of the respective Gospels, and He has always arranged the events in such an order to suit Himself. Every Gospel is therefore to be studied and read separately from the others. They are in their contents not the mechanical reporting of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but the spiritual unfolding of the blessed person and work of our Lord and Saviour as King of the Jews, servant in obedience, Son of man and the Only-Begotten of the Father. In Matthew we have before us the King and His rejection; therefore in the matter of His public ministry all is brought together by the Holy Spirit to show Him as King and to bring out as in no other Gospel that He is rejected of men.

We divide the account of the beginning of His public ministry, as given in the fourth chapter, into three parts. The first from the 12th to the 17th verse. Our Lord was in Jerusalem . The report reaches Him there that the forerunner, John, was delivered up, cast into prison and his ministry is ended. This foretold His rejection, and on account of the imprisonment of John, He departed into Galilee . Here we see Him first in His own city, in Nazareth . But we have here only the bare mention that He was in Nazareth and that He left Nazareth to dwell in Capernaum (verse 12). What happened in Nazareth we have recorded in the Gospel of Luke. In the fourth chapter of that Gospel we read that our Lord, after the temptations, returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee . The whole surrounding country was stirred up on account of Him, and He entered their synagogues, being glorified of all. In the synagogue of Nazareth the scroll of Isaiah was handed to Him, from which He read the opening verse of the 61st chapter, stopping in the middle of a sentence, and began to say to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears." And there in the city where He was brought up they said, "Is not this the son of Joseph?" (In a little pamphlet, "The Messiah and His People," we have described the event in Nazareth in connection with the chapter from Isaiah.) But the starting point of the Galilean ministry and its career is not Nazareth , but the place called Capernaum , that is, "village of comfort," and there He did some of His mighty works. But leaving Nazareth and dwelling in Capernaum was done by Him in the literal fulfillment of a prophecy, standing in a very significant part of Isaiah. We find the words here quoted in the ninth chapter of Isaiah. It is in the midst of prophecies which are all Messianic that we read in the beginning of the 9th chapter that the great light (the Messiah) was to be seen in the Galilee of the nations. The most oppressed, the darkest and the most corrupt province was to receive the light first. Here we see this word fulfilled. We notice a twofold description of Galilee, namely, as the land of Zebulon and Nephtali and as the Galilee of the nations. Read Genesis 49:13, "Zebulon shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and he shall be for an haven of ships and his border shall be upon Zidon." Jacob's prophecy outlines the history of the sons of Jacob, that is, the whole nation, and Zebulon signifies the time of their rejection, when they become merchantmen. Here in Matthew we see Zebulon dwelling by the sea. So that we have the fulfillment of two prophecies before us -- the prophecy in the forty-ninth chapter in Genesis and the one in Isaiah. The same is true of Nephtali. This means struggler. "Nephtali is a hind let loose" (Gen. 49:21). In Jacob's prophecy Nephtali stands for the coming struggling and victorious Jewish remnant. Here, then, in the land of Zebulon and Nephtali the great light shines first. Grace comes down to the most miserable, the struggling ones. But here we see likewise something which has a connection with His second coming. The great light will shine once more. The glory of the Lord will cover the heavens, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings, and when this great event comes, the light will shine indeed upon a remnant of Israel sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

The term Galilee of the nations has another significance. The province was called by this name, because the most ignorant class of Jews lived there and they had become mixed up with the Gentiles, who were very numerous in that borderland. The aristocratic classes of Judea, the learned in the law, the refined and ecclesiastical leaders, yes, all the different sects in Jerusalem , despised Galilee . An inhabitant of Galilee was looked upon as an Am-Hoaretz (an ignorant countryman). What good thing can come from Nazareth ? -- But here, where the people had sunk the lowest, the Lord appears first. That this is again an indication that the Gentiles, the outcasts and despised, were to come first, as we saw in the second chapter, need hardly be mentioned.

From the lips of the King Himself comes now the proclamation, "Repent, for the Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh" (verse 17). He announces that the Kingdom has drawn nigh in that He, the King, is standing in their midst to establish that Kingdom. He never said nor taught of a Kingdom within them. All spiritualizing on these lines of a Kingdom within, which our Lord is made to teach here in Matthew, is wrong. It is the Kingdom John had announced which He now preaches. He prolongs the message of the forerunner for a short time and soon His lips were closed, too. We preach not the Gospel of the Kingdom, but the Glad Tidings of Grace. A day is coming when heralds will announce once more the Kingdom to be at hand, and when it will come in the person of the Son of Man coming from heaven with angels of His power in flaming fire (2 Thess. 1).

The second part of the portion here before us extends from verses 18-22. It describes the call of four disciples, Peter and Andrew and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John. They were not from the class of wise men, learned in the written and oral law, but they were fishers. He calls them away from their nets to be fishers of men. This illustrates what the Holy Spirit later declared through the Apostle of the Gentiles: "For consider your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that He may put to shame the strong things, so that no flesh should boast before God" (1 Cor. 1:26). To be a fisher of men, to preach the Gospel, does not demand a classical education, nor the ordination parchments of man. It is the Lord who calls to service. It is not the first acquaintance these four men had with the Lord. They knew Him before. Here it is the definite call which comes to them to be fishers of men. If we want to learn how these men came to the Lord Jesus Christ we must read the first chapter in the Gospel of John. The events there transpired before the Lord departed into Galilee. We see in the first of John that the forerunner was still witnessing; he was not yet in prison. The "Follow Me" here does not mean, as often erroneously put, the call of the Gospel. Gospel preaching never asks to follow the Lord, but to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." It is the "Follow Me" for service. And how simple and refreshing the whole scene is! Their obedience is prompt. There is no excuse and no delay, for the King's business requires haste. They had come to Him, to Whom John had pointed as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and trusted Him for salvation, eternal life, and now they put themselves, their time, their all completely into His hands. The first call in John came to them, as the call from Him as Saviour, and here it is the call of Him as Lord, and they were to be His servants. "And they, having left their trawl nets, immediately followed Him" (verse 20). How many questions might have been asked by them? "What about our nets?" "What about our support?" "What about food and raiment?" "And here is our old father. Does not our law say, Honor thy father and thy mother? Is it right to leave our father to toil alone by the sea?" -- They left it all immediately and trusted Him for all. And so the true servant of the Lord is obedient to His call and looks to Him, who has called him to service and who has promised from the glory through His Spirit to supply all need. How sad we are made when we look away from this refreshing picture to the modern evils of Christendom. Surely a salaried Gospel ministry is unscriptural. And then to think of all the evil, dishonor to the Lord and reproach upon His Name which is sometimes associated with it.

In the third section we see our Lord making the whole round of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every bodily weakness among the people. The work done was threefold -- teaching, which was exclusively done in their synagogues, and that was expounding the scriptures, the law and the prophets. The meeting in the synagogue in Nazareth referred to above was repeated in many other synagogues. Preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom, which may have been done mostly to the large crowds of people who flocked around Him in public places, in the streets and at the side of the mountains. Closely connected with the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom was the healing of every disease not spiritual, but every bodily disease and weakness. The healing of disease is always connected with the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The healings were signs that the King is the Jehovah and that the Kingdom had drawn nigh. These signs of healing every disease are the powers of the world to come. Later in our exegesis of the eighth chapter we hope to consider the question of healing more fully in all its far-reaching importance. Here we point out simply the fact, that it is not the Gospel of Grace which is preached, but that of the Kingdom. The Gospel of Grace needs no sign outwardly by healing of disease to demonstrate that it is God-given. Nowhere in the Epistles have we the promise that Gospel preaching is to be connected with healing of every bodily weakness and disease. However, it is very significant that the question of healing of every disease by supernatural power is made so prominent in our days. It is but an indication of the nearness of the coming dispensation, when the earth shall be delivered with its groaning creation.

His fame then went forth into the whole of Syria. And now they flock to Him. What a multitude it must have been! Satan had his mighty power resting upon that land. He knew that Christ had come to make an end of his power, hence he troubled his poor slaves with terrible diseases and by his demons took possession of his victims. There were various pains and diseases, those possessed by demons, and lunatics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Once more the prince of this world will attempt to have the world in his control. An evil day is coming for this world. Even now there is an increase of crimes and forms of insanity which indicate demoniacal possession. China and other countries are full of it. In our own land there are unquestionably those who have familiar spirits, known under the name of spiritualistic mediums. But He will come again. He comes when Satan with his demons are in the earth, and in his great but short wrath, torments the inhabitants of the earth during the tribulation. Christ's coming means an end of that awful enemy. Then the Sun of Righteousness will bring healing, and what we see at the end of the fourth of Matthew is but a faint outline of what will be when the Kingdom will have come in the person of the returning King. May that day be hastened!

CHAPTER V

In the closing of the last chapter we saw our Lord Jesus Christ surrounded by a great multitude of people, which followed Him and who were attracted by the King's presence, before whom the various diseases had to flee. If we turn to the eighth chapter we find the continuation of these scenes we had in the last half of the fourth chapter. Between these two chapters are three very important ones, which are as such found only in this Gospel. The contents of the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters are in the form of a continued discourse of our Lord, commonly called "the sermon on the mount," an expression which the reader knows is nowhere found in the Gospels. If we look through Mark, Luke and John we do not find any such report there of a lengthy discourse; indeed, except a number of fragments in the Gospel of Luke, we find nothing whatever in them about these sayings. When we turn to the Gospel of Luke, we find that the portions of this discourse reported there are in an entirely different setting. We point to that which is generally called "the Lord's prayer." In Luke we read (chapter 11) that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father, etc. Now in Matthew there is no such incident, but the disciples hear it in a continual flow of speech. We also call attention to the fact that the call of Matthew is reported in the ninth chapter, the call of the twelve disciples in the tenth, here his discourse is placed before these historical events. The Holy Spirit, to carry through the wonderful scope of the first Gospel, has put the words of our Lord together into one continued address to His disciples, in the very midst of the most positive evidences that the King has come and Jehovah is in the midst of His people. When the King is manifest He utters His proclamation. Such is the discourse before us here in Matthew, the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ as King. And if the King proclaims, makes known His proclamation, it must be concerning the Kingdom which He came to bring, preached and offered to the people. Let this, then, be the starting-point of our analysis of this discourse. The so-called sermon on the mount is a proclamation concerning the Kingdom, the magna charta of the Kingdom of heavens.

In the next place let us consider three false applications which are being made of the discourse of our Lord before us.

1. The application to the unsaved, unbelieving mass of Christendom and others, as if in the sermon on the mount the way to righteousness is revealed and human nature's development (as they say) were here shown, for which every man should strive. This, of course, is the grossest error possible. The discourse speaks of the characteristics of persons who are saved, who have redemption. There is nowhere found in it the word redemption, nor is salvation mentioned and pointed out; in other words, the way a sinner is saved is not revealed here, but, as the greater part of the discourse was addressed exclusively to disciples, the Lord is speaking about such who are saved and not sinners. Yet how little this is understood.

In our days more than ever before we notice an astonishing misuse of the sermon on the mount. The saddest of all is that many preachers of various evangelical denominations fall back upon it as the most important document of Christendom; for them it seems to become more and more the Gospel, and the consequences are that we hear in our times more ethical preaching, more about becoming better, doing good, improving your better self, etc., than ever before. It would require much time and a great deal of space to show up all the errors which are springing from this application. It is the Gospel of works and of evolution. And as this is done there is less preaching of the utter corruption of man, his lost condition and utter helplessness to be righteous (that which the discourse makes very clear), and the salvation of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, the absolute necessity of being born again, the reception of eternal life, the new nature. As the teachings of the Epistle to the Romans have been and are being abandoned in Christendom, the false application of the discourse here in Matthew has been taken up. There is therefore a continual increase of teaching about lifting man out of his lost place into a better sphere by means of ethical teachings taken from the sermon on the mount. This is done also under the garb of a social Christianity, union of worshippers (?), the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Not long ago we were told of a reformed rabbi who read in his synagogue on Saturday portions of the sermon on the mount and preached on it to his hearers. This was hailed as a favorable sign of the progress made toward the lifting up of humanity. Surely, if evangelical preachers (in creed at least) continue to progress in this awful direction by substituting ethical teachings for salvation by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and declare, as not a few have done, "the sermon on the mount is a large enough Bible for us," a general apostasy from the faith will soon be reached. There is a lifting up of the sinner from his miserable place into sonship and making him the heir of God, but that is never by the sermon on the mount, by striving to obtain the heavenly righteousness revealed here.

2. There are others who give the discourse in Matthew 5-7 an exclusively Christian application.

This is the second false application. We cannot put into the discourse exclusively church teachings and say that all found here is to be applied to the church, and that it is the guide for the church, as some have said. If the Lord had had the church in her heavenly calling and character in mind, the place given to the discourse would be all wrong. The Lord mentions the church the first time in the sixteenth chapter, and if following the sixteenth chapter He had spoken these words we might say that we should find in it the church. He said something to His disciples after He had declared that He would build His church, which applies to the church. A good deal in the sermon on the mount appears mostly in connection with the earth. The meek are to inherit the earth. The church, however, is heavenly. Not here, but in the Epistles, written after the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and after the Holy Spirit had come down from heaven, do we find all about the church. The magna charta of the church is in the Epistles of Paul, to whom the full revelation of the church was given. Out of this misconception has sprung a good deal of error. People attempt to make the sermon on the mount the standard of their lives; they apply it to themselves in the least details and get into legal bondage. The flesh given so much to legality likes this only too well. Here the greatest mischief comes in, that believers do not see clearly what grace has done, and that their heavenly walk does not spring from a contemplation of a series of descriptions of the character and actions of regenerated persons, but by the fact that we look upon ourselves as lifted into the highest heaven once and for all in the person of our perfect High Priest. A heavenly walk is the outcome of a heavenly contemplation. But this not being seen, professing Christendom, amongst it many true believers, stumble around in the sermon on the mount. In this way it has come about that the "Our Father" (the name next to "Lord's prayer" given to the prayer, our Lord taught His disciples.) has become the ritualistic prayer of Christendom, repeated at numerous occasions.

3. The last false interpretation is that one, which makes the sermon on the mount exclusively Jewish.

There are not a few who refuse to consider the three chapters in Matthew as having any reference to Christian believers at all and as if there is no application to be made in this direction and the believer could afford to pass them by entirely and not be concerned about it. This is the other extreme and equally wrong.

In our exegesis of the three chapters, (which of necessity we have to condense considerably) we shall always in every part look upon the sermon on the mount as the proclamation of the King concerning the Kingdom. That Kingdom is not the church, nor is the state of the earth in righteousness, governed and possessed by the meek, brought about by the agency of the church. It is the millennial earth and the Kingdom to come, in which Jerusalem will be the city of a great King. We read in the Old Testament that when the Kingdom comes, for which these Jewish disciples of our Lord were taught to pray, the law will go forth out of Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. While we have in the Old Testament the outward manifestations of the Kingdom of the heavens as it will be set up in the earth in a future day, we have here the inner manifestation, the principles of it. Yet this never excludes application to us who are His heavenly people, members of His body, who will share the heavenly throne in the heavenly Jerusalem with Him. Israel's calling is earthly; theirs is an earthly kingdom, ours is altogether heavenly. "In the sermon on the mount we have, then, the principles of the Kingdom of heaven, with very plain references to the millennial earth *** Yet let it not be thought that this takes from us the application to ourselves which Christians seek in it. The fuller revelation only completes the partial one; the higher blessing but transcends the lower. Through all dispensations God is the same God, and we are 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Of many things we can only argue, indeed a more perfect (or at least a fuller application) to ourselves than to them. To take from Israel what is hers is only to diminish her and not enrich ourselves. Nay, what has been called in this way the spiritualizing of the promises has led most surely and emphatically to the carnalizing of the church." (F.W. Grant on Matthew, page 70.)

The Kingdom has, then, a heavenly and an earthly side. Both are seen in the discourse, but the earthly is predominant. In itself the discourse is most perfect. The sevenfold division is well known. We mention them here, and will take up each for a very brief consideration.

1. The characteristics of the Heirs of the Kingdom (chapter 5:1-16).
2. The Law goes forth from Zion. It is confirmed and expounded by the King (verses 17-48).
3. The better righteousness (chapter 6:1-18).
4. Kept in the world. Single-eyed, trusting in God (verses 19-34).

5. The judgment of righteousness (chapter 7:1-14).
6. Warning against false prophets (verses 15-20).
7. Warning against false professors (21-29).

Most of these sections may again be divided into seven parts. The number seven is the perfect number, and as He is the divine King, the perfect King, all that proceeds out of His mouth is perfection. We have seven expansions of the law, seven parts of the better righteousness, and seven petitions in the prayer our Lord taught His disciples.

The first section in the fifth chapter from the first verse to the sixteenth is before us. Seeing the crowds He went up into the mountain, and having sat down, His disciples came to Him; having opened His mouth He taught them. Moses the mediator of the old covenant went up into the mountain where he received the law; but here is a greater one than Moses, the Mediator of a better covenant and the King at the same time. He begins with blessings, the blessings of grace.

The blessings in themselves are most wonderful in their scope and inexhaustible in their meaning. We can but call the attention to a few thoughts in connection with them.

We notice seven beatitudes which show forth the character of those who are the heirs of the kingdom. These are:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Blessed they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed the merciful, for they shall find mercy.

Blessed the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Blessed the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

These seven blessings must be divided into two parts. The division is into four and three. Four is the earthly number and three the heavenly. In the first four we see the characteristics of the heirs of the kingdom in their position in the earth, waiting for the kingdom of the heavens and the inheritance of the earth, and in the last three the inner characteristics as the heirs of the kingdom have them by having become the partakers of the divine nature. Let us remind ourselves once more that the Lord does not speak to unsaved persons, but to His disciples. The blessings do not speak of what a person should be, or strive to be, but what they are. All here is contrary to the natural man, everything is strange to his disposition. It is only the Grace of God in Christ Jesus which can produce this. The gift of God is eternal life in our Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself is the true God and the eternal life, which has been manifested and which is communicated to every one who believes and thus hath the Son. Believing in Him we receive life and are partakers of the divine nature. Here we have the description of one who is in possession of this new nature and as it manifests itself. (The first Epistle of John shows the same characteristics). One has said very pointedly: "At the beginning of His career, Christ draws the picture of the person who is to be the result of His work. This is the ideal man whom the Saviour is to make actual by saving him from sin." (Western on Matthew) How great then the blindness of those teachers in Christendom who make the sermon on the mount, the beatitudes, the Gospel, and who attempt to reform the world by it.

In the first place let us consider that in the seven blessings we have the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the fullest expression of all. He is the highest illustration of these characteristics. It is a most blessed study to see how the Word speaks of Him as the one who was poor and needy, who became poor for our sake. He took that place for us. He could say,

"I am poor and sorrowful" (Ps. 69:29). and, "Bow down thine ear, O Jehovah, for I am poor and needy" (Ps. 86:1), and again, "For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me" (Ps. 109:22). And He who humbled Himself receives the kingdom. He was while on earth the man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. He Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus and over Jerusalem, and in that night of deepest gloom He offered both supplications and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him out of death with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7). He was the great mourner and He was comforted; heard because of His piety and raised from the dead. We know Him as the One who was meek and lowly in heart. He did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street (Isaiah 41:2). And now the earth is surely the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein (Ps. 24). Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under His feet (Ps. 8). As the hungering and thirsting One, He was here, too, hating iniquity and loving righteousness, His meat and drink to do the will of Him who sent Him. And surely He sees and shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Mercy and Purity and Peace were embodied in Him.

Every one then who is born of God has by grace these characteristics. Poor in spirit is the very first characteristic. The unsaved sinner knows nothing of it. It is altogether the work of the Holy Spirit. It means to take the right place before God, which is in the dust in absolute helplessness. It is the continued attitude of a saved person in the earth, poverty in spirit and entire dependence upon the Lord. The mourning which comes next should not be made to mean grieving on account of personal sin. It is rather over the results of sin, the present conditions of things in the earth. Thus our Lord grieved and mourned. The comfort is that coming redemption from the presence of sin and entrance into that heavenly inheritance which belongs to us in Christ Jesus. But having taken the true place before God, and knowing the evil and mourning on account of it, what is to be our path on the earth? Blessed are the meek! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness! This is the way of the heirs of the kingdom, waiting for the manifestation of it.

When we come to the next three blessings, we find the divine origin of the children of God brought out. It would be very helpful to compare these last three beatitudes with the first Epistle of John. God is righteous, God is light and God is love. Everyone who is born of God is righteous, he is in the light and he loves. The love of God which comes down from heaven is perfected in Him. Merciful would stand for Righteousness, purity in heart for Light and peacemaker for Love. These are then called the sons of God and shall see God.

But while all this is a true application or rather a faint outline of that which is so richly told out here, we must not forget that there is also a direct application to the believing remnant of Israel. This remnant of Israel will pass through the great tribulation through which the Church (which of course can never be put into the first part of Matthew) will never pass. They will then be waiting in the midst of great tribulations, persecutions and sufferings for the kingdom to come. When the kingdom at last comes, in the return of the king, the Son of man, they will enter in. Let us look at the first four beatitudes from this standpoint. This people will be poor in spirit. The remnant is described in Zephaniah 3:12-13, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of Jehovah. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth, for they shall feed and lie down and none shall make them afraid." In Isaiah 66:2: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at my Word." This elect remnant will mourn in the earth in the evil day. Here is a prophetic description of the mourning of this remnant: "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desireth the first ripe fig. The godly man is perished out of the earth and there is none upright among men; they all lie in wait for blood, they hunt every man his brother with a net. Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently. ... The son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man's enemies are the men of his own house. (compare with Matthew 24:10 and 10:21-23). But as for me, I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (Micah 7:1-7). They shall then be comforted. Their comfort, however, will not be in the heavenlies, but they shall be comforted in Jerusalem, for He shall come and deliver them from all their enemies and restore the kingdom to Israel. They will be as the meek of the earth and inherit the earth when the king comes. Inheriting the earth is Israel's promise; ours is to rule and reign with Him in the heavenlies over the earth. The thirty-seventh Psalm forms a perfect commentary to this beatitude "Blessed are the meek." There we find what meekness includes, both in ourselves as believers and the future believing remnant. "Fret not thyself" -- "Neither be thou envious" -- "Trust in the Lord" -- "Delight thyself in the Lord" -- "Commit thy way unto the Lord" -- "Rest in the Lord." The meek waiting for the Lord are thus described. But it is of the believing remnant we read in that Psalm. Some day it shall be as it is written there: "Evildoers shall be cut off. But those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the land. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not

be, but the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37:9-11). They will also be hungering and thirsting for righteousness and shall be filled in the day of His manifestation.

The seven beatitudes are followed by two others which describe the heirs of the kingdom as sufferers and persecuted in the earth. Therefore, because we are children of God, the world knoweth us not, for it knew Him not. Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you. Our Lord here, too, is the great exemplar. "For to this have ye been called, for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:21). The first blessing is for the persecuted for righteousness' sake, but in the second we read, "Blessed are ye when they reproach and persecute you, and say every wicked thing against you, lying, for my sake. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens, for thus have they persecuted the prophets who were before you." This second beatitude stands in connection with the last three blessings. In the first the Lord says "They" and that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," but in the second He says, "Ye." In the first it is the kingdom of heaven, in the second it is the great reward in heaven. The latter is more than the earthly glory of that coming kingdom. This finds unquestionably its fulfillment during that time of Jacob's trouble. There will be the suffering for righteousness' sake during the tribulation as never before and many will be slain of these faithful Jewish witnesses for His sake. The latter will receive great reward (read Rev. 20:4). It will be the comfort for His earthly people in the coming day of trouble. The suffering of the church, outside of the camp bearing His reproach is revealed in the Epistles.

From the 13th-16th verses we hear what the heirs of the kingdom are in the earth. "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become insipid, wherewith shall it be salted? It is no longer fit for anything but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot by men."

This is in reference to the first beatitudes. Salt preserves from corruption. Thus is the heir of the kingdom to be in the midst of all that which is corruption. But what when the salt becomes insipid? It becomes absolutely worthless and is trodden under foot. It was so with Jerusalem, it has become worthless; it has been trodden down by the Gentiles and Christendom will be that, nay is, in the age of Laodicea. Ye are the Light of the world. This is in reference to the last three beatitudes. This is followed by the exhortation: "Let your light thus shine before men so that they may see your upright works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens." But what light is it which is to shine? Surely this can mean only the reflection of Him who is the Light. "He does not say let your good works shine, but let your light shine; that is, let Christ shine in your life; not that ye may see your good works, but that men see them; not to your glory, but to the glory of your Father."

Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts, for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). Salt and Light, to preserve and to shine -- this is then our responsibility and our testimony we have. But the salt, the preserving, hindering power will at last be taken away from the earth, and the light will shine no longer. What will be left, but unspeakable corruption and the gross darkness which will cover the earth?

The second section of the great proclamation of the King contains the confirmation of the law and its expansion. We can but give a very brief outline and exposition and will be obliged to guard against digressions, which might be made at almost every verse.

We now see our Lord speaking as the one who is greater than Moses (Hebrews 3:12). Sitting upon the mount, He speaks with greater authority than Moses or any one before Him, because He has greater authority. He who speaks concerning the law and the prophets, confirming and expanding, is the one who gave it to Moses, whose fingers wrote upon the tables of stone, whose Spirit revealed the visions to the prophets and testified in them and through them beforehand, concerning the suffering and the glory that should follow. The question which comes to the Jewish mind after reading the opening of the discourse, the description of the characteristics of the heirs of the kingdom is the question concerning the law and the prophets; that is, the whole Old Testament. Did He then come to set them aside? Did He come to make the law and the prophets void? He states at once that He came not to make void the law and the prophets, but to fulfill, and adds, "For verily I say unto you until the heaven and earth pass away, one iota or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law until all come to pass."

A good deal of wrong teaching has been taken from these words; the most erroneous is the one which puts a Christian

believer still under the law and teaches from this passage that inasmuch as Christ came not to make void the law so, every believer is obliged to fulfill the law. This is a favored argument with Seventh Day people and others. It springs from forgetting the fact that here we have no teaching concerning the Church or the individual believer as it was made known subsequently in the Epistles. The Epistles make very clear the relation to the law which the true believer sustains, who has eternal life and is in Christ. "So that, my brethren, we also have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ, to be another who has been raised up from among the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4). We are dead to the law, yet the law in itself is not dead; it is as much alive as ever, and holy, just and good. However, the new nature which we have is the perfect law of liberty; it is something altogether new; yet the old law still exists and has its power, but never for him who is a new creation in Christ Jesus. "The law has been our tutor up to Christ, that we might be justified on the principle of faith, but faith having come we are no longer under a tutor, for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:24, 25). The law could make nothing perfect, but Christ came, and perfection is in Him and through Him. What is the meaning of "to fulfill"? It means to give the fullness, to make full, to fill out the law and the prophets. The wrong interpretation comes generally from having only the ten Commandments in view, but there is more than that and more than the Lord's full obedience to the law and fulfilling Himself all that which the law and the prophets had spoken concerning Him. In the true sense of the word the meaning is, that He came to make good the whole scope of the law and prophets. He is come to reveal the completeness of that which the law and the prophets had but pointed out. All that which the law and the prophets teach and predict, the fullness, is of Him and will be fulfilled in Him who came and who will come again. The eighteenth verse makes this clear. Even the smallest letter, the Hebrew "jod," shall come to pass; not even the least letter can be set aside, but all will be accomplished. Here we have one of the strongest words for the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. Even the "jod" is of Him, and "until the heavens and the earth pass away one iota or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all come to pass." All then is divine, infallible and will come to pass. What a solemn declaration of the great King this is! This is in full harmony with the entire testimony of the Word. "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89). "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name" (Psalm 130:2). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them is great reward" (Psalm 19). In the 119th Psalm the perfection and excellency of the Word is told out in each of the 176 verses, with the exception of two, and the declaration is made, "Thy Word is true from the beginning." What an awful sin, what a heinous thing, the rejection of the inspiration of the Word of God is!

In the nineteenth and twentieth verses the King speaks of the doing and teaching of the commandments. Here we are, of course, altogether on Jewish ground. Then there is to be a surpassing righteousness, or better righteousness for the one who is to enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Their righteousness was their own and insufficient for the entering into the kingdom of the heavens. But does our Lord here teach that a person is by a better righteousness of his own to enter into the kingdom of the heavens and that he is by his own efforts to produce this righteousness? Certainly not. Still the false application, the ethical teachings in Christendom substituting now so universally the preaching of the glad tidings of our salvation, teaches that man is to lift himself up into heaven by his own righteousness. Our Lord speaks not to sinners here, but to such who are saved, and the saved sinner has a better righteousness than the scribes and the Pharisees, who were only natural men. In possession of his righteousness we do rejoice. "But now without the law the righteousness of God is manifested, borne witness to by the law and the prophets; righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a mercy seat through faith in His blood for the showing forth of His righteousness; in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, so that He should be just and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus" (Romans 3:21-26). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son in the likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:3, 4). And the outflow of the righteousness of God we are in Him, is His righteousness. But these words stand also in relation to Israel, converted at last and entering into the kingdom (Ezek. 36:25, etc).

And now after He had confirmed the law and made known its immutability, He begins to teach that surpassing righteousness which He demands. He teaches the law in its fullest and deepest spiritual meaning. Here we see all the majesty of the King and the lawgiver. Six times He says "I say unto you." It is divine "I" of Jehovah, who speaks. And as

He speaks here and sends forth the expansions of the law, so will He speak again. Out of Zion shall go forth the law and the Word of the law from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). And when that time comes, then surely righteousness and peace will kiss each other, and Israel, new-born, having the laws in their inmost parts and written in their hearts and the Spirit upon them, will walk in His statutes, and nations will be converted.

Not alone does He show in these expansions of the law, in declaring the true righteousness, His divine authority, but He uncovers the human heart and shows its deep corruption and the hopelessness that the natural man could ever attain to such a righteousness. It condemns every human being. As mentioned before, thousands of unsaved persons, Jews and Gentiles have made this first discourse of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew the standard for what they call "their religion." It is a sad statement which is now heard from all sides: "The sermon on the mount is my creed," or "Our preacher preaches only from the Gospels and the sermon on the mount, and never touches the Old Testament or the Epistles" (this was told us), etc. Are these people really honest, and do they know the cutting words of our Lord, words like a two-edged sword, penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart? If they read and are sincere they find themselves all uncovered and naked before Him whose eyes are like flames of fire, before whom indeed all things are naked and laid bare. The words show the sinner his ruin and his corruption. Condemnation comes from every word to the natural man.

Let us look but briefly to the different teachings our Lord giveth, both to show the true righteousness He demands and to uncover the corruption of the heart.

He takes some of the commandments which He wrote on the second table of stone and begins with the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Murder was the first awful fruit after the fall, sprung as it was from envy in the heart. The penalty of murder is the judgment. This, then, is the letter of the law. It dealt with the outward deed, but the heart itself it did not touch. Now He speaks. "I say unto you, that every one that is lightly angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment." (The word "lightly" belongs in here. It was dropped in some manuscripts, but stands in the oldest. It is not angry alone outwardly, but even the remotest feeling of displeasure is meant.) It shall be as if he had committed the deed "thou shalt not kill." Every one that hates his brother is a murderer (1 John 3:15). "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (a word embodying hatred and contempt) shall be called before the Sanhedrin; but whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be subject to the penalty of the hell fire." It will be so, no doubt, when the kingdom will be come into the earth; swift judgment will overtake the offender. But the words lay bare the heart and show the impossibility of man to stand before God, who judges the heart, in their own righteousness. The believer being the partaker of the divine nature, is righteous and loves his brother. Only the reception of eternal life, which is Christ Himself, can produce righteousness and love. "Whosoever has been begotten of God does not practice sin, because His seed abides in him and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God. In this are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, and he who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:9-11). The believer walking in the Spirit will in no way fulfill flesh's lust.

The 23rd and 24th verses refer primarily to Israel ; in principle they are applicable during this Christian age.

The words which follow are: "Make friends with thine adverse party quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest some time the adverse party deliver thee to the judge and the judge deliver thee to the officer and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say to thee, Thou shalt in nowise come out thence till thou hast paid the last farthing." The words contain an allegorical exhortation to Israel . It is a short outline of their history the Lord here introduces. Following the expansion of the law concerning murder and hatred, that which they were about to do with their own Brother, it is significant. Israel were the adversaries of Him who had come, and treated the royal Person in their midst as an adversary. They did not agree with Him and have been put into the prison (nationally) under punishment till the last farthing is paid. The lord will perform His whole work (punitive) upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem (Isaiah 10:12), and then it will be "that her warfare is ended" or, as the marginal reading gives it (Isaiah 40:2), "her punishment is accepted," and "her iniquity is pardoned and she hath received of the Lord's hand double "(in blessing) for all her sins." Thus explained these words fit in the whole.

The next two expansions of the law are concerning purity and divorce. Not alone the deed itself, which was punishable by a severe penalty, is sin, but every one who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Out of the heart the transgression comes, and the heart is evil. And this is what so many persons in Christendom say is their creed and standard for "religion"! It is the word which condemns them altogether.

The plucking out of the right eye and the sacrificing of the right hand is, of course, never to be understood in the literal sense, but stands for the inner exercise of the believer, who in self-judgment puts that away which is a snare or a stumbling block. But what sinner can do it or will do it? Let him try it. And while there is in our day an increased boasting in a better morality, a higher standard, and a "social Christianity" is attempted and built upon certain words of our Lord in this discourse, it becomes more and more evident that the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh are honeycombing all classes of the professing church and are practiced as never before. So it is with divorce. What dreadful things might be mentioned here! Among the Jews the greatest laxity prevailed in this direction. Even now through talmudical laws the marriage relations may be dissolved on a mere pretext. Our Lord says with the voice of authority, binding ever: "Whosoever shall put away his wife except for cause of fornication makes her commit adultery, and whosoever marries one that is put away commits adultery."

In the fourth place He speaks against swearing, not against oaths such as are demanded by law, but in a profane way. Heaven, earth and Jerusalem are mentioned because these were mostly used in profane swearing. Significant here is the description of Jerusalem as the city of the great King. This will be during the millennial reign. When the kingdom has come praise will be heard in the heavens, in the earth and in Jerusalem. Now the earth is full of swearing and wicked words, but in that coming day the offences will be gathered out of the kingdom.

The law of retaliation comes next (verse 38). He teaches not to resist evil. This is again a great principle for His disciples. The author of the Numerical Bible says: "There is no supposition of the abrogation of law or of its penalties. The government of the world is not in question, but the path of the disciple in it. Where they are bound by the law, they are bound and have no privileges. They are bound, too, to sustain it in its general working, as ordained of God as good. Within these limits there is still abundant room for such practice as is here enjoined. We may still turn the left cheek to him that smites the right, or let the man that sues us have the cloak as well as the coat which he has fraudulently gained, for that is clearly within our rights. If the cause were that of another, we should have no right of this kind, nor to aid men generally in escape from justice or slighting it. The Lord could never lay down a general rule that His people should allow lawlessness or identify themselves with indifference to the rights of others. He speaks only of what is personal to one's self -- smite thee, compel thee and sue thee."

The last expansion brings forth love. "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those that hate you and pray for those who insult you and persecute you," etc. (verses 43-48), ending with "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." It is the same exhortation as in Eph. 5:1: "Be imitators of God as dear children." The standard for the heirs of the kingdom is then His own moral perfection.

The day will come when such righteousness and love and perfection as the King here describes will dwell amidst His earthly people and will be manifested in the earth. It will be in the day when the kingdom has come and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven. But every child of God born anew has put before him the highest standard, which includes all that which the King here expounds and that is in possession of Himself, who is the true God and the eternal life, "to walk even as He walked." "Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

CHAPTER VI

Our Lord said: "For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (chap. 5:20). This righteousness He had taught in His confirmation and expansion of the law, but now He speaks of something higher still. He makes known the motive of this true righteousness, which the heir of the kingdom is not alone to possess but also to practice. The motive is in all to act in the presence of the Father. The first eighteen verses of the sixth chapter shows this in a threefold relation. First, in relation to man (verse 1-4), then in relation to God (verse 5-15) and lastly in relation to self (verse 16-18). The word Father is found ten times in these first eighteen verses of the sixth chapter. The Father sees, the Father knows; therefore all is to be done before Him, the Seeing and Knowing One. Here, then, relationship is acknowledged and made prominent, such a relationship which was unknown in the Old Testament. How we are brought into this relationship to God as Father, and to know Him as our Father, so as to act continually as in His presence, is not taught in the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of John makes this fully known. There we read all about eternal life, the reception of this life, being born anew, born into the family of God,

etc. "As many received Him (Christ, the true God and eternal life), to them gave He the right to be children of God, to these that believe on His name; who have been born, not of blood nor of flesh's will nor of man's will, but of God" (John 1:12, 13). This is all anticipated in Matthew, and the Father here is not that "All-Father," as the modern twentieth-century teachers of a Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men teach, but He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead (1 Peter 1:3-5). Only such as are begotten again, born into the family of God are children and though they are little children, yet do they know God as their Father. "I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). Only such who are children and partakers of the divine nature can act as in the presence of the Father; with all others this is an impossibility; for how can they act and walk before One and do all out of love for One and to please that One, whom they do not know? This is another proof how impossible it is for the unregenerated, who have taken the sermon on the mount as a so-called rule for conduct, to do that which is taught.

Our Lord begins with alms. In the first verse the word alms is best translated (as several old manuscripts read) by "righteousness." "Take heed not to do your righteousness before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens."

Alms are good deeds towards others, charitable actions, bestowing upon the poor, needy and afflicted. Such deeds of mercy and kindness are generally designated by Jews as righteousness. In their prayers on New Year's day they profess that repentance, prayer and Zedoko--righteousness will influence God and change the evil to come upon them for their sins, into good. Under righteousness every orthodox Jew understands alms. It must have been so during the days of our Lord in the midst of His earthly people. How was it done? We believe that the description our Lord gives here was a literal performance by the self-righteous religionists. Alms were given so as to be seen by men, a trumpet was sounded before them and the sums they gave to the poor were heralded through the streets. And is it not so now even in the midst of Christendom? How much almsgiving and charities would there be if it were not for a big display? Such almsgiving, such deeds of mercy are not pleasing to God. Such a righteousness, and done by such a motive, are but filthy rags which give no covering and defile. But so it is among Jews and professing Christians, almsgiving, charities without end, good works to appear before men as religious, and no knowledge of the Father. "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does; so that thine alms may be in secret and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee" (verse 4). The lesson here for every true believer is that all our good works are to be done as to our Father and as before Him alone; when we have done all things that are commanded, we are to say, we are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10).

Prayer is the next which follows. Prayer is that which relates to God. How much might be said on that most precious duty and privilege -- prayer! But we cannot digress here. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the street, so that they should appear to men." What glaring contradiction to pray in words which are addressed to God, and in motive they are but uttered so as to "be heard by men! What our Lord describes any one can witness still, on any Saturday morning on the lower East Side of New York City. In synagogues and private dwellings many a Jew can be seen marching up and down, or standing still, or swaying his head and reading his prayers. He is attired with the phylacteries (prayerstraps), a purely rabbinical invention, and his shoulders are enshrouded by a prayer-mantle. His whole behavior as he takes a prominent stand in the synagogue or before an open window, shows but too well that it is done so as to appear before men. "Hypocrites" is the word with which our Lord designates such men. Yet, is it any better in Christendom? The modern "church prayer meeting" shows only too often the same spirit. We have known men and seen them standing in public places to lead in prayer, and before them a very carefully worded prayer written beforehand, which was read with much pathos. Some observer of religious movements spoke of a leading New York preacher a short time ago as making "beautiful and very flowery public prayers." Alas! without sitting in judgment upon any one, the flowery prayers, human eloquence in prayer, are only too often a form of address to God but only uttered to be seen of men. None is excepted of this danger which comes with public prayer. It should be with much godly fear and earnest looking to the Lord when a brother rises to lead in prayer. It is to be done as before God and not before men.

Next our Lord tells us that prayer, like alms, is to be done in secret, as unto the Father and not unto men. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to the Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee." No one would conclude from these words that our Lord forbids public or united prayer. It is seen only that He speaks against the mode and manner of public prayer. A believer praying in public should be as before

the Father in secret. Later our Lord says, anticipating the church, "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree on the earth concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from my Father in heaven" (chapter 18:19). United prayer of the assembly and that not in secret alone but in public, yet as before the Father, is a great privilege and attended by untold blessings. "They gave themselves all with one accord to continual prayer" (Acts 1:14). "And they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2:42). "But we will give ourselves up to prayer and ministry of the Word" (6:4). Unceasing prayer was made by the assembly to God concerning him (Acts 12:5). Such was the practice in the apostolic age, and the exhortations given to believers in the New Testament are in harmony with it. "As regard prayer, persevering" (Rom. 12:12). "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving, praying at the same time for us also, that God may open to us a door of the Word to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:4). "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). Secret prayer is here mentioned by our Lord, and surely the true believer is doing this as he looks to the Father only. What joy, comfort and strength it does afford to be alone before God. Here it cannot be done as unto men. The hypocrite does not know nor practice secret prayer, and the professing Christian often makes an attempt at it in a legal way so as to satisfy his conscience. "The Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." Some manuscripts have "openly." The day will be when all the secret prayers, that precious ministry of prayer given to the saints who are holy priests, will be made known. What revelations there will be and what reward to the saints for such faithful and persevering ministry in secret!

"No sooner had Saul of Tarsus passed from death unto life, than the Lord says of him "Behold he prayeth!" Doubtless he had as a "Pharisee of the Pharisees" said many long prayers, but not until he "saw that Just One and heard the voice of His mouth" could it be said of him, Behold he prayeth (Acts 22:14). Saying prayers and praying are two totally different things. A self-righteous Pharisee may excel in the former; none but a converted soul can enjoy the latter. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of the new man; the language of prayer is the distinct utterance of the new life. The moment a spiritual babe is born into the new creation it sends up a cry of helpless dependence toward the source of its birth." -- C.H.M.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as those who are of the nations: for they think they shall be heard through their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like them, for your Father knows of what things ye have need before ye beg anything of Him." Martin Luther says on this: "Here He censures the abuse of prayer, when they that are praying make use of many words and babblings; He calls this a heathenish practice, a loose, idle and useless talk, of such who think they would otherwise not be heard. The spirit of the worshiper prays, and because he knows that God will hear him, he dares not use such endless, idle talk -- the fewer the words, the better the prayer." (Luther's notes on the Gospels.) The Pharisees had their long prayers with many vain repetitions. One only needs to take up an orthodox Jewish "prayer book" to see the numerous vain repetitions, repeating phrases over and over again. That our Lord had this first of all before Him seems clear. Yet what else is Christendom but, as one has said, "an unauthorized revival of a departed shade"? (Adolph Saphir on Hebrews.) It is an aping after that which no longer exists. The rituals of Christendom with their liberal use of the Psalms in responsive readings, set forms of prayer for all occasions, their chant and rapid delivery, are but the daughters of the old mother -- Phariseism. Here we mention especially rituals which are used at the Lord's supper, generally called by that unscriptural word "sacrament." There are used repeatedly phrases like "Lamb of God, have mercy on us," "Almighty God, have mercy on us," "O Lord, save us." These indeed are vain repetitions, and at the Lord's table when they are used by a believer (who only has a right to the Lord's table) they are worse than vain. Vain repetitions, however, may also be used by such who use no formal prayers, ritual and prayer book. This is often done when the name of God and the Lord is falsely used in public prayer as well as other oft-repeated phrases. Others have gone into an extreme and have declared that the Lord teaches here that a petition should be made only once, and that if we have asked in faith for something once, to ask again is only proof of our unbelief. The Lord teaches no such thing. Our Lord Himself in Gethsemane made the same petition three times, and Paul with his thorn in the flesh had besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him (2 Cor. 12:7).

This is followed by a model for prayer which the King now gives. This prayer is generally called throughout Christendom "the Lord's prayer." Where is the authority in Scripture to call it by this name? If any prayer can be called the Lord's prayer it certainly is the one contained in John 17. It is not the Lord's prayer, but the disciples' prayer. This model for prayer has become the formal prayer, the ritualistic prayer of every sect in Christendom. That which our Lord forbids, vain repetitions, is practiced with this divine model by those who call themselves Christians. In the Roman and Greek Churches, so-called, it becomes a good work to repeat so many "Our Fathers," and the poor deceived souls expect blessing in this world and in eternity from the mechanical repetition of so many prayers. This of course is very little

different from the prayer machines of Thibet, upon which a certain number of prayers written on paper are placed and unwound before some god or goddess. In "evangelical" denominations it is not much better. We remember well in childhood, being strictly brought up in the Lutheran denomination, how constantly this prayer was used. In sickness, in pain, in danger, at mealtime, in the morning and at night, in severe storms, etc., it was ever repeated as if a miraculous power indwelt these words sufficient to dispel sickness, deliver from danger and bring blessing which otherwise would not come. It is one of the rags which Luther brought away from the old Roman sepulchre. Yet it is the same in other denominations. In one of the strongest it is used at the burial of the dead, sprinkling of infants, Lord's supper, "ordination" of deacons and elders, "consecration" of bishops, and it is repeated in public by the congregation. All this practice, the use of this model for prayer, as the Lord's prayer given to the Church, to be used by the Church, is wrong, decidedly unchristian, nor can it be proven from the New Testament that it is intended for the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles we read of the breaking of bread, the gifts of the Spirit, the assembly of believers, the baptism of believers, but do we read anywhere in the divinely inspired record of the beginning of the Church that the so-called Lord's prayer was used by the apostles or by the primitive church? Is there a hint anywhere in the New Testament that the prayer is to be repeated in public and used by believers? Not even the faintest hint that this should be so, but many strong proofs and arguments that it should not be so. Centuries passed before it became a settled custom to make the prayer the King gave to His Jewish disciples the prayer for Christians and to use it in the form and in the way it is used now. An unknown hand then added something to the last petition, "Deliver us from the evil one." The words, "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever -- Amen," are an interpolation. They do not belong into your Bibles, for the Lord never uttered them. The revised version (though so imperfect in many of its revisions) has done well in omitting them altogether. When it was decided to use this model for prayer as a prayer, this ending was written by some one and added to it and thus making it a prayer with the "Amen" attached to it. No such "amen" belongs there.

This perfect model of prayer was given by our Lord to His disciples to be used by them individually and previous to the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was then all on Jewish ground; they were Jewish believers and as such they received this model prayer and used it in the transition state. There came a day when our Lord said another word to these very disciples who had come to Him with the request, "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." It was in the upper room where He spoke all the precious words concerning the Comforter, all that which was so new, altogether new, that which would take them upon a new ground. He said, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. ... In that day ye shall ask in My name" (John 16:24-25). This message alone ought to give perfect light and understanding to any of our readers who are in doubt about this matter. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name." This shows two things: (1) They asked of God, and (2) They asked not in His name. They had then used the prayer He had taught them, and it was a prayer not in His name. Now He tells them that they were to ask in His name. This, then, is Christian prayer to ask God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. When He says "in that day" He means the day which began when the Holy Spirit came down from heaven, and this day is still present.

"When the Holy Spirit was given, and the child was able to draw near to the Father in the name of Christ, you have something different. The Lord's prayer so-called does not clothe the believer with the name of Christ. What is meant by asking the Father in that name? Can it be merely saying "in His name" at the end of a prayer? When Christ died and rose again, He gave the believer His own standing before God, and then to ask the Father in the name of Christ is to ask in the consciousness that my Father loves me as He loves Christ; that my Father has given me the acceptance of Christ Himself before Him, having completely blotted out all my evil, so as to be made the righteousness of God in Him. To pray in the value of this is asking in His name. Is there a soul using the Lord's prayer as a form that has a real understanding of what it is to ask the Father in the name of Christ? I believe they have never entered into that great truth." -- Notes on Matthew by W. Kelly.

The latter is, alas! too true; "they have never entered into that great truth." How sad to see the great mass of professing Christians without a knowledge of what grace has done, without assurance of salvation, constantly "unchristianizing" themselves, cumbered with much service, running to and fro. -- A.C.G.

The Christian believer, knowing his perfect standing in Christ Jesus, prays in His name, and that is prayer in the Holy Spirit, who now joins His help to our weakness; for we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26). We glance but briefly at a few of the petitions to show how a Christian believer could not use this model of prayer as a form. However, we desire to state once

more the perfection of the prayer. Every word here is as divine as He who spoke it. There could be no imperfection about anything He uttered. Many volumes have been written on it and many more might be written to show the perfection of every petition.

As believers we know that our Lord gave the promise and has fulfilled it by the gift of the Holy Spirit, "That if any love Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." We are brought nigh by His blood, and in the person of an adorable Lord we are in heaven seated with Him in the heavenlies. The "Our Father who art in heaven" does not give expression to this nor could it be before the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. "Hallowed be thy name" is Jewish. Indeed, the Jewish ritual uses the phrase very often. The believer exalts "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Him whom God has exalted and made head over all things."

"Thy kingdom come." This petition is for the coming of the kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens, the Messianic Kingdom, which is followed by the doing of the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. Here Christendom is the most confused, expecting a kingdom now; a spiritual kingdom without a king. What our Lord taught His Jewish disciples to pray for is the kingdom of the heavens to come, that which John the Baptist preached, and also the Lord up to the time of His rejection. As Believers we do not wait for the coming of the King and the establishment of the kingdom in the earth, but we wait for the coming of the Lord to take us out of the earth. The prayer of the Church is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." Without enlarging on the other petitions or attempting a full exposition of them in their full and perfect meaning we wish only to say that this prayer will be heard once more in the earth and will then be used as it was once used by the Jewish disciples when they were sent forth by our Lord. When the Church is taken from the earth a believing Jewish remnant will give the witness and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom once more. They will undoubtedly use this prayer during the great tribulation through which they will pass, the tribulation in which the evil one is in the earth and famine and many temptations will abound. Then can they truthfully ask, "Give us this day our daily bread -- lead us not into temptations -- deliver us from the evil one," which is the personal Antichrist. "Thy kingdom come." This prayer will be answered, deliverance will come for them from heaven in the coming of the King. (We pass over the petition, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This is a legal, an Old Testament petition. Our forgiveness does not depend upon our relation to each other.)

Then our Lord speaks in connection with prayer of the spirit of forgiveness which every one who is in relationship with God as Father should exercise. If such a spirit of love and patience towards those who have done evil against us is not practiced, it means that we cannot enjoy full communion with Him. Therefore, "let all bitterness, and heat of passion, and wrath, and clamor and injurious language be removed from you, with all malice; and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). That which relates to ourself follows next: "And when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, downcast in countenance, for they disfigure their faces so that they may appear fasting to men; verily I say to you, they have their reward. But thou when fasting anoint thy head and wash thy face, so that thou mayest not appear fasting unto men, but to thy Father, who sees in secret; and thy Father who sees in secret shall render it to thee." Here once more we have the wrong motive and the true. It was done by the hypocrites in just the way spoken of here. It was an attitude of humiliation of the body, denying self, but only as to be seen of men. What else has been and is all the fasting and asceticism as it has been fostered in Christendom? If one does fast, let the fasting be done in secret as unto the Father and not to appear before men.

In the second half of the sixth chapter we are taken upon another ground. The heirs of the kingdom are seen in this section as in the world, subject to the cares and temptations of the wilderness. We must not lose sight here of its Jewish application. When our Lord sent forth His disciples in the tenth chapter to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom He gave them instructions how they should go about, depending in all things upon their Father in heaven. The disciples thus sent forth with the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel are the types of another Jewish remnant which is to preach once more in a future day the same Gospel, "The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh." To this remnant going through the tribulation the exhortations have a special application. However, we pass this by and apply it to ourselves as believers, for all which our Lord speaks in this section is for every member of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, as such, who are in the earth, pilgrims and strangers, waiting for the coming of the Lord. We are in the world though not of the world, hated by the world as the world hated Him, but in this world we are exposed to all the temptations and the cares and sorrows connected with an earthly life which are ever coming upon the believer. Our Lord tells us now how to behave in the midst of these scenes, passing through the wilderness, what our privileges and comforts are. -- "Lay not up for yourself treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust spoils, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where neither moth nor rust spoils, and where thieves do not dig through and steal; for where thy treasure is, there will be also thy heart." -- The natural man lives for the earthly things and strives for the things which are seen. His delight is in treasures which are here below, and connected with this life is care, worry, anxiety and at last the loss of that which was cherished and loved. As believers born again we have a new nature and belong no longer to the earth, but we belong to heaven. "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things which are above, not on the things that are on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2). "We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things which are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). While, then, this is our calling it is nevertheless true that the heirs of the kingdom are constantly in danger in this present evil age to forget that they are but pilgrims and strangers here. Alas! only too many are like Lot, pitching first the tent towards Sodom and getting there altogether after a while. In these days especially the danger is exceedingly great and the heavenly calling, the laying up of treasures in heaven is often put into a secondary place. The exhortations in the Epistles are but a continuation by the Holy Spirit of this word of our Lord. "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many unwise and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is the root of every evil; which some having aspired after, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9-11). "Enjoin on those rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches; but in God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal in distributing, disposed to communicate of their substance" (1 Tim. 6:17, 18). "Let your conversation be without the love of money, satisfied with your present circumstances" (Heb. 13:5). How great the danger of looking back to Egypt ! But as we follow the exhortation and lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and that in view of the judgment seat of Christ, where we shall receive the rewards, our heart will surely be there. Thus having our treasures there and laying them up there they are not alone secure, but our heart will constantly be drawn there and in this way kept from the earthly things. And where do our thoughts mostly rest -- on earthly or heavenly things? If our thoughts are here surely our treasure cannot be in heaven.

Our Lord continues: "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark: If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness."

These are most solemn words. The believer has a spiritual nature, a heart in which he sees, "being enlightened in the eyes of your heart" (Eph. 1:18). The Word of God is the light and the entrance of His Word bringeth light. The eye, the heart single -- that is looking only above to the heavenlies, the whole body will be light, there will be not only a realization of a heavenly calling but also a walk worthy of this high calling, a heavenly walk. But light rejected becomes darkness, and how great the darkness! Truth given, light flashed forth from the Word and not used and acted upon, leads into the grossest darkness. (This is the deplorable state of thousands of believers.)

Therefore a double service is impossible. We cannot serve two masters. It is impossible that the eye could look at the same time to the earth and to heaven. Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). Is it then a hard path which we have in the wilderness with no comfort? No, for the very next words of our Lord bring to our hearts that sweet and precious comfort which only he can enjoy who with the single eye looks to things above and walks in separation from the world.

These words (verses 25-34) tell us that we have a Father who careth, a Father who knows and who loves. He who feedeth the birds of heaven provides surely more abundantly for those who are much better than they, and all He asks is trust in Him. "Be not careful" -- oh, how blessedly it sounds -- oh, how full and rich it comes to the believer's heart. And again it is written "Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). Be not careful for your life, what ye shall eat. ... Be careful for nothing. ... Yet how slow we are to learn it. Anxiety and care, hurry and worry, these God-dishonoring works of the flesh are ever coming up again. How true George Mueller used to say:

"Where anxiety begins faith ends, Where faith begins anxiety ends."

The lesson can only be learned in constant dependence upon Him in seeking the things which are above.

And what does anxiety and care accomplish after all? "But which of you by being careful can add to his growth one cubit? And why are you careful about clothing?" etc. (Verses 27-33). We are then utterly helpless in ourselves. Alas! how often

we look in our anxiety, in sickness and in health to something in ourselves and to men and man's help and not to Him in whose hands we are so secure and leave it all with Him, committing our way unto the Lord. And all this is applicable to even the smallest matters of the daily life. Seeking then first of all the kingdom of God and His righteousness -- that is, the things which are above -- the promise is given, all things shall be added unto you.

And there is another characteristic about anxiety. It looks unbelievably ahead. Unbelief draws dark pictures of despair and occupies the mind with a day which may never come. How different it ought to be and will be if we but follow His word, "Be not careful then as to the morrow, for the morrow will be careful for itself: sufficient for the day is its own evil."

CHAPTER VII

The chapter which follows contains the last words of the great discourse of our Lord. The contents of this chapter are very instructive and form a most fitting end of the declaration of the King. The first few verses contain a warning against judging. We have in the beginning of the chapter something which is altogether different from the last section of the sixth chapter. There we saw the heir of the Kingdom in the midst of the world, how he is to trust in and depend on the Father and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, his walk undivided and depending. When our Lord begins with "Judge not, that ye be not judged" He directs the attention to the conduct of the disciple towards his fellow disciple. The conduct towards those who are enemies, who despitefully use and persecute the heirs of the Kingdom was mentioned by our Lord before. It is the relation they were to show one towards the other He touches upon now. The principle of this relation is love. In Matthew of course it could not be mentioned in full. In the Gospel of John our Lord leads His disciples into the fullness of it, which here is but indicated, and in the First Epistle of John these precious things are still more unfolded. After He had, as the Lord and Teacher, washed the disciples' feet, He told them that they ought to wash one another's feet. This is the opposite from that against which He warns here, sitting upon judgment against the other and exposing one another's faults.

But we ask, what does our Lord mean, when He says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you"? Does He in these words forbid the judging of outward actions or the present evil? Some have taken it in this sense and gone into that looseness against which the Lord warns later (verse 6). The Lord does not forbid here the judging of actions and evil. If He did, His words would clash with numerous statements in the Epistles. For instance, we read in Corinthians: "For what have I to do with judging those outside also? Yea, do not ye judge them that are within? But those without God judges. Remove the wicked persons from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:12, 13). It is evident from these words, as well as from the order our Lord has laid down, to proceed with a brother who has sinned (Matthew 18:15-18), that the individual believer as well as the assembly has a right to judge evil actions. Furthermore, in this very chapter our Lord declares, "By their fruits ye shall know them;" how, then, could we know them if it were not by ourselves judging the persons on account of their evil actions? Certainly judging of things which surround us, as well as persons, when it is our plain duty to do so, is nowhere forbidden. Contending earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, to which we are exhorted in these days of falling away, carries with it the necessity of judging that which, in man-made systems as well as in persons, is offensive to God and dishonoring to our Lord. The words which demand the separation from that which is evil presupposes judging likewise. This solemn duty we have as believers, in the midst of a perverse generation, standing as we do, at the close of this dispensation. It is to be exercised as in the fear of the Lord and with the single eye to His glory and the honor of His name. Easily and quickly made is the step from the judging, which is duty, to that censoriousness, fault-finding and all that follows, against which our Lord warns and which is sinful.

But what is the meaning of the words "Judge not"? Our Lord forbids the judging of motives, the spring from which actions result. I have no right to judge that which is not manifested to mine eyes. Motives are concealed and known to God alone. He who in censoriousness continually judges his brother's motives and in a fault-finding spirit sits in judgment upon him, assumes the place of the judge, which does not belong to him, but to the Lord only. Two passages, perhaps, from Romans and Corinthians explain the judging which our Lord condemns: "One man is assured that he may eat all things; but the weak eats herbs. Let not him that eats make little of him that eats not; and let not him that eats not judge him that eats: for God has received him. Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own master he stands and falls. ... But thou, why judgest thou thy brother? or again, thou, why dost thou make little of thy brother? for we shall all be placed before the judgment seat of God. ... Let us no longer therefore judge one another; but judge ye this rather, not to put a stumbling-block or a fall-trap before his brother" (Romans 14:3-13). "So that do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord

shall come, who shall also both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts; and then shall each have his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

And how true it is what our Lord says: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." This is a law, from which the believer cannot escape. A law like that other one in Galatians, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that shall he reap." Many a one has found out the swift working of this law, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you." Many will have yet to learn by sad experiences and much heartache that the execution of this law is never slow. The word was quickly spoken which censured a brother's motives, which belittled him (to lift up the self of the accuser), but it will not take very long, and some one will step up with the same measure and the same judgment and do the same to us. Nothing is so detrimental to spirituality than a habitual censoriousness.

And why, then, do men see the little mote in their brother's eye? Because they do not see the great beam in their own.

If the saint But judges himself he will surely not be forever occupied with seeing the mote in the Brother's eye. He will be patient, loving and not surmise always evil. "Love does not impute evil ... beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13).

In the sixth verse our Lord warns against the other extreme, which is looseness, the abuse of His grace: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them with their feet and turn round and rend you." (That incorrect paraphrase called "the Twentieth Century New Testament" has seen fit to put part of this verse in a more refined [? !] language. They translate, "Do not give what is sacred to dogs; nor yet throw your pearls before pigs." How ridiculous!) A person misunderstanding the "judge not" may allow evil to go unjudged, and therefore that which is holy and the pearls become defiled and are trampled under feet by dogs and swine -- unconverted persons, though perhaps outward professors (see 2 Peter 2:22). To apply the passage to the preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved and to those sunk the deepest in vice would be incorrect. It has no reference to the preaching of the Gospel. We should, however, always guard against any irreverent use of the word of God and the blessed things made known in it.

In verses 7-11 we have the familiar words of our Lord telling us to ask of Him, with the assurance that every one that asketh receiveth. The connection is obvious. In looking at the injunctions our Lord gives not to judge and not to abuse, what He has given, one feels the need of wisdom. Intercourse with God in prayer supplies this need. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

And what an invitation is here put before us! How simple and definite the language! How plain it all is with no "if" or "but" added to it. Happy he who takes all these words in their simple meaning and ever uses the royal offer in faith. Of course we would not look in Matthew for the fullest teaching on prayer in His name nor could the words here, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you," be applied to anyone else but believers. This is clear from the words: "If ye then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to those that ask Him." In Luke 11 we read the same word, but there it says, "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, however, is no longer in order, for the Comforter has come, and no believer has a right now to ask upon this promise for the Spirit.

The 12th verse in this chapter is one of the most misapplied in the whole discourse of our Lord. "All things, therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, thus do ye also to them: for this is the law and the prophets." This, many professing Christians and others, who make no profession at all, call the golden rule. How many, Jews and Gentiles, have told us that this is the religion they believe in. It is even claimed that in the "sacred" books of the East, the religious products of Buddhism and Brahmanism, something similar is found. (Jews claim the same for the Talmud because Hillel taught "What thou wouldst not wish for thyself, do not unto thy neighbor. This is the whole law." -- Talmud, Sabb. 31.)

Yet with all this boast in a rule which they do not understand, no one keeps it nor would think of keeping it. The Lord gives this practical word to the true disciple. He who is born again is born of God. He has the nature of God and that is love. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. ... Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:8 and 10). "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We see then that the terse saying our Lord puts

in the chapter is not out of keeping with the whole. The outcome of intercourse with God spoken of in verses 7-11 will be, acting in love.

This is followed by an exhortation such as He who is from above alone could give and with it the first half of the seventh chapter closes. "Enter ye in through the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many there are that enter through it; because narrow is the gate and straitened is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it." It is the well-known Gospel text, though not always correctly applied. The gate (door) and the way is Christ Himself. "I am the door of the sheep; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10). "I am the way ... no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14). And why then is the gate narrow? Not because certain conditions and hard terms are to be fulfilled, but because man does not want to give up his own righteousness and clinging still to his miserable, filthy rags, he refuses God's way and God's door of salvation, which is Christ and Christ alone. Ah, the devices of Satan ever multiplying to keep men away from entering in through the narrow gate! The broad way that leads to destruction was never so thronged in the history of Christendom with such masses of professing, self-righteous, moral, educated, but Christ and the blood rejecting "Christians" as in these days, and still the word is true of the narrow gate and the straitened way that "few there are that find it."

In His closing words our Lord gives a most solemn warning against false prophets, and makes a contrast between the false professor and the true possessor. "Beware of false prophets, such as come to you in sheep's clothing, but within are ravening wolves!" (verse 15). Let us notice first of all that this warning has a special significance for the closing of the age, that is, the ending of this dispensation, the seven years of tribulation and sorrow in the earth. We only need to turn to the Olivet discourse (Matt. 24) in which our Lord answers the question of His disciples concerning the consummation of the age. When they asked about this ending of the age they surely meant nothing else but the Jewish age, for of a Christian age they knew nothing. In answer our Lord gives, describing the events which fall into the seventieth week of Daniel, He says: "And many false prophets shall arise." These false prophets will make their appearance during the great tribulation, no doubt under the leadership of the false prophet, the Beast, so prominent in the book of Revelation. That there have been throughout this dispensation false prophets in sheep's clothing and that they are more numerous now than they have ever been before we need hardly mention, yet strictly speaking, the warning against false prophets concerns the Jewish remnant in the earth during the time of Jacob's trouble. Nowhere are we as believers warned against false prophets; we are warned against false spirits and false teachers, which of course, like the false prophets come in sheep's clothing. False prophets then, after the church is taken, to lead many astray; false teachers and false spirits now while the Church is still on the earth. The false prophets, who will undoubtedly work many miracles and be leaders of the strong delusions, are the visible manifestation of the false spirits which are now at work. When Paul said farewell to the Elders of Ephesus he said: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30). How soon this prophecy was fulfilled! Let us remind ourselves of some of the solemn warnings which are for the Church. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so-called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 6:20). The very errors and false teachings so prevalent in these days are marked out here. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). And how great the increase of these seducing spirits in our day! "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). The so-called "Higher Critics," who sit in wicked judgment upon the infallible Word of God and dishonor Christ, the living Word, are meant here. And where are these men not found throughout Christendom? See also the warnings against false spirits in the first Epistle of John. (1 John 4:1-3; 2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Titus 1:10, 11, and other passages).

But whether they are false prophets coming in the future or the false spirits and teachers at the present time, they come in sheep's clothing. Anti-Christ himself will first speak like a lamb and have a flattering tongue, and all the prophets under his control will follow him, backing their assertions by signs and lying miracles. The story of Moses and Aaron sent by Jehovah, and Jannes and Jambres sent by Satan and endued by him with power, will then be acted out again (Exodus 7:11). In this way many will be led astray. In our age Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and the false spirits and teachers appear like meek sheep of the Great Shepherd. In the subtle infidelity which denies the inspiration of the Bible, Satan has surely transformed himself thus. There is much talk from their side of "Bible research," and that their

work will help in bringing out the truth, and many declarations that they are sincere and earnest Christian workers in spite of their infidelity in the divinity of the Scriptures, but all this is but the sheep's dress in which they make their appearance. We think of other false teachers who deny the eternal Deity of our Lord, the physical resurrection of Him and the revealed facts concerning the dead in Christ and those who died unsaved. (We have reference to the "Millennial Dawn Series." Thousands have been led astray by these books which appear indeed in sheep's clothing, but within is the ravening wolf who wishes to harm the flock of Christ.) All these soul destroying false teachings come in the garb of truth and light.

Our Lord continues: "By their fruits ye shall know them: do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but the corrupt tree bringeth forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth forth not good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. By their fruits then shall ye know them" (verses 16-20).

What does our Lord mean by fruit? Does He mean downright wickedness? There is no question that immorality and evil deeds are included under the term fruit. Many a false teacher began in teaching error in such a way that the error could hardly be distinguished from the truth, but continuing in error he ended with many of his followers in the flesh. Often behind the most subtle errors the flesh is nourished and an outbreak in gross immorality may follow. Yet, if our Lord meant nothing but evil deeds and wickedness, it would be hard indeed to detect these false ones. Satan is not so blind as to peddle his lies around by wicked people whose lives bear the stamp of immorality and open wickedness. He does it in quite another way. We were often told of people who hold the most abominable doctrines and deny the Deity of our Lord as well as the atonement, "But look at the beautiful lives they live! How meek and lovely they are! How much good they do! Do not their lives prove that their doctrine is right and the fruit show that the tree is not bad?" This outward moral appearance and a "sweet" temper belongs only too often to the sheep's clothing and is one of the devices of Satan with which he tries to lead many away from the truth and into error -- the fruit by which we shall know them may be wickedness in the grossest form, but it means more than that. The word "Do men gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles?" is the key. Grapes and figs speak of true fruit. Thorns bear fruit which may resemble grapes, but never can they be grapes from which comes the wine which makes glad the heart of God and man. The soul looking deeper (and we remember the warning is for believers) than outward appearances finds soon that the false teacher or spirit is not in the truth. He tests it by the Word, and finds the fruit, the glory of Christ and glorying in Him, lacking. It is a most subtle substitute for the true fruit -- a counterfeit -- and leaves the soul empty. A believer, not much taught in the Scriptures, sent us a few weeks ago a question about a certain publication which was sent to him with the promise of leading him into a better knowledge of the Bible inasmuch as it was devoted to Bible study. We wrote him at once exposing the true character of the paper. He answered, that while he had but little knowledge yet of the Word, and while much seemed to be in favor of the paper which had been placed into his hands, yet while reading he experienced a feeling of emptiness, there was no response from his heart and a lack of joy and peace. This, perhaps, will be helpful to see how a true believer will know them by their fruit.

But in the words of our Lord we have also the most definite teaching of that doctrine, which may be termed the A B C of the Gospel, the total depravity of man, the utter ruin of man, and, therefore, the necessity of the impartation of a new nature. Both, as we well know, are denied by some of the leading preachers and teachers of all the great evangelical denominations. To deny these truths is equal to the denial that Christ is our Saviour. Man is, according to the new theology, his own Saviour. The tree is corrupt, the fruit is bad. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. The tree is good and the fruit is good. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

In the three verses our Lord mentions His own coming day, when He will appear as the One into whose hands the Father has given all things. The whole ending of the discourse brings us into that time. This in itself makes it that great dispensational discourse concerning the kingdom, as we have pointed out in our exposition.

"Not every one who saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out demons, and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye who work lawlessness!"

That this has no reference to the Church is evident. The Church meets the Lord in the air, and every believer has in Christ's day to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But at that judgment seat no mere professors of Christ's name will

appear, and no "Depart from Me," will be heard from the lips of the Lord, the Head of the Body. Nor does this word here in Matthew refer us to the great white throne. When our Lord says "in that day," He means the day when the kingdom of the heavens is come by His return to the earth. Then many will be found but empty professors, who in spite of their works and using His name were none of His. From this dispensational aspect, we may well look to our times. The name of Christ is upon many lips, and there are many who speak in His name, and do works of power in His name, yet they are not saved and know Him not. Christian Science, falsely so-called, may be mentioned here as well as others. Not outward profession brings into the kingdom and makes one an heir of it, but doing the will of the Father. This is continued in the last paragraph. "Therefore, whosoever heareth these words of mine and doeth them, is likened unto a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock, and the rain and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (verses 24-27).

How sublime and yet simple is this illustration of our Lord! Hearing first and doing is the way. The rock upon which he who heareth (believeth), builds, is Christ. Other foundation can no man lay. Being in Him we are safe and secure in time and in eternity. The storm will come, and is even now advancing, yet we have a refuge and a shelter in Him, and as He abides, the Rock, so shall we abide. How true, oh! how true it is:

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand, All other ground is sinking sand.

All which is not Christ is sinking sand. Reader! where do you stand, upon Christ and Christ alone, or upon something else -- no matter what -- the sinking sand?

Such teaching, such unfoldings of the purposes of God were never heard before. The Pharisees and scribes disputed together, and expressed their human opinions, but here One spake with authority, so that the multitudes were astonished.

CHAPTER VIII

With the eighth chapter we enter into a new section of the Gospel. This section extends to the end of the twelfth chapter. The King had declared the principles and rule of the kingdom, and now He comes down from the mountain followed by great multitudes. First of all He is to manifest Himself as the divine King, the Jehovah of the Old Testament Scriptures, who is truly come to His own. To them He offers and through His disciples likewise, the kingdom. But soon it becomes evident that His own receive Him not. They reject Him and recognize Him not as their King, and accuse Him, before whom the demons cried in terror, that His miracles were done by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. He then breaks off the relationship with His own, which we find at the end of the 12th chapter. These five chapters, from the eighth to the twelfth, contain therefore the full manifestation of Jehovah-Jesus among His people and the rejection of the King.

And how completely He manifested Himself as the King with divine power! Here we have a number of miracles, one following the other, as we Hope to show, put in perfect order by the One who is perfect in Knowledge, the Holy Spirit. Yet with these wonderful manifestations, the leper cleansed, the demons driven out, the blind made to see, the dead raised, the people deliberately reject Him, and fall not at His feet to worship Him. This shows the utter ruin and full character of the flesh, enmity against God. It is so still and never can be anything else. Even if now (as it is sometimes said it should be) signs and miracles would be done, the flesh would not be changed by them, but would still reject Him and turn away from the Lord. The antichrist, the false king, Satan's masterpiece and counterfeit, will make his appearance in the closing days with all power and signs and lying wonders. He will mimic all the signs and miracles done by our Lord. The flesh will surely accept that false one with his strong delusions. But let us briefly point out the signs our Lord does in these chapters:

1. The cleansing of the leper, 8:1-4. He touches the leper.
2. The healing of the Centurion's servant, 8:5-13. He heals by His word. Faith touches Him.
3. Peter's wife's mother healed of fever, 14, 15. Healing by His touch.

4. The healing of All, 16, 17. His presence among the suffering.
5. He rebukes the winds and the sea, 23, 27. His divine power over nature.
6. The two possessed by demons delivered, 28-34. Demons confess Him Son of God.
7. A man sick of palsy completely restored, 9:1-8. Full restoration of soul and body. "The lame man shall leap as an hart" (Is. 35:6).
8. A woman with an issue of blood healed, 9:20-22. She touches Him.
9. The daughter of the ruler raised up, 23-26. Resurrection.
10. Two blind men receive their sight, 27-31. "He openeth the eyes of the blind" (Is. 35:5).
11. A dumb man with a demon healed, 32, 33. "The tongue of the dumb shall sing" (Is. 35:6).
12. Preaching the Gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease, 9:35 (Is. 61:1).
13. The man with the withered hand healed (12:10-13).
14. One possessed by a demon, blind and dumb, restored, 12:22. His last sign of this section (Is. 35:5, 6).

In these miracles we have before us the manifestation of the King. Jehovah alone could manifest Himself thus in mercy, healing and restoring. Satan may have great power to work signs, yet never could such a manifestation come from him. "If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?" (12:26). With these words our Lord silenced the Satanic accusations of the Pharisees. What He did, furthermore, is seen in the Old Testament in connection with the kingdom. The signs manifest the King as well as the Kingdom. In Isaiah 35 we have a description of the kingdom as the King is to set it up. He came, and that He is the King and His Kingdom at hand, is proven by Him in doing the signs enumerated in the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. The King and Kingdom is rejected, the Kingdom postponed, and Israel and the nations wait with a groaning creation for the glorious fulfilment of this chapter in Isaiah. The fulfilment will come, when the King comes back to the earth, then "the ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

And how full is the manifestation of His divine power! Leprosy, the awful disease and defilement, altogether gone. Winds and sea calmed. Demons banished and sent to the place where they belong. Forgiveness of sins followed by the healing of the body. The blind see, the dumb speak, the dead rise! Every sickness and every disease healed. These miracles our Lord did here to show Himself as the King are certainly also typical of the spiritual cleansing, the opening of the eyes of the blind, the sinner, the speaking in praise and worship of those who never spoke to God or of God, the raising of the dead, the power and dominion of Satan broken. The application on these lines is evident. We see in them also a foreshadowing of the redemption of the body of the believer in resurrection, as well as the blessings for Israel and the nations, in the coming age. All these features, we hope to point out as we look to the different signs, separately.

Before taking up the first part of the eighth chapter we must call the attention of our readers to another fact. If one looks for these miracles in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, and traces our Lord's movements in them, he will be astonished to find that they are put in these Gospels in an entirely different setting. We will not go into details here. In Matthew all has its peculiar arrangement, and everything is taken out of its chronological order. This is nowhere so evident, as in the section before us. The reason is obvious. The Holy Spirit has manifested in it His divine wisdom. Infidels have ever sneered (and do even more so every day) at a verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. The utterances of some well-known "evangelical" teachers, that the New Testament contains numerous discrepancies, is generally backed up by arguments about the miracles recorded in Matthew, as happening after the sermon on the mount, when in another Gospel they are given as having occurred before the discourse of our Lord. Now that which moves the infidel and the preacher tainted with higher criticism to ridicule the divinity and infallibility of the written Word, moves the believer and diligent searcher of the

Scriptures to praise, for the very argument which the denier of a verbal inspiration uses to build his infidel fabric on, is to the believer the most positive evidence of the divinity of the Bible and its verbal inspiration. It is not alone so here but all through the Word. The Holy Spirit as the writer of the first Gospel has taken certain events in the life of our Lord and grouped them together in such a way that they not only show us how the King proved Himself King and how He was rejected, but to show in the grouping of these miracles the purposes of God, and bring out some very rich yet simple dispensational teachings. The Gospel of Matthew as the Jewish Gospel is the proper place for it.

We look now at the first seventeen verses of the eighth chapter. Here we have four different signs.

The first is the cleansing of the leper, followed at once by the healing of the centurion's servant, after which our Lord enters Peter's house, and his mother-in-law being sick, He touches her hand and the fever leaves her. The last is the healing of all. Now in these four miracles, following one the other as they do here, we have by the Holy Spirit dispensational teachings concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. The first, the cleansing of the leper, stands for Jehovah among His people Israel. The second, where He is absent, and heals not by His touch but by His Word; this represents the Gentile dispensation which is still running. After this dispensation is passed He will enter the house again, restoring His relations with Israel, and healing the sick daughter of Zion, represented by the healing touch and raising of Peter's mother-in-law. After this is accomplished the millennial blessings come to all in the earth when the curse of sin will be removed. We look at each but briefly.

I. The cleansing of the leper. Israel represented by the leper. Jehovah-rophe (Exodus 15) among His people. Leprosy is the most loathsome disease known. There was no remedy for it in the Old Testament, nor is there a remedy for it in our times, and we may say there will never be any found. The Spirit of God has made leprosy a type of sin, and inasmuch as there is no remedy from the human side for sin, so there is none and will be none from man's side for leprosy. Jehovah alone could heal the awful disease (Numbers 12:13; 2 Kings 5:1-15, etc.). This man meeting our Lord as He comes from the mountain was according to Luke (and he was a physician), "A man full of leprosy" (Luke 5:12). The application of leprosy as to every sinner is so well known that we pass it over. The leper here does not alone represent the sinner, but he represents Israel. Long before the Spirit of God had made known the leprous condition of the people in the following words: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Is. 1:5, 6). This is a most perfect description of the leper with his wounds, bruises and sores as he wanders an outcast toward still greater sufferings. Here then Israel's Messiah, Jehovah-Jesus, the same who spoke in Exodus, "I am Jehovah, thy Healer," meets His poor, unclean people, represented by the leper. The attitude of the leper as he fell before Him, doing Him homage, should have been Israel's attitude, his prayer, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou art able to cleanse me," Israel's prayer. Jehovah-Jesus stretches out His hand and touches him. He speaks as Jehovah in all His omnipotent power and mercy, "I will -- be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Thus Jehovah could and would cleanse Israel. He had then manifested Himself as the "Jehovah, thy Healer," among His people. The Lord sends the cleansed leper to the priest and asks him to offer the gift which Moses ordained. This was all proper before the death and resurrection of our Lord. Some have taken this as an evidence that the law should still be kept, but they forget that by the death and resurrection of our Lord we are delivered from the law. However, the issue here is not the continuation of the Mosaic institutions. The Lord sends the cleansed leper to the priest for a different purpose. The priest was the proper person to pronounce the cleansed one clean. How then had he become clean? Had he used any remedy? No. Had he seen some celebrated physician? No. Jesus had spoken, "I will!" He, who in prophecy, in the law (Deuteronomy), in Ezekiel and Isaiah, saith again and again, "I will," had touched him. Who was this Jesus? There could be only one answer, He is Jehovah manifested in the flesh. The priest should have broken forth in song and praise: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people!" He should have run from the sanctuary in search of Him, and having found Him adore Him as Jehovah. But the event closes abruptly. The priest alone heard the story, for the man was told not to tell it to others. The priest is silent; we hear nothing of him. He failed to recognize Jehovah in the midst of His people, and does not respond by coming forth to meet the divine King. The priest is the type of unbelieving Israel. The day, however, will come when the King will come again, and when in mercy, He will speak again to the remnant of His people, "I will." The Sun of righteousness will rise with healing beneath His wings.

II. The Centurion's servant healed by His Word. Grace shown to the Gentile. Not even in Israel have I found so great faith. Israel having failed to accept the King, and not recognizing Jehovah in their midst, the Gentile is introduced. Grace was to come to the Gentile. The Centurion's servant was a paralytic -- the type of the helpless and hopeless condition of the

Gentiles. The Centurion steps up with a simple, childlike faith. How different from the ritualistic priest who had no answer to Jehovah-Jesus. Jesus declared Himself willing to come and heal him. He, the One who knows the heart of man, well knew that this would bring out the faith of the Gentile. And the Centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not fit that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only speak a word and my servant shall be healed." In this simple faith there is the fullest confession that Jesus is God and able to heal by His Word, though absent from the sufferer. What a grand foreshadowing of the dispensation in which we live and of the mercy shown to the Gentiles! It is the character of the dispensation. Jesus is absent, yet in childlike faith we know Him, and by His Word He manifests His power. It is not Healing by touch, But By His Word. Upon the manifestation of "so great faith," our Lord reveals the coming in of the Gentiles and the setting aside of Israel, "the sons of the kingdom." "But I say unto you that many shall come from the rising and setting sun, and shall lie down at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." There is another feature here we must not forget. In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis we read how Abraham refreshed the Lord. Here after the failure of Abraham's seed the Gentile refreshes the heart of the Lord. What joy and comfort the blessed One had in looking upon this Gentile and "so great faith," and then look towards the cross and beyond it; the travail of His soul must have come before Him, the blessed fruit of His death and resurrection in the coming of them afar off. And are you refreshing and comforting His heart, Him who is unseen now? And surely it is by simple faith in Himself and in His power we refresh Him.

III. Coming to the house. The suffering woman healed of fever, raised up and serving Him. Typical of Israel's healing and raising up. In the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, we see a type of what will take place after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The sick woman is typical of Israel. In some of the Prophets we have the comparison of Israel to a woman, a widow, one forsaken, but the promises speak of her healing and that she is to become the minister of the Lord as Peter's mother-in-law served the Lord. We also see that He heals her by touch. So will He come again in relationship with His people and heal them.

IV. The demons cast out. All healed who were sick. The fulfilment of Isaiah 53:4, Millennial blessings. "And when the evening was come, they brought to Him many possessed by demons, and He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all that were ill; so that that should be fulfilled which was spoken through Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases." Later the demons cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Son of God? Hast Thou come here before the time to torment us?" (Verse 29.) The day is coming, the set time, when Satan will be cast out and bound. This will be in connection with our Lord's return and Israel's restoration. Then all demons will be cast out. Now not all are healed, but then the sad results of sin will be removed. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Is. 33:24).

We come now to the second half of the chapter. It will not be necessary to call again attention to the arrangement of the incidents recorded, differing from the Gospel of Luke, where the scene is laid after the transfiguration. We have learned before that the Holy Spirit does not report these events chronologically, but puts all together in His own perfect, divine way. First, we meet with a scribe who desires to follow Jesus, and then a disciple is seen, who wishes to go first to bury his father before following Him. After this He and the disciples are on the stormy sea and He rebukes the winds and the sea. On the other side the two possessed of demons are delivered. We can touch upon but a little of the manifold application which can be made of these events.

"And a scribe came up and said to Him, Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou mayest go." And Jesus says to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heavens roosting places, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head" (verse 19, 20).

This man was a self-seeking scribe, one whose mind was filled with idle dreams of a Kingdom to be established and, having seen the manifestation of the divine power, he desires selfishly to follow Jesus. No doubt his expectations were earthly gain, riches and glory. In this respect he may well be taken as a type of the nation itself. The Lord then gives the answer, which showed the scribe how perfectly He understood his heart and read his thoughts. Nothing is heard of the scribe afterward. It was sufficient to discourage him completely. The Messiah had nothing to offer him, and if he would follow Him, it meant that which the flesh can never do. But all brings out the fact of the coming rejection of the King. None of the multitude come to fall down before Jesus and worship Him as Jehovah, only this man comes. Our Lord was on His way to the other side, when the scribe approaches Him with his carnal request. The answer which Jesus gives is

also significant. It is the first indication coming from His own lips of His rejection, and for the first time in this Gospel He speaks of Himself as "Son of Man." This title belongs to Him both in His rejection and in His exaltation. Of course, here it refers to His rejection. The words, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven roosting places, but the Son of Man has not where He may lay His head," are generally taken to refer to His extreme earthly poverty. This is certainly correct. He who was rich became poor, that we might by His poverty become rich. He who is the creator of all things came into the earth and made a little lower than the angels, which He had created, took the place of dependence in lowliness. The Book of Psalms, which so fully reveals Him, the Son of Man, in His rejection as well as in His glory, records His voice as He would speak and as He did speak in the earth. There we read that He says: I am weak, I am weary from groaning, I am poor and needy, I am a worm and no man, I am poured out like water, I am poor and sorrowful, I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I am a sparrow alone, etc. But this word of our Lord speaks also of His death, though it is in the 16th chapter, after Peter's confession, He reveals to His disciples fully the fact of His rejection, suffering, death, resurrection and coming again as Son of Man. The foxes have places where they find shelter when the hunters seek their lives, so have the birds roosting places where they are safe, but for the Son of Man there was to be no refuge; He came to die the death on the cross.

Many there are still who speak of "following Jesus." What has not the flesh attempted in this direction! Some went into poverty to be as poor as He was and others tried to follow Him in His life and walk as Jesus of Nazareth, ever speaking of His earthly life as an example and of "character building" (a phrase so prominent in modern preaching), as if the flesh could ever be anything but flesh. The true "follow me" and the connection of him who has believed with the Lord in death and resurrection, is but little known and understood.

Then comes one who is a disciple. In Luke we read that the Lord spoke to him first. He called him as His disciple. Here we read, "But another of His disciples said to Him, Lord, suffer me first to go away and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead." The Lord who calls asks absolute obedience. He is the first and all earthly connections are to cease. How reluctant to follow the call; how often the disciple, the believer, who is the Lord's when there is the call to service from the Lord, says, "Suffer me first." Some earthly thing, a certain occupation, an earthly relationship intrudes itself between the calling Lord and His disciple. Oh, for more and greater devotedness to Him, whose we are and who is our Saviour and Lord. May we be loosed from all earthly bondage and "let the dead bury their dead."

"And He went on board ship and His disciples followed Him; and behold, the water became very agitated on the sea, so that the ship was covered by the waves; but He slept. And the disciples came and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save: we perish. And He says to them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then having arisen, He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. But the men were astonished saying, What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him" (verse 23-28).

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still" (Ps. 107:28). The "He," who created the sea was in that ship upon the stormy sea and rose in His power and rebuked (what a word!) the winds and the sea. How suggestive it all is. He had asked devotedness and obedience of His disciples and now He shows them that He is with them and in the midst of storm and waves they are secure and are kept and saved by His power. He slept. What calm and rest was His in the midst of the turbulent element when the disciples were threatened with disaster and death. And such rest is the rest of faith. How slow we are to learn it, the simple lesson "Be anxious for nothing." It is impossible for the flesh. Though the Lord may have sent deliverance a thousand times, whenever a new trial of faith comes, whenever a new storm arises and tribulation is before us, the flesh will always fear and tremble in unbelief. But how blessed the assurance that in the midst of all the waves and roaring, in all the attacks of Satan and the world, in all trials and adversities, we are secure, eternally secure. We can never perish. "All things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to purpose;" and therefore "we glory in tribulations." And the disciples with their unbelieving appeals and cries, how often we have been like them! Instead of looking to Him, who is Lord and our Lord, we looked to circumstances and cried for help where faith should have looked in rest and silence to Him, who doeth all things well. But where could we stop with the lessons and different applications of this scene! The world and the age, this present evil age, is represented by the sea and His own are upon it, so fearful and of little faith. As He arose then, so will He rise again and will rebuke in His majesty as Son of Man the winds and the sea. We speak not only of the blessed fact that in our own lives and experiences He does now often rebuke the winds and the sea, but of His coming again. Then and only then will be "a great calm."

Coming to the other side He is met in the country of the Gergesenes by two possessed by demons, coming out of the

tombs, the place of death, exceedingly dangerous, so that no one was able to pass by that way. They could not be bound, not even with chains and they cut themselves with stones (Mark 5:1-7). Not one demon, but many demons had entered into them; their name in one of them was Legion (Luke 8:30). What awful witnesses, these naked, bleeding, raving and tearing demoniacs were of the body and soul destroying power of the enemy. When our Lord appeared in the land the evil one had by the demons taken possession of large numbers of people and was driving them on to perdition. It will even be worse before His return. Satan and his angels will be cast out into the earth and his angels with him. This will be during the great tribulation. And even now those possessed by demons are continually increasing. The ever changing, as well as new forms, of insanity, many of them at least, if not all, must be connected with the influence of these evil spirits. The so-called "mediums" of Spiritism and adepts in occult "sciences" are undoubtedly demon-possessed. Surely our days, the days long ago predicted, are the latter times in which some apostatize from the faith, giving their mind (it is the mind where these evil workings begin) to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). And opening the soul to the deceiving spirits and teachings of demons means their dreadful entering in and taking full possession. We cannot follow here this dark theme, much as it is needed in our days. And, He, the Son of God has come to destroy the works of the Devil, and through death annul him, who has the might of death, that is, the Devil. And here the demons confess Him, that He is Son of God. "And behold they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Son of God? Hast thou come here before the time to torment us?" It is the first confession of Him as Son of God we have in the Gospel. They give Him His right title. The demons believe and tremble (James 2:19). They see and know Him as their future Judge, but they argue that the right moment for the punishment is not yet. The knowledge of the demons according to this is threefold: They know Him as Son of God, as their Judge and that the judgment will take place at a certain time. But Satan with his lies drives his countless victims on in unbelief to deny every one of these facts that Christ is Son of God and the Judge, and the most striking thing is that the father of lies succeeds to put himself down as a myth.

He shows Himself next as the one who has power over these demons and that they may well fear Him. They cried out and then asked, "If thou cast us out send us away into the herd of swine." He said: "Go!" What power over these legions is His! Can they ever touch Him or harm Him? No, never! And Son of God, declared by resurrection from the dead as all power in heaven and in earth and the day will be when all things shall be subjected under His feet. Then "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings." And we are linked with Him, His victory is ours, we too can triumph over these evil beings. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. "For the rest brethren, be strong in the Lord, in the might of His strength. Put on the panoply of God, that ye may be able to stand against the artifices of the Devil; because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:10-13).

"And they, going out, departed into the herd of swine; and lo, the whole herd of swine rushed down the steep slope into the sea, and died in the waters." This has puzzled not a few readers of the Word. We may explain it from the dispensational side. The deliverance of the two possessed typifies the deliverance of the Jewish remnant, the apostate part of the Jewish nations is foreshadowed in the swine and they will rush on into the waters, representing judgment.

The account in Mark and Luke goes into details, showing each one of the delivered victims in their right mind. In the end of the chapter we hear that the whole city went out to meet Jesus, and when they met Him, they begged Him to go away out of their coasts. They feared perhaps the loss of other possessions, and rather have the earthly things and the swine, than the Lord. What Satanic blindness! He, the evil one, is seen here in the manifestation of His power in another form. Strange that they should be afraid of Him who is the deliverer! But Satan had completely blinded them. And as we look back over what we were, we can praise our God for such deliverance from such an enemy, for we were dead in offences and sins in which we once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who works now in the sons of obedience (Eph. 2).

CHAPTER IX

After our Lord was requested by the Gergesenes to go away out of their coasts, He passed over the lake and came to His own city, that is, Capernaum. Here the Lord did His greatest miracles, yet they rejected Him there, so that later He said: "And thou, Capernaum, who has been raised up to heaven, shall be brought down even to Hades. For if the works of power which have taken place in thee had taken place in Sodom, it had remained until this day. But I say to you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in judgment day than for thee" (Matt. 11:23-24).

One of the mighty miracles He did in Capernaum is related by the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the chapter which we have reached. He is manifested in this miracle like in the others, as Jehovah. A paralytic is brought to Him by loving hands, and when He saw their faith He said to the helpless one, "Be of good courage, child; thy sins are forgiven." And now for the first time in the Gospel do we read that the scribes said, "This man blasphemeth." They did not speak it out, but He saw their thoughts, for He is the One of whom David says: "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts from afar off" (Ps. 139:2).

He then asks them: "Which is easier: to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of God has power on earth to forgive sins (then He says to the paralytic), Rise up, take thy bed and go to thy house. And he rose up and went to his house" (verses 2-8).

Divine power is here fully manifested. In Luke the Scribes and Pharisees say, "Who is able to forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). Indeed, if He who spoke the word of comfort and gave the paralytic the assurance of forgiveness is not Jehovah, anything less than He, the accusations of the scribes would have been well founded. He then shows that He has the power to forgive sins by healing the body of the paralytic, who rises up and carries away the bed upon which he was brought. The paralytic is a type of the sinner in his helpless condition. In the Old Testament we have a beautiful type of this in Mephibosheth, who was lame on both of his feet and who had to be brought to King David. So this one is brought. But why did they bring him? No question, healing of the body was all which they desired for their helpless friend and what he himself expected. But our Lord goes deeper to that which is the fountain of all disease and pain -- sin. He knew the guilt of sins resting upon the paralytic, and before he could rise and walk, before he could be delivered out of his helpless condition, the sins had first to be forgiven. The conscience, burdened more than the crippled, paralyzed body was by disease, had first to be relieved. The lessons here are clear. It foreshadows that which He, who gave Himself for us and who was raised on account of our justification, gives to every one who believes in Him. He has removed completely the guilt of sin and we have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins: the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" is ours through and in Christ. He also has given us a new life. He has delivered us from the power of sin and spoken the word "Rise up and walk." All this is so familiar that we will not enlarge upon it. We should not forget that the spiritual application of "Rise up" is not the first meaning. The paralytic received healing for his body and the miserable body was delivered from the paralysis which held it down. So the body of the believer has been redeemed and there will be a "rising up" from the grave and from the earth, changed in the twinkling of an eye.

We have also to say that the teaching of remission of sins and what is connected with it is not to be taken from the ninth chapter in Matthew. To teach from this chapter the doctrine of forgiveness, as it has been done so much, would be an error. He shows His authority as Son of Man to forgive sins on earth, and because He has this power and proves it, He manifests Himself by it as God. He is now no longer Son of Man on earth, but He will come again as Son of Man, and then once more will show His authority to forgive sins on earth and speak the Word of Life to those who are helpless. To this the miracle refers us in type.

The paralytic is the type of Israel. We have a number of such types in the Word. In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John we read of an infirm man who was lying helpless in the five porches (typifying the law) and Jesus came and healed him, telling him, "rise, take up thy couch and walk." He is the type of Israel. In the third chapter of Acts another helpless one, lame from his mother's womb, was lying at the beautiful gate of the Temple. He is raised up and leaps and praises God. The name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene had raised him up. He also is a type of Israel. Aeneas in Acts 9:32-35, who had been lying for eight years upon a couch, paralyzed, and to whom Peter said, "Jesus the Christ heals thee," is not different in the typical application from the others.

It is Israel we have to see here represented in type. What He, the Son of Man, when He comes in glory, will do for His earthly people is seen in the healing of the paralytic. First, He will come and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. He will forgive their sins and remember them no more. And His people, the remnant of Israel, will break forth and sing, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). He will then say to His people, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Is. 43:25).

After this He will heal them. His own, poor, blinded, paralyzed and miserable people Israel will be the first of the nations

of the earth to receive complete healing for soul and body. They will leap and shout for joy like the lame man in the third chapter of Acts. Therefore it says in Malachi 4, where it speaks of the Son of Righteousness with healing beneath His wings, "Ye shall go forth and leap for joy (correct translation) as calves of the stall." "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Is. 33:24). The 103rd Psalm illustrates most beautifully Israel's coming praise. It is not only "who forgiveth all thine iniquities," but also "who healeth all thy diseases." The diseases in this psalm are generally spiritualized, but that is incorrect. They are bodily diseases. The healing of the paralytic has been put by the Holy Spirit in a special place to be in harmony with the whole scope of the Gospel of Matthew. What the Son of Man did in humiliation to one paralytic, the Son of Man in exaltation, coming again, will do to the whole nation and others in the earth in that coming age of millennial glory.

The healed one went to his house. "But the crowds seeing it were in fear, and glorified God, who gave such power to men" (verse 8). This was all they saw and did. They did not acknowledge Him as Jehovah, but simply in their formal way glorified God, which was but the service of the lips.

Besides the record of the healing of the paralytic we have nine other events put together once more in a peculiar order, far from being chronological, but in fullest harmony with the scope of this first book. These are: The call of Matthew, Jesus entering the house and sitting down with the publicans and sinners, the question of John's disciples, the ruler whose daughter had died and the Lord going to raise her up, the woman with an issue of blood who touches Him and is healed, the raising from the dead of the ruler's daughter, the healing of the two blind men, the healing of the dumb man as well as others and the Lord's compassion for the multitudes.

The call of Matthew, the same who was chosen by the Holy Spirit as the instrument for the writing of this Gospel, is related in a few words only: "And Jesus passing on thence saw a man sitting at the tax office called Matthew, and says to him, Follow Me. And he rose up and followed Him" (verse 9). Had Matthew written this book by himself and not by inspiration he would have followed the custom of other writers in making himself more prominent. He might have begun the book with an elaborate account of himself, his earthly circumstances and spoken, perhaps, at length of the scene which is but rapidly sketched in one verse. The Holy Spirit, however, guided his pen, and in the right place in the right words he records the story of his own call. The place given to it is significant. After the Lord had shown Himself in His power to be Jehovah He now manifests Himself in His grace to the lost and outcast sinner. What a scene it is which the one little verse puts before us! There he sits gathering in the tax, no thought of Him, no knowledge of Him. As a tax-gatherer he was, with his colleagues, despised by the leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Scribes, as well as by the mass of the people. Tax-gatherers (Publicans) were known as thieves, who enriched themselves by extortions. Another one said later, after the Lord had entered into his house: "If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I return him fourfold." However, this was not the cause why the people hated him. They looked upon them as miserable hirelings of the Roman government, who had put themselves under the control of the Gentile rule and helped in the subduing of the land and the people, their own land and their own brethren. The taxgatherers were, therefore, considered apostates. And such a one is called not alone to follow Jesus, but called and chosen as an instrument to write the kingly Gospel. Marvelous Grace! "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). This is perfectly illustrated in Matthew's case as well as in everyone who is saved by Grace. Well may we adoringly cry out: "Oh, the Grace that sought me!" With no thought of Him or for Him, busied in earthly things for the meat that perisheth, Matthew was called to follow Him. Matthew follows. He leaves the table, there is no bargaining on his side, no request to think it over, no desire to go first to do something else, but the first thing done was obedience to the voice which had spoken. Yet there is no claim of merit from his side in doing this. May we who are His own ever be ready in obedience to His call.

And Matthew invites Him to his house and makes Him a feast. It does not say in this Gospel that it was Matthew's house; in another Gospel the Holy Spirit has made a record of it (Mark 2:14-17). Here a company of tax-gatherers and sinners are come together, and He, the Holy One, the One who had come to seek and to save that which is lost, reclines with them at table and eats with them. Again we say, what a scene of grace! He who created the heavens and the earth in the creature's place in living touch with those who rebelled against Him! And there they stand, the poor, miserable, self-righteous Pharisees. They would in their religiousness, with their broad phylacteries, keeping the outside clean, not even touch a tax-gatherer, much less speak to him. To sit down and eat with them would have been in their eyes an almost unpardonable crime. And here they find Him whose words of divine authority they had heard, whose deeds of omnipotent power they had seen, who had manifested Himself as Jehovah, and He eats with tax-gatherers and sinners. Not the poor, wicked, self-confessed thieves, the tax-gatherers and harlots appear in this scene and throughout the Gospel as Satan's masterpiece, but

the proud, religious, self-righteous Pharisee. John the Baptist with his divine message came, and the Pharisees were rightly called by him the generation of vipers, but never the tax-gatherers and the harlots, who gladly came and confessed their sins and owned their lost condition. "John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the tax-gatherers and harlots believed him; but ye, when ye saw it, repented not yourselves afterwards to believe him" (Matt. 21:32). So here we see them, without any faith in Jesus and no knowledge of the God of mercy, wrapped up in the filthy rags, their own righteousness. What else then could they do but speak against the Lord's gracious way? "Why eateth your Master with tax-gatherers and sinners?" And the self-righteous Pharisees of ritualistic Christendom are not different from these, their forefathers, the Pharisees. No heart for Christ, no understanding of grace and no knowledge of God. In the answer our Lord gives He shows that what He does is in fullest harmony with His having come down into the earth. God would have mercy and He had come to show it. "They that are strong have not need of a physician, but those that are ill. But go and learn what that is -- I will have mercy and not sacrifice; for I have not come to call righteous men, but sinners."

Then the disciples of John came to Him with a question. "Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but Thy disciples fast not?" John's disciples were having a difficulty. Their master had made much of fasting and had enjoined it upon themselves, but the disciples of Jesus were not fasting. Were they not with Him in the tax-gatherer's house, eating and drinking? It is a straightforward question they bring. They come not as faultfinders or murmurers, like the Pharisees, but as intelligent inquirers, who were seeking light. So the Lord meets them and solves their difficulty by a gracious answer. He is still the same, ever ready to teach and instruct the saint who sits at His feet. The only difficulty is we are often so unlike these disciples of John, though our knowledge and our position is higher than theirs. Instead of taking the straight course in coming to Him first of all, we seek first the solution of our difficulties somewhere else. Perhaps the disciples of John who came here are the same who came and told Jesus, after they buried the headless body of their master.

"Can the sons of the bridechamber mourn so long as the bridegroom is with them? But days will come when the bridegroom will have been taken away from them, and then they will fast." He Himself is the bridegroom and He had come and while He was with them, mourning could have no place; His rejection was to come and then they would fast. But our Lord not merely answers the question and shows Himself greater than John, who was but the friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29), while Jesus is the bridegroom. He adds something which is of great importance. He speaks of a complete change of the order of things. "But no one puts a patch of new cloth on an old garment, or its filling up takes from the garment and a worse rent takes place. Nor do men put new wine into old skins, otherwise the skins burst and the wine is poured out, and the skins will be destroyed; but they put new wine into new skins and both are preserved together." The old garment is Judaism with its legal righteousness. It is no good and had proven itself as such. No value in it at all, only to be cast aside, utterly put aside. A new garment, a better righteousness was about to be given. He whose name is "Jehovah our righteousness" had come and a change of dispensations was to take place. And now as it has come the old is gone, it is no longer in existence. Yet that which the Lord here but faintly indicates, the impossibility of patching up that which is hopeless and worthless, has been done in Christendom, nay, is the almost universal state of Christendom. It is mixing law and grace together. The rent has become worse. A Judaistic Christianity which, with a profession of Grace and the Gospel, attempts to keep the law and fosters legal righteousness, is a greater abomination in the eyes of God, than professing Israel in the past, worshipping idols.

The new wine is the Gospel of Grace. The old skins* are the law, the Levitical institutions and all connected with it, New wine belongs into new skins. (Bottles in the authorized version. Skins were used and are being used in the Orient for the preservation of wine. Hence skins is the correct translation.) If the new wine is put into old skins, the skins will burst and then there is no wine left and the skins are also made useless. The two belong no longer together. So Gospel and Judaism, Law and Grace do not belong together. The Gospel of Grace enclosed in ceremonial Judaism will result in the loss of the new wine, and ceremonial Judaism, the old skins, will be gone as well. And such is ritualistic Christendom; it is neither Christian nor Jewish. It has not Judaism and has lost the new wine. "They say, they are Jews and are not" (Rev. 3:9). If men hold only the form of godliness and deny the power thereof, it will always mean outward religiousness, legality, self-righteousness and turning away from Grace and the Lord Himself.

The ruler whose daughter had died appears next on the scene. He is unlike the Centurion in the eighth chapter who had the greater faith and wanted the Lord to speak but a word. The ruler of the Jews wants the Lord to come in person to his house and touch the one, without life. His personal presence is demanded to raise the daughter from death to life. That we have here once more dispensational truths before us is seen at the first glance. Israel is often spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures as a daughter, the daughter of Zion. In the short book of Lamentations alone we find the word, daughter, as

meaning Israel , eighteen times. The daughter who has died is then likewise a type of the people. To bring life to Israel can be only through the presence of Him, who is the life. When He came the first time, they would not come to Him that they might have life. But He is coming again to raise up His people, to touch the daughter of Zion .

And while our Lord goes forward to fulfill the request of the ruler, another incident comes in by the way. An unclean woman touches Him and is healed. "And behold a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years came behind and touched the hem of His garment; for she said within herself, if I should only touch His garment I shall be healed. But Jesus, turning and seeing her, said, 'Be of good courage, daughter, thy faith hath healed thee.' And the woman was healed from that hour" (verses 20-23). She represents the Gentiles and the grace which comes to them by faith, while the resurrection of Israel is still unaccomplished, but drawing' nigh. Faith touches Him now and receives of Him salvation with its precious assistance. But the touching of Him is parenthetical, just as the present age with salvation come to the Gentiles is a parenthesis. Jesus comes to the house of the ruler. It has the meaning of relationship. So will He come to raise up the daughter of Israel . "And when Jesus was come to the house of the ruler, and saw the flute players and the crowd making a tumult, He said, Withdraw, for the damsel is not dead, but sleeps. And they derided Him. But when the crowd had been put out, He went in and took her hand; and the damsel rose up. And the fame of it went out into all that land." May not the crowd of unbelievers and mockers represent nominal Christendom? Surely the same is in Christendom which we see here. The Lord has declared in His Word, eternally settled in the heavens, His loving purposes concerning Israel . It can well be said of His earthly people, as He said of the ruler's daughter, "The damsel is not dead, but sleeps." The Scriptures are full of promises to Israel and the day of their resurrection and restoration, yet Christendom treats all this with unbelief and ridicule. There is no understanding of God's purposes, the plan of the ages, and hence no heart and no love for the people, who are still beloved for the Father's sake and whose are the promises. Our Lord said to that crowd, "Withdraw," and they were put out of the scene, when He came and touched the damsel to raise her up. And may we not see in this also the end of the motley throng in Christendom, which will be put off the scene when He comes to do the miracle of His mercy and His power on Israel ?

And when He does this to His people then surely the blind will see and the dumb speak.

In the healing of the two blind men, which comes immediately after the raising of the maid, we see again a dispensational foreshadowing of Israel 's present condition and future healing. It is true the miracle of the two blind men who cry to Him is often spiritualized, and we do not at all deny that he has an application in that direction. First of all, however, we must not overlook the original meaning it has in this Jewish Gospel, and as we do this we shall yet more and more grasp the divine scope of the Gospel of Matthew. "Two blind men followed Him crying and saying, Have mercy on us, Son of David." The two blind men picture Israel 's condition as the leper did in the beginning of the eighth chapter. They were blind, when He came and dwelt among them. His own knew Him not and received Him not. But how much greater has their blindness become since they not only have cast Him out, but rejected the offer of His mercy after His resurrection and ascension? Now it is, Let their eyes be darkened. Blindness in part has happened to Israel . When the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, had come to Rome, and in his burning love for his brethren, his kinsmen, had sent for them and in disagreement they began to leave, he addressed to them the Word, so true throughout this age: "Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go to this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear and not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive. For the heart of this people has become fat, and they hear heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them" (Acts 28:25-28). But this is not Israel 's final condition. Like these two blind men, so Israel will cry out of the deepest darkness, out of the terrible night of Jacob's trouble, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." Son of David is His title as He stands in relation to His earthly people, and in this passage we have Him called by this name for the first time in the Gospel. The cry these two men utter is specifically Jewish, and surely no Gentile will cry to Him as Son of David. Later in the Gospel a Gentile woman cried after Him, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is miserably possessed by a demon. But He did not answer her a word" (Matt 15:23). When she called again, she said, "Lord, help me," and after she had taken her place with the dogs the Lord acknowledged her faith. And when thus Israel cries for mercy and waits for the coming of the Son of Man and the Son of David, He will arise and have mercy upon Zion and "in wrath He will remember mercy." "He will return again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

He did not pass by the two blind men. "When He was come to the house (which always stands for relationship), the blind men came to Him, and Jesus says to them, Do ye believe that I am able to do this? They say to Him, Yea, Lord. Then He

touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you. And their eyes were opened." So He healed them by coming in touch with them not absent and unseen, but present and touching them. He is absent from the earth now unseen to the eyes of men, yet we believe in Him and through Him on God; we believe, too, that He is able, that all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth and it is also now "according to your faith." But He who is absent will come back to earth again, back into definite relationship with His earthly people, and then and not before will Israel's blindness be ended. And what these two healed men did, spreading His name abroad in all that land, believing and seeing Israel will do in that day.

Next comes a dumb man possessed by a demon, and the demon having been cast out, the dumb spake. This, too, refers to Israel still under the control of Satan's power. Instead of praising their King, Israel was dumb and is dumb now; but the demon will be cast out, and then Israel will speak His praises and sing the new song unto the Lord. What a day it will be, when dumb Israel is at last the people "formed to show forth His praise!" "And the crowds were astonished, saying, It has never been seen thus in Israel ." And in that day when Israel is healed it will be said, "What God has wrought," and all the nations will know that He is Jehovah. We learn therefore in the three miracles -- the raising of the maid from the dead, the opening of the eyes of the blind and the casting out of the demon from the dumb man -- the blessed story of Israel's coming redemption. Israel raised from the dead will see and behold the King, the Son of David, and speak and praise His name. It is not less the way of divine grace with each sinner who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are dead in trespasses and sins. He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that an hour is coming and now is (and the hour is not yet passed), when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that have heard shall live" (John 5:24), and those He raises from the dead to them He gives eternal life, which is He Himself, and gives them the light of life, His Spirit, to enlighten them and guide them. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak to His praise who loveth us and has redeemed us by His blood and delivered us from the power of darkness. Oh, how blessedly rich and full in His Word!

But now the dark side. While the crowds were astonished, the Pharisees said, He casts out the demons through the prince of demons. Here for the first time in the Gospel do we find the awful blasphemy of the religious leaders of the people. The power of Jehovah had been manifested before their very eyes. The leper had been cleansed and gone to the priest, who knew Jehovah's power had done it; the tempest had been stilled, the demons cast out, the paralytic healed, the dead maid raised up, the blind saw and the dumb spake; but instead of bowing in the august presence of the King and acknowledging the power, which manifested itself in such a manner, as divine, they attributed it to Satan, the prince of demons. They accused the Lord from heaven of being the instrument of Satan! Awful blasphemy! It is here but the first muttering of the coming storm. The storm breaks fully in the twelfth chapter. There they stand in all their Satanic boldness and charge Him with casting out demons by Beelzebub. They committed there and then the sin against the Spirit. We must reserve the closer investigation of this matter till we read the chapter in which our Lord speaks of that sin. Here we notice especially that the rejection of our Lord began with the blind leaders of the people, the religious, self-righteous Pharisees. It is not different in Christendom with the falling away from the faith.

Our Lord continued in His ministry in Galilee . "And Jesus went round all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom and healing every disease and every bodily weakness" (verse 35). What an activity this must have been! He walked up and down through Galilee , and certainly not one of the numerous villages was forgotten by Him. Let us notice again that it is the Gospel of the kingdom He preached, therefore Kingdom signs were present. When He, the King, comes again, and the Kingdom of the heavens is established and the heavens rule, then disease and all that offends will be put away.

But what scenes met His eye as He passed thus ministering among the crowds of people? He beheld them as worn out, harassed and cast away as sheep not having a shepherd. His loving heart was moved with compassion for them. In this loving sympathy He reveals Himself as the Shepherd of Israel. Long before His Spirit in the prophets had spoken of the scene we behold here. "Son of Man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel ; prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds: Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do not feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ... And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, where they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth and none did search and seek after them" (Ezek. 34). In the same chapter we read what Jehovah the Shepherd of Israel says: "I will both search My sheep and find them out. ... I will seek out My sheep. ... I will bring them out from the people and gather them from the countries. ... I will feed them in a good pasture. ... I will feed My flock and I will cause them to lie down. ... I will seek that which was lost. ... I will make with them a

covenant of peace," ... etc. He came thus to His own as the Shepherd, but they did not want Him. As the good Shepherd He laid down His life for the sheep, becoming the great Shepherd in resurrection and the chief Shepherd in glory. But He is also the Shepherd of Israel, and thinks still of His earthly people and loves them. That thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel will yet be literally fulfilled through the returning Son of Man, and then His poor flock will know Him and sing in the earth what the believer's heart sings now: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." "Then saith He to His disciples, The harvest is great and the workmen few; supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth workmen unto His harvest." He Himself is the Lord of the harvest. He sends forth the workmen and He equips them for the service. But there is a great difference between the sending forth of the workmen to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and to heal the sick, and the gifts, the Lord in glory, as the Head of His body, has given to the church. The sending forth of the laborers into the harvest will be before us in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X

We learn now how our Lord, who is truly the Lord of the Harvest, sends forth the laborers. He does it as the King, who came to offer the Kingdom to Israel . He sends forth the laborers into the harvest as messengers of Himself to announce the same message, which He announced, "The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh," and confers to them the authority and the power to heal the infirm, raise the dead, and cast out demons. This sending forth, as we shall see, was altogether in connection with the Kingdom; it was therefore only temporary and ended with the complete rejection of the Kingdom by Israel . However, there is a time coming when a Jewish remnant will again go forth to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. This will be during the great tribulation.

It is strange that Christian believers should go to the tenth chapter of Matthew and look upon what is written here as meaning the sending forth of the laborers, missionaries, preachers and teachers to proclaim the Gospel of Grace, when there was first of all no Gospel of Grace and when the words of our Lord so clearly show that it could not refer to anything outside of Israel and Israel's land. Yet this wrong application is constantly made. It is claimed by some on the authority of this chapter that missionary efforts should consist in not preaching alone, but healing of the sick. They send out, therefore, missionaries who are physicians, and supply them with drugs and surgical instruments, as if our Lord did anything of the kind. Others again claim that the healing of the sick, besides the preaching of what they term, the Kingdom of the heavens, is still in order, and they act according to this belief; however, the raising of the dead they do not include in their powers. The Mormons with their abominable and blasphemous teachings likewise go to this chapter, going forth two by two and trying to follow the other commands given. All this confusion is at once ended, when we look upon the sending forth of the laborers here, as the sending forth of messengers to announce the Kingdom; after the Kingdom had been postponed this special mission of the twelve ended.

The first verse in the chapter tells us that He called His twelve disciples and that He gave them power over unclean spirits, so that they should cast them out, and heal every disease and every bodily weakness. The twelve messengers, whose names are given in the second, third and fourth verses, stand as such always in relation to Israel . He tells them later, "Ye shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel " (chapter 19:28). Even in the New Jerusalem there will be this distinction. "Her shining was like a most precious stone, as a crystal like jasper stone; having a great, high wall; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:12-14). The twelve apostles thus stand in prominent and definite relation to Israel . Here among the twelve, who are sent forth, is also the name of Judas the Iscariot, who delivered Him up. After his awful end another was rightly and divinely chosen in his place, that is Matthias. It is astonishing to hear able teachers of the Word talk and write of the mistake which the eleven made in the first chapter in the book of Acts in casting the lot and choosing Matthias. We have heard all kinds of criticism upon their action. They were, however, guided aright, and did not make a mistake, for they acted upon the Word of God in the Psalms, and in the casting of the lot they were fully authorized by the Old Testament Scriptures, and besides this, they did it in dependence on the Lord. It is also said by these brethren who see in the choosing of Matthias an error, that the Lord wanted Paul to be the one who belongs to the twelve. This is the worst blunder of all. The Holy Spirit fully endorses the action of the eleven before Pentecost through Paul himself. In 1 Corinthians 15:5 we read that the risen Lord was seen by the twelve. In the eighth verse Paul says: "And last of all, as to an abortion, He appeared to me also." It is clear from this passage that Paul does not belong to the twelve. Paul, as apostle to the Gentiles, is an apostle not from men nor through man (Gal. 1:1); he received his apostleship from the risen and glorified Lord. It is through Paul as the one who has no earthly connections, but has it all from above, that the Gospel of

Grace as well as the mystery hid in former ages is made known.

In the Epistles given through Paul we read, therefore, all concerning the Gospel of Grace, the church and the ministry, which is for this age, an age in which our Lord Jesus Christ is not King, but Lord in Glory. It is from the Glory as Head of the Body He gives gifts. "He that descended is the same who also ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things; and He has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:10-12). He ministers then through the instruments He chooses from above, and nowhere in the Epistles do we read anything like that which is contained in the tenth chapter of Matthew. Let us divide the Word of truth rightly and not put the church and the ministry of the church in the chapter before us. All this will become clearer to us as we turn to the different verses.

For instance, in the sixth verse we read: "Go not off into the way of the Gentiles, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ." This is a limited sphere. They had nothing to do and could have nothing to do with the Gentiles nor with Samaritans. After the death and resurrection of our Lord the Gospel was to be preached, beginning in Jerusalem , in Samaria , to the uttermost parts of the earth. The lost sheep of the house of Israel , that much "spiritualized" phrase, were not Gentiles, nor were they the church, for a church was not and could not be then. Their preaching was only this text: "The Kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh." What does it mean? It meant that the promised Kingdom for Israel , and through Israel to the nations, the Kingdom with all its earthly blessings, was about to come. It was heralding the fact of the presence of the King to set up the Kingdom, if His own would have it. Such a preaching of the Kingdom of the heavens is not given now. After the church age closes by the removal of the church from the earth into heaven, as foreshadowed by the vessel which Peter saw coming out of heaven and again received into heaven, then the kingdom will again draw nigh in the person of the returning King and Lord with His saints.

He tells them: "Ye have received gratuitously, give gratuitously. (Christian Science also claims to follow this chapter by healing the sick. But "freely give" is not practiced by this wicked cult. It costs to be healed.) Do not provide yourselves with gold, or silver, or brass, for your belts, nor scrip for the way, nor two body coats, nor sandals, nor a staff, for the workman is worthy of his nourishment." Some well-meaning persons have tried to follow out these commandments to the very letter, but it was never meant for the servants of Christ to be followed literally during this age. However, two principles are in these words before us, which find their application in this age. They had received the message and power gratuitously and thus they were to give it. The Gospel is to be free, without price and without money. This principle holds good at this time. How great the failure in Christendom, with its salaried ministry, pew rents, fairs and entertainments to make money for the building of churches and other things!

They were to go forth with no provision made. This made them altogether dependent upon the Lord who had sent them. Trust in the Lord, who sends out the laborer, is another principle, which belongs to this age as well. All disappointment and discouragement for the servant of Christ comes in when he looks not to the Lord but to man. The Lord never disappoints. "And He said to them, When I sent you without purse and scrip and sandals, did ye lack anything? And they said, Nothing" (Luke 22:35). The Lord who calls His servants and sends them forth always keeps them when they walk in simple dependence upon Himself.

From verses 11 to 15 we read other instructions for this special mission. In city and village they were to inquire for them who are worthy. The worthiness consisted undoubtedly in a desire to know Messiah, "waiting for the consolation of Israel ." The Gospel of Grace, which is preached now, is preached without any such distinction. Its message is: "Whosoever," even the most unworthy. At the end of this paragraph (verse 15) there is the threatening of judgment when their message is not accepted.

In the next four verses (16-20) we read of how their ministry would be accepted. "Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves; be therefore prudent as the serpents and guileless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to sanhedrins and scourge you in their synagogues." And so they did reject the Lord and the servants He sent. But it was not alone confined to the Jews -- sanhedrin and synagogue -- but the Gentiles would treat them in the same way. "And ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the nations." Part of the fulfillment of all this is found in the book of Acts. We see here also a deeper meaning and refer to these words again when we come to another verse.

"But when they deliver you up, be not careful how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given to you in that hour what ye shall speak. For ye are not the speakers, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you." We can point to Stephen in Acts 7 as an illustration how fully this promise has been fulfilled.

The most bitter persecution is now promised them by our Lord: "But brother shall deliver up brother to death, and father child; and children shall rise up against parents and shall put them to death; and ye shall be hated of all on account of my name. But he that has endured to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee to the other, for verily I say to you, Ye shall not have completed the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come." These words are perhaps the most important in the whole chapter. They are a kind of key to the entire chapter.

The coming of the Son of Man which is mentioned is His second coming. The giving of the testimony by Jewish disciples concerning the Kingdom of the heavens is according to the words of our Lord to continue till He comes again. How are we to understand this? The testimony which was begun by the apostles up to the time when Israel rejected once more the offers of mercy from the risen Lord, when He was still waiting for their repentance as a nation, is an unfinished testimony. After that offer was again rejected the great parenthesis, the church age, began, and during this age (which is not reckoned in the Old Testament) there is no more Jewish testimony of the kingdom of the heavens. Israel nationally is set aside, blindness in part is theirs till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. When the church is complete and the rapture of the saints has taken place, then the Lord begins to deal with His people Israel again. There is the seventieth week of Daniel 9 yet to come, and this week of seven years forms the end of this dispensation. In this coming last week of seven years the church testimony is finished and Jewish believers will take up the unfinished testimony to the nation and proclaim once more "The Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." The 24th chapter in this Gospel is a continuation of the 10th chapter, inasmuch as Matthew 24 shows us the unfinished testimony of the 10th chapter, finished and completed. (Read Matt. 24:5-32.) In Matt. 24 we read of the great tribulation, so likewise here in the tenth chapter. In Micah 7 we read of a dark picture and there the Spirit of Christ reveals a tribulation, which His lips on the earth proclaim to His disciples. Then during the tribulation (never now) it will mean enduring to the end and salvation will come then by the visible return of the Son of Man from heaven. What our Lord said in verses 17 and 18 about persecutions from Jews and Gentiles for these witnesses will find its final great fulfilment in that great tribulation, when not alone the unbelieving nation will persecute the believing and witnessing Jewish remnant, but nations as well.

From the twenty-fourth verse to the end of the chapter our Lord continues to speak to the twelve, who were about to go forth. His words are now words of encouragement, not to fear; they were safe in the hands of His Father. While all these words had a special significance for the Jewish disciples our Lord sent forth, they also contain precious comfort and instruction for every true believer living in this day. It would be extremely one sided to pass over these words of our Lord and treat them as not containing truth for us. Every word which our God and Father has been pleased to give us has a meaning for us.

First of all our Lord speaks of the position of the disciple. "The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the bondman above his Lord. It is sufficient for the disciple that he should become as his teacher, and the bondman as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household?" (verses 24-26). (Beelzebub means "Lord of the house," that is, Satan as the possessor of the house.) The position of the disciple is then according to these words identification of the closest kind with His Lord. However, to learn fully of this identification with Him, who is our Saviour and Lord, we do not go to this first Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew was not written with this purpose. In the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Life and Resurrection, and the First Epistle of John as well as the Epistles given by the Holy Spirit through Paul, we learn of the blessed identification which exists by Grace between the Lord and His own. How precious it is revealed by Himself in that Holy of Holies in the Gospel of John, the seventeenth chapter. And this chapter itself is but the germ out of which the Holy Spirit develops in the Pauline Epistles, the Gospel of Grace and the truth concerning the Church as the Body of Christ. In that marvelous chapter our Lord intercedes before His Father for the very disciples (as well as ourselves) whom He sent forth in the beginning of His earthly ministry. Altogether one with Him, is the golden thread which goes through His prayer. And He said; "The world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil." In the First Epistle of John the Holy Spirit says: "Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you," and in the upper room He said to His own: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before you" (John 15:18). It is therefore an identification of the closest nature in which we stand with our Lord. And do we ever stop and think on these things? How little we do, how little all this is real to us? It is true little of the reproach of Christ is seen in these days; but

little hatred from the side of the world, nor any names of rejection. We ask why? The answer is soon given. The professing church has turned her back upon her heavenly calling and with that upon the Lord. She has committed adultery in loving the world and has returned to the beggarly elements of this world. But let the true believer leave this camp and go outside of that which professes His name and soon enough the reproach will have to be borne. Christendom and the world has little use for one who walks in true separation. Still how precious is that place. If it is reproach it is His reproach; hatred, it is the same with which He was hated. Reproach, hatred and persecution is the seal of identification and fellowship with Him.

But with this our Lord does not leave it. He comforts those He sent forth. And now He speaks the word which is to calm their fears: "Fear not." What meaning it has coming from such lips! Angels spoke the word "Fear not" in olden times. They are but creatures sent with a message from the Throne. But He who speaks here is the Creator Himself made a little lower than the angels He had created; the Omnipotent One, our Lord speaks, "Fear not!" "Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, and secret which shall not be known. What I say to you in darkness speak in the light, and what ye hear in the ear preach upon the houses." In other words, He tells them of the day when all is to be uncovered, and the secret things to be made known. This fact is ever to be before them. It is to be daily before us. Oh, brethren, let us learn to look at all things in the light of the Judgment seat! "Do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord shall come, who shall also bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts; and then shall each have his praise from God" (1 Corinth. 4:5). In view of this revelation of the secret things our Lord tells us to be bold and to declare the whole counsel of God.

Then what harm can men do to him anyway, who is Christ's (and Christ is God's). We belong to God, we are His own. No man can do us any harm with his persecution or hatred. Therefore He says now: "And be not afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." What if they should even go so far as to kill the body, as they often did and will yet do, especially to the Jewish Saints in the great tribulation. (We mention again that all these words have a future meaning and fulfillment during that time of Jacob's trouble, after the removal of the church. The Jewish believers will know the comfort of these words, as Saints during this age know them.) If they kill the body they cannot kill the soul and the killing of the body and faithful testimony given through martyrdom will enrich the Lord as well as the disciple. We may not be called upon to surrender thus our bodies, yet the principle of it is ours; fear nothing outward, nothing temporal, whatever it may be. "But fear rather Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Here Gehenna and not Hades. Gehenna is correctly translated hell.) And He who is able to do that and will do it at the great white Throne to the unsaved, is God. He then is to be feared alone. Of course all this is not to be read as referring to the believer. He who has believed is passed from death unto life, he does not come into judgment. Once saved means always saved. We must, however, not overlook the fact that among the twelve there was one who was not saved. It was the first warning coming to Judas. He looked to outward things and was a thief.

Words of comfort come next. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father; but of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are better than many sparrows." And where is the child of God who does not rejoice in such a statement? He knows the sparrows upon the housetops as He knew the fish in the sea and the piece of money, which laid on the bottom of the sea. He knows every hair of His own. He speaks of a special providence which watches over every child of God. Happy are we if we walk in the simplicity of a child before our Father and our Lord and ever know by day and by night "He careth for you." We are all in His hands.

The words of responsibility follow: "Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, I also will confess before my Father who is in the Heavens. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in the Heavens."

He who believes in the name of the Lord Jesus is saved; confession with the mouth follows (Rom. 10:8-12).

Every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and confesses with the mouth that Jesus is Lord, such confesses Him before men. This confession of Him is ever to increase not only with the lips but in the conduct and the life. Thus every true believer is a confessor of Jesus as Lord and the Lord in His day will confess him before His Father. Individual faithfulness will of course bring a corresponding reward. The unsaved denies Him before men. He may have the name of Jesus upon his lips but he trusts not in Him and this is the denial and he who has not believed will not be confessed before

the Father, because the unsaved is none of His.

In the few verses which follow, 34-36, our Lord describes the characteristics of this age, the age in which we live and which is so rapidly ending up. "Do not think that I have come to send peace upon the earth. I have not come to send peace, but a sword." Many puzzled Jews have come to us with this word and asked what Jesus of Nazareth meant. How could He be our Messiah when instead "of peace He sends the sword?" "Is not Messiah the Prince of Peace to speak peace to the nations?" However we learn that the words He speaks here, foretelling the history of this age, are blessed evidences of His divinity. This age is not the age of world wide peace. "Peace on Earth" is not yet reached in the divine program for the earth. The King and His kingdom rejected, He Himself absent, strife, confusion and wars, the sword reigns. But the King is coming back. Before His return as King out of the opened heavens the sword will be unsheathed and peace be taken from the earth. The nations may boast of peace among themselves at this time, but it will not last very long and soon the rider upon the red horse will gallop over the earth (Rev. 6). Peace like a river will surely flow after the King has come and all swords have become plowshares. The Lord hasten the day.

And what place and position has the true disciple with Christ in this age? Christ is rejected and scorned. He Himself is to be owned and full devotedness shown to Him, and that means -- suffering.

"He who loves father or mother above me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter above me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He that finds his life shall lose it; he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it."

But there is another side. Not alone the suffering but the glory which is to follow. The recompense is as sure as the suffering and the recompense will be greater than the sufferings.

"He that receives you, receives me, and he that receives me, receives Him who has sent me. He that receives a prophet in a prophet's name shall receive a prophet's reward; he that receives a righteous man in a righteous man's name shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily he shall in no wise lose his reward." The one who receives a prophet shall have the blessing of a prophet -- he who receives the Son of God becomes the Son of God, Heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ, and anything done, which has love for its motive, will not be forgotten.

CHAPTER XI

The first verse of this chapter belongs to the sending forth of the twelve, and should be put to the previous chapter. "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and preach in their cities." He took the work upon Himself once more, and with the disciples He had sent forth He preached the Kingdom of the Heavens to be at hand. The Lord of the harvest, who had sent forth the laborers, enters the harvestfield Himself. His rejection is now to be made more and more manifest. He came to His own and His own received Him not. Gradually in this Gospel we have seen how Israel had no heart, no desire for Him; they were indeed blinded. The rejection of Him who had so fully shown Himself to be Jehovah manifested in the flesh, is now rapidly approaching. Soon He will leave the house and take His place at the seashore (chapter 13:1) to teach the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens, that which is to pass, while He, the King, and with Him the Kingdom is rejected. The eleventh chapter is the beginning of the crisis, and the twelfth chapter is the great turning point.

First of all we have the record of John the Baptist in prison sending to our Lord, and the message our Lord sends to him. "But John, having heard in the prison the works of the Christ, sent by His disciples and said to Him, Art Thou the Coming One? or are we to wait for another? And Jesus answering said to them, Go, report to John what you hear and see. Blind men see and lame walk; lepers are cleansed and deaf hear; and dead are raised and poor have glad tidings preached to them; and blessed is whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

The incident has been differently interpreted. From the fourth chapter we learned that when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison He departed into Galilee (4:12). The fourteenth chapter in this Gospel gives the story of John's imprisonment and his death. In this arrangement the divine hand which guided Matthew's hand is seen again.

John the Baptist spent therefore some time in prison before he sent his disciples to our Lord. It is generally assumed that John, the preacher of repentance and the coming Kingdom, had finally expected that Jesus would soon establish the Kingdom, and that he, as the voice in the wilderness, the forerunner, would have a share in its glories. Instead of this expected glory he is cast into a dungeon. He had faithfully discharged his duties. Not like a miserable hireling had he acted, but fearlessly he had denounced evil, and for all his faithfulness nothing but suffering, rejection and death staring him in the face. It is, therefore, said by many that he doubted that Jesus was truly the promised Messiah, and asked for evidences of His Messiahship. However, this interpretation can hardly be right. If we turn to the Gospel of John and read his utterances there, we find that he had a complete insight into the work which Christ as the Lamb of God was to do, and he knew Jesus was the Christ. It is also reasonable to assume that his own disciples who had come to our Lord with the question, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast but Thy disciples fast not?" had come to him and given him the answer, that the bridegroom, the Messiah, was to be taken away from them, and then there would be fasting.

Others have looked upon this incident in another light. They attempt to shield John the Baptist altogether, and defend his absolute faith and confidence in Jesus as the Christ. According to many John was perfect so that no doubt could assail his mind. But why should he send from his prison and ask of the Lord such information? The difficulty is, according to these, solved, in that John desired the answer not for any confirmation of his faith, but that he sent his disciples because they were staggered in their belief. Martin Luther says on this passage: "It is certain that John sent to inquire on account of his disciples; for they did not yet regard Christ as the One for Whom He was to be regarded. They waited for one who would move along pompously, highly learned, as a mighty King. John treats them tenderly, endures their weak faith till they become strong; does not reject them because they do not yet believe in Him so firmly." This solution of the difficulty, however, lacks scriptural support. It is a fanciful theory that John should have sent to Christ for the sake of his disciples. We need not claim perfection and infallibility for John the Baptist, for he had neither. Only one on the earth was perfect and infallible, sinless and spotless, who was never assailed by doubt, and that one is our Lord Jesus Christ. John, like Elijah, was "a man of like passions as we are." Elijah's ministry was marked with individual failure. His life was threatened by Jezebel: "And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:3, 4). What a failure this was! Surely there is nothing good in man, and even in the most privileged servants of the Lord there is the flesh and the failure of the flesh. John in prison passes through the experience of Elijah in whose spirit and power he had come. It would be incorrect to say that John doubted the Messiahship of Jesus. He knew Him as the Christ. Yet in prison his patience is severely tested, and doubt troubles him. In this test he looks to Him, whom he always honored as his Lord, for succor. He sent directly to the Lord, and certainly He knew the weak and doubting one, as well as his faith, which looked to Him for strength and a word of cheer.

And is this not an incident with lessons for us? It teacheth us to confess our weakness before Him, and look to the Lord for the strength and comfort He alone can give.

We may also meditate in connection with John in prison and his doubt with another servant of the Lord in prison. There in Rome he sat and wrote, "I, Paul, prisoner of the Lord." And out of that prison came forth the strains of praise and joy. How many "ifs" and "hows" and "whys" he might have asked? How many murmurings and bitter complaints might have flown from His lips? He sends out a letter from the dungeon which has not the slightest hint of failure in it, where sin and flesh is not seen and not mentioned. But what is the secret of the rejoicing prisoner of the Lord? What is the secret which underlies the triumphant language of joy in the Epistle to the Philippians? It is one word, "Christ." The life of Christ in him, and Christ the center, Christ the pattern and object before the apostle, and Christ his strength, enabled by Him to do all things, is the secret of all; and that John the Baptist, the greatest of the Old Testament did not know, nor could he be in possession of it. It is our full inheritance as believers on the other side of the cross. Oh, may we live in enjoyment of it, up to the mark of our position and possession in Christ.

But we return to our chapter. The Lord gives the message for John. If his disciples had any doubt, the words of the Lord must have dispersed these. And when John heard the answer it must have brought him strength and cheer. The Lord speaks of the signs of the Kingdom which He did in fulfillment of Old Testament predictions. We have shown before how in the miracles our Lord performed of Isaiah 35:5 and 6 was fulfilled. The dead also were raised and the glad tidings preached. The spiritual significance of the latter two is of course fully seen in the Gospel of John. The words, "And blessed is whosoever shall not be offended in Me," are words of exhortation to John the Baptist. How like the Lord to put them at the

end of the message. The Holy Spirit has repeated this in the Epistles where the admonitions are always coming in at the end or after words of love and commendation were given first. The admonition was certainly understood by John, and how deeply it must have exercised him. It led to humiliation, heartsearching, and in the end it was a beatitude, a "blessed." May it ever be so with us.

And all this was not unknown to the crowds. They stood there and heard what passed between the Lord and John's disciples. They heard the question they asked and the answer our Lord sent to John. John the Baptist was known by these crowds and they believed in him as a great prophet. His testimony and his personality might then be discredited by them. The Lord addresses himself to the crowds in what may be termed a defense of John. He shields him now before any criticism, and maintains his testimony and divinely given mission.

"But as they went away Jesus began to say to the crowds concerning John, What went ye out in the wilderness to see? A reed moved about by the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in delicate raiment? Behold those who wear delicate things are in the houses of kings. But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet; this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say to you, that there is not risen among the born of women a greater than John the Baptist. But he who is a little one in the Kingdom of the Heavens is greater than he."

We confine our remarks to the end sentence. What is the meaning of it? Its common application is generally the thought that our Lord speaks here of the church age, and that the least in this present dispensation is greater than John in the old dispensation, to which he fully belonged. That such is the case no one doubts. We as Christian believers are higher in our standing than the Old Testament saints. However, the primary meaning of the passage is a different one. The question would be first of all, "What does our Lord mean here by Kingdom of the Heavens?" Up to the thirteenth chapter in the Gospel of Matthew the phrase, "Kingdom of the Heavens," has only one meaning, viz., the Kingdom to be established in the earth, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets. In the thirteenth chapter it is the Kingdom of the Heavens in the hands of man in its development during the absence of the King. We cannot think, therefore, that in the eleventh chapter, where it is still the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens, our Lord would introduce the present age. This would be all out of keeping with the scope of Matthew. Now as our Lord means the Kingdom of the Heavens actually set up in the earth, the meaning of His words becomes clear. The little one who is in that Kingdom of the Heavens, when it has come at last, will be greater than John, who but announced the Kingdom to come. It foreshadows the glories of the coming Kingdom age, when the little one will be greater than John ever could be in the earth.

But our Lord adds: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens is taken by violence, and the violent seize on it. For all the prophets and the law have prophesied unto John. And if ye will receive it (him), this is Elias, who is to come. He that has ears to hear let him hear."

These words are again very simple and to our mind present no difficulty at all, if they are taken in their literal meaning. It is strange that the words of our Lord should be made to mean the Gospel, eternal life, conversion and the sinner's own efforts to take possession of it. Yet such is the case. Many preachers and evangelists have no other light on this passage and preach and exhort from it what is in direct opposition to the blessed Gospel. According to these preachers, the violent, who take the Kingdom by force or press into it (Luke 16:16), are unsaved sinners. The devil, the flesh and the world stand in the sinner's way of salvation, so they teach, and he must use force, great violence, to enter into the Kingdom. After due exercise, strenuous effort and violence he will be able to take it by force. This is the general interpretation of the passage. It is as erroneous as the interpretation of the parable of the treasure hid in the field and the pearl of great price, which makes the sinner give his all (though he has nothing to give) to buy salvation.

No, the violent who take the Kingdom by violence are not unsaved sinners, who seek salvation and that salvation must be taken by force. Salvation is by grace, it is God's free gift, and the sinner is not saved through and in his violent efforts, but in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees and scribes who stand here before our Lord are the violent who take the Kingdom of the Heavens (never the Gospel) by force and seize on it. Our Lord says: "From the days of John until now." The forerunner, John, was violently rejected by the Pharisees. This foreshadowed the rejection of the King, the rejection of the preaching of the Kingdom and the Kingdom itself. In this seizing upon the Kingdom, rejecting it, the Kingdom of the Heavens suffered violence. It was

rejected by force and now is postponed till He comes again. If they had received John the Baptist he would have been Elias. But he was rejected, they would not have it so. They did violence to what the King had come to bring. Another Elias will come once more, and then no violence can keep back the coming of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Let us notice that John's ministry was exclusively to his own people. Elijah's ministry is still future and falls in the period of the great tribulation. His ministry and testimony will be confined to the land of Israel and to the remnant of Israel . Any one who claims to be Elijah incarnate at this time is either a downright fraud, unbalanced in his mind, or so grossly ignorant of the Word of God and His revealed purposes, that the proud imaginations of his heart lead him astray into such a ridiculous claim.

The words which follow are a true description of the generation which was privileged to see the King, Jehovah, manifested in the earth. "But to whom shall I liken this generation? It is like children calling to their companions, saying, We have piped to you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wailed. For John has come, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a demon. The son of man has come eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man that is eating and wine drinking, a friend of tax-gatherers, and of sinners; -- and wisdom has been justified by her children" (verses 15-19). In other words, the generation was a foolish lot of people who could not be suited by anything. They were like children. It is a wonderful declaration of our Lord of the condition of the people, His own to whom He came, and who received Him not. The illustration is taken from children playing with the real things of life, with joy and sorrow, and idling their time away. John appeared, among them and they were dissatisfied with him. He was too strict, too severe; they cared not for him, and because he would not sit down and eat and drink with them they said, he has a demon. Then the Lord came. Truth and mercy were revealed through Him. He sat down with the tax-gatherers and sinners and mingled with them, eating and drinking. Divine mercy towards the fallen and outcast was most blessedly shown -- the spotless One in touch with the defiled and lost, calling sinners to repentance. But they had no understanding for this, no heart for that wonderful grace. He was in their eyes but a man, for they said: "Behold a man -- eating and drinking." They put Him on the same level with the wine drinking company. Neither mourning nor rejoicing suited them. Behind it stands the evil heart, the natural man, never pleased with God's way, always finding fault. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). The words "wisdom has been justified by her children" has found many different interpretations. Its meaning is very simple. While the large mass of people were thus rejecting John and Christ, and had no understanding for God's love and mercy made known, there were others, a few indeed, and these accepted the teaching of John and believed in the Lord. "Wisdom" is an Old Testament name of our Lord. The whole book of Proverbs abounds with the word Wisdom and the speech Wisdom utters. The eighth chapter tells us that Wisdom is a person and that person is our Lord. Those who believed in Him are the children of Wisdom and they had no fault to find, neither with John's burning call to repentance, nor with the mercy of Christ in eating and drinking with the tax-gatherers and sinners. In this way Wisdom was justified by her children.

And is the present generation of nominal Christian better than the generation of professing Israelites in the day of Christ? We think not. They are today the same as the Christ rejecting Jews were then. The Christ of God, God's way of Righteousness and Grace does not suit the natural heart at any time.

Solemn are the words which follow now. The Judge speaks. He who speaks here will take His place upon the throne and preside in that judgment day of which He speaks, "Then began He to reproach the cities in which most of His works of power had taken place, because they had not repented. Woe to thee, Chorazin! Woe to thee, Bethsaida ! for if the works of power which have taken place in you, had taken place in Tyre and Sidon , they had long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in judgment day than for you. And thou, Capernaum , who hast been raised up to heaven, shall be brought down even to Hades. For if the works of power which have taken place in thee, had taken place in Sodom , it had remained until this day. But I say to you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in judgment day than for thee." His divine patience is now seen as almost exhausted and for the first time in this Gospel He speaks the "Woe," which He repeats later a number of times. And oh! the word "woe" coming from such lips! Chorazin and Bethsaida had been greatly privileged. Works of power, works which manifested Jehovah's presence had been shown in their midst, yet they repented not. Tyre and Sidon never witnessed such manifestations. The responsibility of Chorazin and Bethsaida is therefore greater than the responsibility of Tyre and Sidon . There will be in that day different degrees of punishment. Capernaum , His own city, had come nearest to heaven and still there was no response. Sodom with all their awful fruits of the flesh will fare better in judgment day than Capernaum . The measure of relationship is always the measure of responsibility. Tyre , Sidon and Sodom had no such

privileges and stood in no such relationship to the Lord as the cities which our Lord mentions here. It is so with Christendom today. It shall be more tolerable in that day to the nations of darkest Africa than to the so-called "Christian nations," with light and privileges offered and wilfully rejected.

And what a scene follows! "At that time," when in the midst of the outburst of His righteous words of condemnation, He speaks the words so precious still. What words could picture Him as He stood there and that face, soon to be marred and spit upon, turned upward to heaven? And now He said, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for thus has it been well pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father, nor does anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal Him."

The Lord stands on the earth and looks to the Father in heaven. Both are Lord. It was so at the destruction of Sodom . "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." (Gen. 19:24). The Lord who had then been in the earth and communed with Abraham His friend, stood once more on the earth. He came in the form of a servant, having emptied Himself of His outward glory, and here as the obedient One praises Him, to whom He had said coming into the world, "Lo, I come to do Thy will" (Heb. 10:4-7). The Lord of the heaven and of the earth is His Father, but He who looks now to Him is not less the Lord of the heaven and of the earth. "Father," He said. He was then the only One who could thus look to heaven. It is, blessed be His name! different now. The Spirit of Sonship has been given whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

From the wise and the prudent, the self-sufficient religionists, the Pharisees and speculating Sadducees these things were hid, but revealed unto babes. They had refused Him, the wisdom of God; being wise in their own conceits and blindness was the dreadful result. Babes instead received the revelation of Himself. We often wonder why the wise and prudent of our day do not see certain truths, the blessed Gospel of the Glory of God, the truth concerning the church, the coming of our Lord, while others, poor and weak though they are, are in full possession of these revelations and ever receive more out of his fullness. The reason is soon found. Only He who owns his nothingness, who takes his place in weakness at His feet, and is like a babe, can receive these things. Never does the Lord entrust His secrets and his councils to the wise and prudent. Would we know more of Him, of His Word, His purposes and His thoughts? There is only one way -- be a babe, own yourself as such and as a babe walk and live before the Lord of heaven and earth.

"All things," our Lord said, "have been delivered unto me by my Father." The people were soon ready to reject Him as their Messiah and King, but He knew His inheritance, an inheritance in which the babe in Him has a glorious share.

Furthermore, "the Father knoweth the Son." How softly we should tread whenever we speak of the person of our Lord, for the full knowledge is only with the Father. "No one knoweth the Father but the Son and he to whomsoever the Son may be pleased to reveal Him." No one cometh to the Father but by me. Whoever denies the Son has not the Father either. Revealing the Father is what our Lord did and still is doing. In resurrection He is Son of God with power, and all who receive Him are brought to God and become children of God, to know the Father.

Upon this divine statement of His own person, His oneness with the Father, He utters that word which is so well known and which has been a word of blessing to uncountable souls.

"Come to Me all ye who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest." This is the first part of the gracious invitation. Significantly it comes in right after the rejection by His own becomes manifest and after He spoke of the rejection of the favored Galilean cities. It is typical of that full, free and blessed Gospel of Grace, which was made known after His death and resurrection, and which is still being preached.

It is an invitation to all, Jew and Gentile. The invitation is to those who labor and are burdened; it is to come to Him and He promises rest. How full it is! How inexhaustible in its meaning! The second part of His invitation brings us further. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls; for My yoke is easy and My burden light."

The one who has come to Him and found rest is to take now His yoke upon him and to learn of Him. It means to follow Him, to be under Him as Lord. The yoke is not the law, but His own yoke, His loving restraint; and two belong into the

yoke; we are yoked together with Him. And having Him, the One meek and lowly in heart, ever before the soul, rest for the soul is the blessed fruit. It is the whole Epistle to the Philippians in a nutshell. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." Coming to Him we have rest -- living in Him we find rest for our souls. May the reader meditate upon these words of our Lord till they become sweeter than honey and honeycomb. _234

CHAPTER XII

The twelfth chapter brings before us the full manifestation of the enmity of Israel against our Lord and His rejection by His own.

It is the great turning point in this Gospel and with it the offer of our Lord to Israel as their King, as well as the offer of the Kingdom ceases. We have followed the story of our Lord manifesting Himself as Jehovah the King. Everything in the first part of this royal Gospel proves Him to be the promised One. Speaking not like the Pharisees and the Scribes, but with authority, He had declared the principles of the Kingdom He came to bring.

Going through the cities of Galilee, He and His disciples had preached the Kingdom of the Heavens to be at hand. Multitudes had heard the glad and solemn announcement.

These glad tidings were backed up by the most startling signs. The blind saw, the lepers were cleansed, demons were driven out and the dead were raised. There could be only one explanation for these miracles.

Every one of them proved conclusively that Jehovah had visited His people; He whose name is "Immanuel" had appeared in their midst. Old Testament predictions of the coming of the Messiah, the manner of His coming and His works were being fulfilled before the eyes of that generation yet they did not and would not recognize Him. They remained cold and indifferent. They had no heart for Jehovah-Jesus. This in itself was a fulfillment of prophecy. And so we learn in the eighth chapter that a Gentile showed greater faith than the Lord had found in Israel and our Lord indicates the immediate future of the children of the Kingdom. They were to be cast out and others from the East and the West were to come and sit down in the Kingdom of the Heavens with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The murmuring of the Pharisees, first heard when he healed the paralytic and forgave him his sins, was the first outbreak against Him. And now the storm we saw in its threatening is to break. The awful blasphemy is uttered and the King declares in His sovereign power the relationship between Him the King and the Kingdom people broken. It is now clear that the Kingdom of the Heavens, so fully revealed in the Old Testament, is to be postponed till the Son of Man comes again. After this rejection of the King and His turning away from His own, He revealed the Kingdom of the Heavens in mysteries. He shows, as the Revealer of Secrets, the history of what He brings and makes known, the Kingdom in the hands of men and the development of it during His absence from the earth. And so we read immediately following the 12th chapter, "And that same day Jesus went out from the house and sat down by the sea." He left the house; breaking off His relationship and taking His place by the sea -- (a type of the Gentiles).

And now we are ready to look a little closer at the sad events before us in the important twelfth chapter.

The first paragraph, contained in eight verses, shows us our Lord manifesting Himself as Lord of the Sabbath and answering the charge of the Pharisees, who accused them of Sabbath breaking. "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the cornfields; and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck the ears and to eat. But the Pharisees, seeing it, said to Him, Behold, Thy disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." It was "at that time," at the time of that loving call to come unto Him, which stands at the close of the eleventh chapter. When divine love was full of solicitude for the burdened and the poor, the evil hearts of the enemies were ready to attack Him.

The Sabbath, the seventh day, is something essentially Jewish, the peculiar day for the peculiar people. Its keeping is embodied in the ten commandments. The seventh day was, and is to the present day, a matter of great importance with the Jew. He prides himself with it and boasts in the strict keeping of it. Not satisfied with the plain fourth commandment in the decalogue, the Jewish elders added their injunctions forbidding even the smallest matters and entering into details which are ridiculous. These human traditions were in the days of our Lord strictly followed. The religious Pharisee saw to its enforcement and they put these burdens upon the people and tried to establish their own righteousness. To take ears of corn and eat them on the Sabbath is nowhere forbidden in the law given through Moses. Among many other injunctions

the leaders of traditions had added this to the Word of God and made it a sin should anyone pluck an ear of corn on the seventh day.

Before we continue with the story of this chapter we desire to add here a few words, which may prove helpful to some of our readers. Not a few Christian believers have been annoyed, as well as disturbed, by a class of professing Christians who have added to their denominational names, as a special distinction, the term "Seventh day." Thus we find about us "Seventh Day Baptists" and "Seventh Day Adventists," as well as others whose chief endeavor seems to be to preach the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath. These sects, who defend the seventh day as a Christian institution, are nearly all infested with other serious evil doctrines, such as soul sleep, second probation, universalism and others. The root of this error of Sabbath keeping is the ignorance of these people of the fact that the believer in Christ has not the law, the ten commandments, for his rule, but the believer in Christ is dead to the law, and as a new creation is completely severed from that which is old, as well as from all earthly connections. The believer in Christ is above the law. He is complete and perfect in Christ. The rule for his walk is Christ Himself, by whom he is indwelt. The Sabbath, the seventh day, is connected with the earth and with Israel, but the believer is not Israel, nor does he belong to the earth, but Grace has lifted him into heaven. It is quite true there is a Sabbath day and this day is the seventh day of the week. But there is no Sabbath keeping now as regards Israel and the earth. The great and true Sabbath is still coming.

The question might then be asked, "Has the Christian believer no Sabbath day to keep?" The answer is, No. If we speak of a Sabbath day then surely it must mean the seventh day, and if we desire to keep the Sabbath day holy we must keep not the first day of the week but the seventh day. But some will say, "the Sabbath has been changed from the last day of the week to the first day." This is often said; but there's no scriptural authority for it. Neither Christ nor His apostles declared such a change. It is, therefore, wrong to call the first day of the week, known by the name "Sunday," the Sabbath or "Christian Sabbath." The first day of the week is the Lord's day, the day of resurrection, the day of the new creation. This day was kept in the very beginning of the Christian age as a precious memorial of Him who was dead and was raised from the dead, who is seated in the Highest Heaven and who is coming again. It was with the early Christians, and should be so still, a day of worship, when they came together to break bread and partake of the blessed cup, to show the Lord's death, till He come again. Some one has expressed it in the following short sentences: "Israel was commanded to observe the Sabbath day; the church is privileged to enjoy the first day of the week. The former was the test of Israel's moral condition; the latter is the significant proof of the Church's eternal acceptance. The Sabbath day manifested what Israel could do for God; the Lord's day perfectly declares what God has done for us."

There is no law about this blessed first day of the week. The Christian believer is in perfect liberty, with no yoke and bondage upon him. "For ye have been called to liberty, brethren; only do not turn liberty into an opportunity to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:15). The child of God will know how to use this liberty in the right way and will certainly have the first day of the week as a day of rejoicing in the Lord and fellowship with Him.

A strange sight indeed it is to see the nominal church attempting by political influences, legislation, police activities, to force the world to keep the Sabbath day on the first day of the week. As if it were the calling of the church to enforce laws and as if the world could be made to keep the Sabbath. What a deplorable mixture! What an awful confusion!

And now after this digression we come back to our chapter. The human way of answering the objections of the Pharisees would have been to tell them that there was no law forbidding the deed done by the disciples. In a few words He might have informed them not alone of the invalidity of their traditions, but also of the sin they had committed by adding to the Word of God. However, this is not the way divine wisdom chooses to silence their accusations. Perhaps they expected in their Satanic device some such answer, which they would have used against Him. The answer they hear from His lips, the lips of the Lawgiver Himself, is a different one than they expected. It reveals His divinity, Hint the perfect one in knowledge, as does every other answer He gave to His enemies in this Gospel, silencing their temptings at every instance. When He met Satan, as we learned from the fourth chapter, He used as weapon the Word of God, His own Word. Now He meets the offspring of vipers, the children of the enemy, and the weapon He uses is the same. He wields once more the Sword of the Spirit and answers their unscriptural objections by His scriptural assertions. May we learn from it, and at all times, whether it is the Devil or his offspring which tempt us, use the Word in our defense. And thus He spake: "Have ye not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were hungry? How he entered into the house of God, and ate the shewbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests only? Or have ye not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless? But I say unto you, that

there is here what is greater than the temple. But if ye had known what is: I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

The incident quoted by our Lord from David's life we find recorded in 1 Sam. 21. How then is this incident to be applied? David was forced, as the rejected one, though God's anointed king, to enter the house of God and do what was not lawful for him to do. David's hunger and the hunger of those who were with him is but a type of the greater One than David and His disciples passing through the cornfield hungry and obliged to pluck ears of corn to eat. The sad scene on that Sabbath day was evidence enough that the people did not care for the little group headed by the King. When David was rejected and a fugitive, the holy things connected with the ceremonials given to Israel by God ceased to be holy. The sin was David's rejection, and this made the consecrated shewbread common, as David said to the High Priest, "the bread is, as it were common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel" (1 Sam. 21:5). The rejection of God's anointed had profaned all. This is the thought our Lord expressed to the Pharisees. They had rejected Him. They had no love for Him nor cared for Him. How ridiculous for these hypocrites to speak of Sabbathkeeping when they were rejecting the Lord of the Sabbath! They were straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. How much of this pharisaical, hypocritical spirit we have about us in Christendom. The divinity of the Bible, as well as the Lord and His redemption work, is denied by many professing Christians, who hold still outward forms, rituals, keeping of holidays and ceremonials. But even the priests profaned the Sabbath and were blameless. What did our Lord mean by this? The priests had to bring sacrifices on the Sabbath day. "And on the Sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two-tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof" -- thus the law commanded (Num. 28:9). This demanded work, and according to the law and their interpretation of it, it was forbidden on the Sabbath, yet the priests, though they profaned the Sabbath, were held blameless. Grace was fully typified in these sacrifices and Grace working is above the law and does away with the legal covenant. Our Lord surely indicates here the time when laws and ceremonials were to find their end in Him who is "greater than the temple." He had come as the true priest and the true sacrifice to do that which the blood of bulls and goats could never do; that is, to take away sin and bring the Sabbath, the rest. He is the Lord of the Sabbath and that as Son of Man, in His humiliation and in His exaltation. But alas! they would not understand Him nor know what it meant, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." There was no answer from the Pharisees. The declaration of Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath, the One who is above the Sabbath, must have inflamed the hatred in their hearts still more. And so we see Him going away from thence. However, He did not turn His back upon them. It is a lingering, patient love we learn of Him here. He turns His blessed feet towards their synagogue. How reluctant to leave them in their dreadful condition of enmity against Him!

A man is present with a withered hand. They desire now to find some new ground of accusation against Him. Their first attempt had failed. He had read their evil thoughts, and by His answer He had shown that He anticipated the question they now put to Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Awful motive, which stands alongside of the question, showing the depths of Satan "that they might accuse Him." The question also discloses the fact that they believed in His healing power. We may well imagine the scene in that synagogue. The Lord in His divine calmness, the unfortunate man with the withered hand, the malicious, accusing Pharisees with their Satanic desire. And now the stillness broken by His voice, "What man shall there be of you who has one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and raise it up?" There was no answer; of course none could stand up and declare he would not deliver his one sheep out of the pit. "How much better then is a man than a sheep! So that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath." What a divine logic! How unanswerable this statement!

But it is not His Word alone. He has divine power to heal him who has heard His words. His glory as Jehovah, the King Immanuel, is to shine forth once more. He says to the man, "Stretch out thy hand!" Faith answers to His Word, and he stretcheth it out, and it was restored sound as the other. It was faith to stretch out a withered hand in answer to His Word and precious are the lessons we may learn from it for the life by faith to which we are called, ever living and acting in obedience to His Word. Yet we pass over that which is so plainly seen on the surface and add but a few words of what this miracle stands for in this dispensational Gospel. The man with the withered hand is a type of poor, withered Israel, withered spiritually and nationally. He had come to restore, but, unlike the man, Israel had no faith. Yet the day is coming when Israel will answer in faith and healing will follow.

The Pharisees beaten by His words and deed go out of the synagogue. In their dark councils for the first time they came together to find a way how to destroy Him.

How great the blindness which began to settle upon them! How could they destroy Him, who had raised the dead? How could they take His life, who is the true God and the eternal life? And even if there and then, in their dark counsels, they had found a way, according to their conception, to destroy Him, they could never have touched His life, for our Lord's body was not subject to mortality, His body in His humiliation was immortal, for He knew no sin. And while they kept their blind endeavors to themselves, He was not ignorant of it. "But Jesus, knowing it, withdrew thence, and great crowds followed Him and He healed them all and charged them strictly that they should not make Him publicly known" (verses 15, 16). The withdrawal of Himself from the scene and the presence of the Pharisees indicated His withdrawal from the nation itself, the result of His rejection.

This is made clear by the quotation from the Scriptures which follows: "That that might be fulfilled which was spoken through Esaias the prophet, saying: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul has found its delight. I will put my Spirit upon Him, and He shall show forth judgment to the nations. He shall not strive or cry out, nor shall anyone hear His voice in the streets; a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, until He bringeth forth judgment unto victory; and in His name shall the nations hope" (verses 17-21). These verses are found in Isaiah 42:1-4. He who knew the Scriptures and who had come to fulfill the prophecies relating to His sufferings, whose constant desire was to do the will of Him who sent Him, that the Scripture might be fulfilled -- what comfort and encouragement must have come to Him through these words, which His own Spirit had revealed to Isaiah. The rejection of Him by His own was imminent. They were turning away from Him and accusing Him, but He knew Himself as the chosen One, the Beloved, His Father's love and delight upon Him. Thus in the midst of the enemies with their wicked accusations and persecutions He could be calm, His perfect trust in Him, whose Beloved He was, well pleasing to Him.

Our way, as His own, should not be different from this. In the midst of tribulations and adversities, surrounded by the enemy, we can be calm, and more than that, rejoice.

He, as the servant of Jehovah, did not strive. Why should He strive as the One who put His trust in Jehovah? And thus it is written of the servant, His follower, "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all." (2 Tim. 2:24.) Gentleness as foretold was to be found in Him. How gentle and loving He must have been? Can we ever think too much of His patience and gentleness? The bruised reed He did not break. The weakest thing He took tenderly in His hands. The smoking flax was not quenched by Him. In the Epistle of our practical walk in Christ we are exhorted, "let your gentleness be known of all men." (Phil. 4:5). He in us will reproduce the very same characteristic in our lives here on the earth.

But the force of the quotation lies in the fact that the Gentiles, the nations are mentioned. The fulfillment in its completeness will take place, no doubt, at the time of His second Coming, but here the Holy Spirit uses it in still another way. Israel had begun to reject Him and now the Gentiles shall hear of God's gift and grace. The passage is introduced by the Spirit of God in a way as He only could do it.

Another one possessed by a demon is brought before Him. Most likely He had returned from the withdrawal recorded above, and once more the Pharisees are present. The possessed one is blind and dumb. Was he not a perfect picture of the nation Israel? Blind and dumb was their condition. Again He manifests Himself as Lord and He healed the demon possessed man, so that the dumb spoke and saw. No wonder that all the crowds were amazed and said, "Is this the Son of David?" They must have meant by this cry the Messiah, for they expected Him under the title of the Son of David. Still the question also implies doubt.

And here they stand again, these dark and cunning Pharisees. They have heard it. Perhaps the cry, "Is this the Son of David?" reached their ear. Moved with jealousy, anger, malice and Satanic hatred against Him whose omnipotent power was once more manifested, they said: "This man does not cast out demons but by Beelzebub, prince of demons."

The accusation had been made before by them (9:34) when it was passed over by the Lord, but now, after the repeated manifestations of His power, after their hatred culminated in seeking His life, the awful blasphemy is to be rebuked by Him. Cowards they were, as it is seen that they did not dare to bring the accusation to His face. How could they dare to stand before Him? So He reads again their very thoughts, a miracle in itself, which should have startled them. His answer to their Satanic thoughts consists in two very logical arguments. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not subsist. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself, how then shall his kingdom subsist?" (verses 25-26). This is very clear. Satan casting out Satan would mean a

division in his awful domain, which would mean its complete ruin and overthrow. It is, therefore, inconceivable that the Devil could furnish the power to destroy his own kingdom which he controls. The passage is full of meaning aside from the argument it contains. He who knoweth all things in perfect knowledge tells us that Satan is a person and a king, for he has a kingdom over which he rules. The demons are in his kingdom, one with the head in thought and purpose. (The translation "devils" is not correct. There is one devil, but the fallen angels are demons.) How little we know of his awful power, of his kingdom and the agencies at his command to destroy body and soul. We need not know it all, it is sufficient to know that he is an enemy overcome, his kingdom is spoiled by the victor, by Him who has annulled him, who has the power of death, that is the Devil.

Higher Criticism claims that our Lord acquiesced in the legendary belief of the Jews, a belief they had picked up in Babylon, that there existed a personal Devil and demons under him. This foolish, infidel theory, which is nowadays held by so many preachers and theological professors, is almost as blasphemous as the accusation of the Pharisees. If our Lord knew better than what the Jews held, and He did not correct their views, and if He did not know that their belief was incorrect, then in neither case could He be divine. This is Higher Criticism, the denial of the infallibility and divinity of the living and the written Word. The second argument against their evil thoughts is the following:

"And if I cast out demons, by Beelzebub, your sons by whom do they cast them out? For this reason they shall be your judges" (verse 27).

Among the Jews there were and are still such who profess to be exorcists, men who claim to have power to cast out demons. We cannot follow certain traditional teachings of the Jews concerning exorcism at this time. Some of them were wandering exorcists, going from place to place professing to cast out demons. Such are they who are mentioned in Acts 19:13: "And certain of the Jewish exorcists also, who went about, took in hand to call upon those who had wicked spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches." Perhaps those who are mentioned elsewhere, who drove out demons using the name of the Lord and did not follow Him, were exorcists. Certain it is the Lord did not mean His own disciples upon whom He had conferred the power to cast out demons in His name; He meant the school of Pharisees, who practiced, or claimed to practice, exorcism. The question put to them by our Lord demanded an answer which they cared not to give, for it would have been to their own condemnation.

And so He continues with His perfect argumentation, driving it home to their hearts, as only He could do it. "But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then indeed the Kingdom of God is come upon you." It is impossible that Satan could cast out Satan. There remains, then, only one other alternative; the Spirit of God casts out the demons. Then, indeed, the Kingdom is come upon you in the person of the King who manifests this power. Alas! they knew it, but they would not have Him and the Kingdom He preached.

And still His voice is heard: "Or else, can anyone enter into the house of the strong man and plunder his goods, unless he first bind the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

The strong man is Satan, but the Lord, stronger than Satan, had bound him and has the power to enter his domain and take away his prey. Who then is He who bound the enemy? Perhaps His voice rested here. Perhaps He waited for an answer. "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God" would have been in order here.

And stronger still He speaks. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not with me scatters." He demands decision. Half-heartedness does not satisfy Him and in face of such open-faced accusations and blasphemies would be impossible. It was an appeal to decide. In our day in which we live, out and out decision is not less demanded. Phariseeism and Sadduceeism, the leaven is working about us and to be undecided is paramount with dishonoring His own glorious person.

"For this reason I say unto you, every sin and injurious speaking shall be forgiven to men but speaking injuriously of the Spirit shall not be forgiven to men. And whosoever shall have spoken a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming one."

Much has been said and written on this passage and on the question of the unpardonable sin. Many who had lived in open

sin and worldly lusts, having been arrested by the grace of God, almost despaired for they feared they had committed that sin and now in spite of their repentance forgiveness was an impossibility for them. This wrong conclusion is often preached in so called "revival meetings" to bring sinners to accept Christ. Believers who fell in sin likewise have thought that after sinning with open eyes, wilfully, they had been guilty of the unpardonable sin. How many poor, ignorant souls have grieved for weeks and months thinking the Holy Spirit had now left them for good. But the Holy Spirit once given to the believer in believing on Christ has come as the abiding Comforter. He has come to stay and never, no never, to leave that which He has sealed. The Spirit may be grieved, He may be quenched, but never can He be driven away so that the true believer would fall back and be lost.

This widespread doctrine of falling from grace in the sense of the believer's possibility to be lost dishonors Christ and His work for us. But some one says: "Did not David pray: And take not the Holy Spirit from me?" Certainly he did, and it was in order for him to pray thus for the Holy Spirit might have left him, for He was not then in the earth with believers as the abiding comforter. The believer in the New Testament is never exhorted to pray to the Spirit to remain with him. He is to be filled with the Spirit and continually guard against grieving the Spirit or not to quench Him, but never to doubt His presence. All these wrong conceptions spring from a deplorable ignorance of the fundamentals of the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God.

And now what is this sin of which our Lord speaks here? In His coming to His own people, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were manifested. The Holy Spirit in His power was manifested through the Son, our Lord, upon whom He was in His fullness. The signs He did were not alone done in His own omnipotent power as Jehovah, they were the manifestation of the Holy Spirit likewise. And these Pharisees had sinned against this Holy Spirit by accusing Christ, that He drove out the demons by Satanic power. They had blasphemed the Spirit, spoken injuriously about Him, in saying that Beelzebub, the prince of demons, was present with Christ and not the Holy Spirit. This they did maliciously. And this and nothing else is the sin of which our Lord here speaks. The sin is to charge the Lord with doing His miracles through Satanic power and not through the Holy Spirit. We do believe, therefore, that this sin could only be committed as long as our Lord Jesus Christ was in the earth and that it was committed by the Pharisees with their blasphemies. This is the sin which would not be forgiven neither in this age nor in the coming one. In 1 John 5:16-17, we read, "If any one see his brother sinning, a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life, for those that do not sin unto death. There is a sin to death. I do not say of that that he should make a request." This is to be explained in the following way. The brother is a believer. On account of sinning he is chastised. God permits sickness to come upon him and the sinning not having been unto death (physical death only) he is raised up. However, a believer may go on wilfully sinning and remain there dishonoring Christ. He is to be taken away out of the land of the living, cut off by death. No request could be made for such a one. The question of death is not eternal condemnation but only physical death.

From the fact of the sin these Pharisees were doing, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Lord now turns to the cause of this, the spring from which the evil comes. "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt. For from the fruit the tree is known. Offspring of vipers! how can ye speak good things, being wicked?" (verses 33-34). The Searcher of hearts, He who understandeth the thoughts afar off, uncovers the real condition of these men and the condition of man in general. The tree is bad, the fruit must be bad. The tree must be made good, and that denotes a change, and the fruit will be good. "The heart is deceitful above all, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart" (Jer. 17:9, 10). He does it here and speaks of them as John, the forerunner did, as "offspring of vipers," with wicked hearts and impossible to bring forth anything good. And, later, once more He spoke of the condition of the heart of man, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19). How little those Pharisees, and Sadducees as well, believed in this and how unwilling they were to accept the sentence and verdict of Him, who knoweth all things. They were given to their ceremonial, ritualistic observances, very scrupulous about their phylacteries and fringes of their garments, making long prayers, keeping the outside of the cup and the platter clean, but never acknowledging the condition of the heart before the Searcher of Hearts. Self-righteous, moral, religious and, with it all, "offspring of vipers." All their religious observances and outward morality did not and could not effect a change. And so they stood before Him whose finger had written the law, boasting in the keeping of the law and rejecting the Lord, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

The leaven of the Pharisees is still at work. This leaven has leavened, indeed, the whole lump. Ritualistic, religious, moral Christendom, professing, and not possessing, is the direct descendant of the Pharisee of old and as such the offspring of vipers as much as they were. How little the radical, complete corruption of man is believed in Christendom, how little it is

taught. Man with the good spark in him (as they claim), developing it by religiousness and the use of his own will, becomes and is his own Saviour. The Lord is looked upon not as Lord, but as Jesus of Nazareth, whose life is an example, while the atonement, the blood, is set aside and rejected. The wicked heart cannot bring forth good things. Fine and polished, sweet and harmonious, may be the language of the cultured, religious, unsaved man, but proceeding from an evil heart it can never please God. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man out of the good treasure brings forth good things and the wicked man out of the wicked treasure brings forth wicked things. But I say unto you that every idle word which men shall say, they shall render an account of it in judgment day; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (verses 35-37).

These words have been misunderstood and much misapplied and all this by wresting these words out of their connection. They are mostly applied in connection with that unscriptural phrase and doctrine, "universal judgment." According to this, even the words will be weighed and judged, and only then in that hour of judgment, will it be known, according to this teaching, who will be saved and who is lost. Our Lord did not teach this here nor is it taught anywhere else. These Pharisees were proud of their works and were self-righteous. If they relied on their works as a means of their justification and salvation they have to expect a judgment accordingly; every idle word is to be judged, which means utter, absolute condemnation. Their words could not be good because they were wicked. May the self-righteous, religious man remember this. Absolute condemnation awaits him. Salvation is by grace, and by that salvation man receives a good treasure and brings forth good things. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth then speaks. Furthermore, the word "idle" means useless, barren. All that which man speaks out of himself is barren and useless. The believer, however, living after the Spirit, will not utter useless words, but that which is in honor of the Son of God. As believers, we should bear constantly in mind that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, not for a decision of eternal salvation, this was settled when the believer trusted in Christ, but for rewards. Surely then our deeds, our works and our words will be either approved or disapproved.

"By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." This has also a reference to the familiar passage in Romans 10: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." And wherever there is not this confession springing from the belief of the heart there is condemnation.

The scene is now drawing to its close. The hard-heartedness of the Pharisees is seen by some of them coming after such words, saying, Teacher, we desire to see a sign from Thee. Whatever evil design they had in asking him thus we do not know. He had done sign upon sign and they had ample proofs of His divinity. Upon such an evil, unbelieving request He can only utter His righteous indignation. So He calls them a wicked and adulterous generation. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it save the sign of Jonas the prophet. For, even as Jonas was in the great fish three days and three nights, thus shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. Ninevites shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold more than Jonas is here" (verses 38-41). This is a most significant passage. How far the Pharisees believed the story of Jonas we do not know. The Sadducees no doubt rejected the book of Jonah, for they were the rationalists and critics of their day. It is significant for us in our day when the judgment to fall upon apostate Christendom is so near, nothing is more ridiculed than the book of Jonah and its sublime teachings. The Sadducees of the present day, the higher critics, assume to know more than the Lord, and by rejecting the book of Jonah as uninspired they reject the infallible Lord Himself. But why does our Lord mention Jonah here? Because Jonah is a type of the death and resurrection of our Lord. Jonah is the only prophet who was sent away from Israel's land far unto the Gentiles, to the great and ungodly city of Nineveh. However, before he went there, he passed through a death experience and out of that grave in which he was brought he was taken again, a type of resurrection. Through it God brought salvation to the Gentiles, for Jonah, after his death and resurrection experience proclaimed the message of God. So the Lord was going away from Israel. He was soon to leave them, and the grace of God was to go out towards the Gentile world. Yet before that could be He had to go into the jaws of death, and, like Jonah, was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so was He to be the same length of time in the grave, but also to come forth in resurrection. He was preached, after His resurrection, to the Jew first; but while Nineveh repented after the message of Jonah, that wicked and adulterous generation did not repent of their course, after the preaching through Him, who is greater than Jonah. Therefore the Ninevites will rise up and condemn that generation. Jonah is likewise a type of the whole nation, which, however, is not before us in this chapter. (See our tract on "Jonah and the Whale," where the dispensational side is expounded.) The Queen of Sheba also will condemn that generation, she came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and here stands He who is the

Wisdom and they reject Him, who imparted to the wise King the wisdom he had.

And this is followed by a prediction by our Lord which concerns the future of that generation. "But when the unclean spirit has gone out of the man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then he says, I will return to my house whence I came out; and having come he finds it unoccupied, swept and adorned. Then he goes and takes with himself seven other spirits worse than himself, and entering in, they dwell there; and the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. Thus it shall be to this wicked generation also" (verses 43-45). All kinds of interpretations and applications have been made of this prediction. It is, however, clear that there is but one application, and that is in respect to the unbelieving generation. "Thus shall it be to this wicked generation also" -- settles the point of application. Generation is certainly to be understood in the sense of race. The unclean spirit is idolatry. It had left the nation, and even now the nation is swept from that evil spirit and unoccupied, and boasts of reform. It will not be so forever. The unclean spirit will return and bring seven others with him and take possession of that house again, and the last condition, the end, becomes worse than the beginning. The return of the unclean spirit with its seven companions will take place during the great tribulation.

The end of the rejection of our Lord by His own has come. He has outlined their dreadful end, and to which Israel's unbelief is rapidly leading on, and now follows a pathetic ending of this great crisis. "But while He was yet speaking to the crowds, behold His mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him. Then one said to Him, Behold Thy mother and Thy brethren are standing without, seeking to speak to Thee. But He answered and said to him who had spoken to Him, Who is My mother and who are My brethren? And stretching out His hand to His disciples, He said, Behold My mother and My brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in the heavens, he is My brother and sister and mother." From Mark's Gospel we learn the possible reason of His relatives coming to Him. "And His relatives having heard of it went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, He is out of His mind" (Mark 3:21).

He refuses to see them. Behind this refusal stands the fact of a broken relationship. He no longer recognizes His own, and speaks of a new relationship, founded upon obedience to the will of His Father in the heavens.

CHAPTER XIII

We have now reached one of the most important chapters in this Gospel. It demands, therefore, our closest attention, and this more so because the revelation which our Lord gives here, the unfolding of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, has been and still is grossly misunderstood and falsely interpreted. Precisely that which our Lord did not mean has been read into this chapter. The whole chapter has been, so to speak, turned upside down by most of the learned commentators of Christendom. For any believer to turn to these for light and instruction will only result in getting thoroughly confused. We have often said if this one chapter would be rightly understood by the professing church, the consequences would be the most far-reaching. But one almost despairs of seeing the true meaning of the mystery of the kingdom in Matthew 13 believed in Christendom. The professing mass continues, and will continue, with the majority of those who are not merely outward professors, to build upon the misinterpretation of our Lord's parables the optimistic dreams of the enlargement of the church, the foreshadowing of the universal extension of the church and the continued good work of the leaven in the three measures of meal, etc. We have found in our experience, that it is hard to get the individual believer, brought up in these wrong conceptions, to see the true meaning; and often the testimony given is rejected. Let us then carefully and prayerfully look into the chapter before us, and may our Lord give His blessing; and while the many may reject what we teach from these parables it may be a few receive light through the entrance of His Word, and may all believers in these truths be strengthened.

Let us notice, first of all, two verses in this chapter; "Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it is not given" (verse 11); "All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and without a parable He did not speak to them, so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the world's foundation" (verses 34-35). These verses then tell us what our Lord makes known in this chapter, namely "the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens" -- "Things uttered, which were hidden from the world's foundation."

In Genesis we read of one who is called "Zaphnath-paaneah" which, according to rabbinical interpretation, means "Revealer of secrets." He is Joseph, the Hebrew lad rejected by his brethren, that most perfect type of our Lord. After his

rejection by his brethren, Joseph becomes the revealer of the secrets, and that through the wisdom of God.

Here in this chapter Christ appears as the rejected one, and now after the offer of the kingdom is rejected by the people of the kingdom, and He as king, is likewise rejected, He becomes the revealer of the secrets, to show what will take place after the Kingdom has been rejected by Israel, and postponed.

That He is the rejected one and the far-reaching witness He gives now is evident in the very opening verses. "And that same day Jesus went out from the house and sat down by the sea." Leaving the house means He severed His relation with His people as we saw at the close of the twelfth chapter. Taking His place by the sea, the sea typifying nations, shows that His testimony to be given now, the mysteries to be revealed have a wider sphere; they are relative to the nations. "And great crowds were gathered together to Him, so that going on board ship He sat down, and the whole crowd stood on the shore." He separated Himself from the multitude, while in the first part of this Gospel He moves in the midst of the multitudes, here He takes His place alone. What a scene it must have been! There on the seashore the multitude, and He alone some ways from the shore -- He cannot be reached by touch now. All is significant. Then when all eyes hang upon His lips, He began to speak.

What He says is in parables, and without parables He did not speak to them. He utters seven parables. In no other Gospel do we find them grouped together as here. Why is this? This is the great dispensational Gospel. Here God's plan of the ages is revealed as in no other Gospel. We have seen before that the Holy Spirit in giving us this Gospel, the Genesis of the New Testament, is not tied down to chronological order, but He arranges everything to suit His sublime purpose. After the kingdom was offered and rejected, the Lord makes known what is to be after this rejection, and during the time of His absence. Therefore these parables, seven in number, denoting completeness, are put right in here.

Now the important question is when the Lord says six times in these parables, "The kingdom of the heavens is like" what does He mean by the term "Kingdom of the heavens?" That it can no longer mean the kingdom as it is revealed in the Old Testament, as it is promised to Israel, and as He offered it to the people, is evident. For in the first place, the offer was made and rejected. The preaching of Him and the messengers He sent out was, "The kingdom of the heavens is at hand, repent." Not a word do we hear of this in the thirteenth chapter, nor after this chapter. And in the second place, if our Lord had had the Old Testament kingdom promised to Israel in view, when He says here "The Kingdom of the heavens is like," He could not have said that He uttered things hidden from the world's foundation, for the kingdom, in the Old Testament is not a mystery, but clearly revealed.

Some say, and indeed the popular and almost universally accepted interpretation is -- it is the church. The Lord begins now to teach about the church. So that if He says: "The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal," etc., it is declared the church is meant, and the Gospel. The church is nowhere called the kingdom of the heavens. Oh, the great confusion which exists on this topic. The Lord mentions the word church only [twice] in the Gospel, and it is in Matthew 16:18 where He says that He will build His church. The church did not exist in the Old Testament, it was not known there at all; it was not in existence while the Lord walked in the earth, and nowhere does He refer to the church as the kingdom of the heavens, neither does the Holy Spirit speak of the church as the kingdom. He speaks of the church as the habitation of God, a house, a temple, the body of Christ and the Bride of Christ, but we repeat it, never as the kingdom of the heavens. All this modern application of kingdom of the heavens to the church is foreign to the Word of God. It is the unscriptural theory of man.

But what does our Lord mean when He says "the kingdom of the heavens?" The answer is a very simple one. The kingdom on the one hand was rejected by Israel, but on the other hand, God gives His Word to the Gentiles, a fact indicated in the Old Testament prophetic Word.

The mercy and grace offered to Israel is to go forth to the Gentiles, the nations, while the King Himself is absent. This is indicated in the first parable where the sower went out, which stands for the fact of His going forth into the field, which is the world. So that which is extended to the Gentiles and that in which the name of Christ is confessed is now the kingdom of the heavens, and of this development of what He the Lord from heaven brought and left in the earth, our Lord speaks in these parables. In one word "the kingdom of the heavens" in Matthew is equivalent with "Christendom." It includes the whole sphere of Christian profession saved and unsaved, so-called Romanists and Protestants, all who are naming the name of Christ. Therefore the church is not the kingdom of the heavens, though the church is in the kingdom of the

heavens.

The Lord teaches in the seven parables how matters will go in the earth while He is not here, and what men will do with that which He brought from heaven and left in the hands of men.

Before we take up the parables separately we must consider their general character. The seven parables are first divided into four and three. The first four He speaks before the multitudes. Then after He dismissed the crowds, He went into the house and in the presence of the disciples He utters the three last parables. These three last ones, the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price and the dragnet, have a deeper spiritual meaning than the first. The first two parables our Lord explains Himself to His disciples; the other five He leaves unexplained.

They may also be divided in the following way by twos:

1. The sower who went out to sow.
2. The enemy sowing tares, the spurious seed.

These refer in part to the beginning of the kingdom of the heavens in the hands of men, however the conditions pictured here last to the end, the time of the harvest.

3. The parable of the mustard seed.
4. The parable of the leaven.

These foretell the external and internal development of the kingdom of the heavens, the progress is described and it is an unnatural and evil progress.

5. The parable of the treasure hid in the field.
6. The parable of the one pearl.

These stand for the two mysteries of the kingdom, God's earthly people hid in the field, the church the one pearl for which He has given all. First the pearl is taken, then the treasure is lifted in the field.

7. The parable of the dragnet.

It stands isolated, and refers to the end of the kingdom of the heavens in its mystery form.

Still another way of looking at them would be to compare them with the seven church messages in Rev. 2 and 3. Here the Lord speaks again, and this speaking is from the glory. In the seven messages we learn the beginning, the progress and the end of this present Christian age. It is the history of Christendom, the kingdom of the heavens.

1. The parable of the sower -- Ephesus . The apostolic age. The beginning with failure -- leaving the first love.
2. The parable of the evil seed -- Smyrna , meaning bitterness. The enemy revealed.
3. The parable of the mustard seed -- Pergamos -- meaning high tower and twice married. The professing church becomes big, a state institution under Constantine the Great. The big tree and the unclean birds (nations) find shelter there.
4. The parable of the leaven -- Thyatira -- the one who sacrifices. Rome and her abomination. The woman Jezebel, the harlot, corresponds to the woman in the parable of the leaven.

5. The parable of the treasure hid -- Sardis -- the reformation age -- having a name to live, but being dead and a remnant there. Israel, dead but belonging to Him who has purchased the field.

6. The parable of the Pearl -- Philadelphia. The church, the one pearl. The one body of Christ and the removal of the church to be with Him.

7. The parable of the dragnet -- Laodicea -- Judgment. I will spue thee out of my mouth.

We do not claim to teach all this exhaustively. That would take many months, but we give these that each reader may have hints in what way to search.

We add but one more fact to these introductory remarks to the study of the different parables. The key for their right interpretation is in themselves as well as in the scriptures. The sower in the first parable and in the second is the Son of Man. What He sows is the wheat, that which stands throughout the scriptures for purity, for Christ himself. The Word He is Himself and the corn of wheat; the good seed are the sons of the kingdom. The field is the world. The enemy is the Devil. The man in the sixth parable who buys the field (the world) is the same Son of Man and the merchantman who sells all He has to purchase the one pearl He desires is the same person as the Sower. It is nonsense to make out of the merchantman and out of the man who buys the field the sinner. That would mean that the sinner has something to give. He has not. And the field, meaning the world, it would mean the sinner is to buy the world.

The three measures of meal of course come from the wheat, they always stand for that which is good. Leaven, however, never means anything good, but it always stands for evil. The closer study of these parables, which we now take up will bring out all this more fully.

After having studied this important chapter in a general way, we shall now look at the seven parables separately and to learn from them the development of the Kingdom of the Heavens in its mystery form. Throughout our study the dispensational aspect of the parables is to be kept strongly in the foreground, for it is dispensational truth which is taught here.

The first parable is the well-known one of the sower. "And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying, Behold the sower went out to sow." Two things attract our attention in this opening sentence of the parable. We notice first that our Lord speaks of the sower, not of a sower, and when He expounds the parable later to His disciples He does not tell them who this sower is, but He only speaks of what happened to the seed He sowed. The second thing we mention is that the sower went out.

The personality of the sower is not difficult to clear up, for in explaining the second parable our Lord says: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." Our Lord Himself is the Sower. He came with the precious seed, the fine wheat, and of course He himself is the corn of wheat. The seed He sows can only bring forth as it falls upon good ground, and in the ground it dies, and out of death comes the fruit. All this is indicated here. We would, however, take this parable in the first sense to apply to the days of our Lord in the earth. In a wider sense it must be taken as typical of the entire age, in which He is absent from the earth and the Kingdom is in the hands of men. The sowing He began continues still, and the result of sowing is likewise the same.

And what is the significance that it is written that the sower went out to sow? It shows the beginning of something new; a new work which the Lord now takes up. Israel had failed to yield fruit. Israel was the vineyard of Isaiah 5. "He fenced it in, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine press therein; and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes ... and now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down." (Is. 5:2-5) Israel is the fig tree of the parable; the Lord came and found no fruit. The vineyard is laid waste and the fig tree stands barren. It is true, it will not be always so. The vine and the fig tree will bring fruit at last, but in the meantime, while Israel is unfruitful, the sower has gone out to sow. Where has he gone? Where does the sower generally deposit the seed? In the field. What is the field? The divine interpreter gives us the answer. "The field is the world." So we have here the fact established that after Israel failed the Word is to go forth into the wide world, "beginning in Jerusalem unto Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth."

The question comes at once, what will be the result? Will all the world receive it and every part of the entire field be cultivated? Will the whole field be reached by the seed and the seed spring up and bear an abundant harvest? Will not a single grain be lost? The parable has this very thought as its center, What becomes of the seed?

What we learn from the parable is far from teaching us the optimistic dream of Christendom of world conversion, so often founded upon a wrong application of these parables. The parable proves that it will not be a universal acceptance of the Word which we can look for in this age; only the fourth part of the seed sown brings forth fruit, and there is again a marked difference in the quantity of fruit in that fourth part. Our Lord then impresses here in this simple parable the fact, which later the Holy Spirit repeats, the age in which He is absent and in which His Word is preached and His grace is offered, that Word will be in greater part rejected, and only a fourth part yields the fruit; the rest is failure.

It is very significant that we meet this important dispensational fact at the very threshold of Matthew 13. Alas! it has not been believed by the great mass of professing Christians. To speak of failure in this age and deny a soon coming world conversion is frowned upon as a miserable, unbelieving pessimism. One is sometimes even accused of disbelieving the power of the Holy Spirit to convert the whole world, as if the Holy Spirit had been sent down from heaven for world conversion.

But we shall now read what came from the lips of our Lord in this parable.

"Behold the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some grains fell along the way, and the birds came and devoured them; and others fell upon the rocky places where they had not much earth, and immediately they sprang up out of the ground, because of not having any depths of earth, but when the sun rose they were burned up, and because of not having any root were dried up; and others fell upon the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them; and others fell upon the good ground, and produced fruit, one a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty. He that has ears let him hear" (verses 5-9). We need not to guess the meaning of this parable for the Lord Himself tells His disciples what He meant by the birds and the rocky place and the thorns. And so we shall take His own explanation with such comments which may be helpful for a fuller understanding.

"The disciples came up to Him and said, Why speakest thou to them in parables?" This question came at once after He had finished this first parable. They had never heard a parable from His lips. What He had spoken before to the people and their leaders had been in simple words, easily to be understood by every one, and now for the first time He spoke something which they could not comprehend. It was veiled. The answer which our Lord gives is of great solemnity, as it announces the judgment upon Israel .

"And He answering said to them, Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of the Heavens, but to them it is not given." The disciples, representing believers, were to understand the mysteries coming in now while the nation who had refused the light would be in darkness. "For whosoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall be caused to be in abundance. But he who has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him." The disciples had received the Lord and He gave them more, while Israel had not, they rejected Christ and so what they had still as His earthly people was to be taken away from them. But this two-edged sword cuts in another way. The principle our Lord here utters is still active. The true believers composing the church have, and by and by we shall be caused to be in abundance, while an apostate Christendom which has not shall lose even what it boasts to have.

"For this cause," our Lord continues, "I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear nor understand; and in them is filled up the prophecy of Esaias, which says, Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and beholding ye shall behold and not see; for the heart of this people has grown fat, and they have heard heavily with their ears, and they have closed their eyes as asleep, lest they should see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." This passage is a quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10. Isaiah saw in a vision Jehovah sitting upon a throne, and He spoke these words to the prophet. If we turn to the 12th chapter in the Gospel of John we find these words quoted again, and there is the significant addition, "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spoke of Him" (John 12:40). The Jehovah Isaiah saw upon His throne was our Lord Jesus Christ. Once more do we read the same words brought to remembrance by the Holy Spirit. In the last chapter of Acts, when Israel 's apostasy and unbelief is fully established, Paul speaks them to the assembled Jews and adds, "Be it

known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear."

And now after our Lord declares them blessed on account of what they see and hear, He explains the parable Himself.

"Ye, therefore, hear the parable of the sower. From every one who hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and catches away what was sown in his heart; this is he that is sown at the wayside" (vv. 18-19).

How easy is it then understood. The wayside is hard and trodden down by feet, there the seed fell and birds were ready to snatch it up and devour it.

A hearer or a class of hearers is given here who do not understand the Word. But is it the question of mental capacity of an intellectual understanding? Certainly not. The Lord says the word was "sown in the heart;" it had directed itself to the conscience and could either be accepted or rejected. But the heart would not have it and turned against it; "and does not understand it," means "he would not understand or receive it." No sooner is this the case and the seed has fallen upon such a ground, a hard heart like the wayside, then the birds come and devour the seed. The birds represent the wicked one. He is present with his agencies and busy to take up whatever was given and rejected. Once more do we read in this chapter of birds; it is in the third parable, that of the mustard seed. The birds there mean nothing good but that which is evil, like in the first parable.

"But he that is sown on the rocky places -- this is he that hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy, but has no root in himself, but is for a time only; and when tribulation happens on account of the Word, he is immediately offended" (vv. 20-21).

The rocky ground is lightly covered with earth. There is a sudden springing up, an enthusiastic reception one might say, which pushes itself along. But the sun rises higher, the heat is felt, and there is no resistance, no life to combat these conditions; the delicate thing drops over and is burned up. It had no roots. This little earth on top of the rock may well represent the natural heart of man as the way trodden by men represents it. Only here is the brightest side of the flesh, if one can speak of it in such a way. But behind that little earth is the solid rock, which no plow has broken and where no life is present. How large is this class? It is the great class of professing Christians. They are covering over this old, desperately wicked heart with a little earth. They put on the form of Godliness, while they know nothing of its power. There is also a great deal of enthusiasm, a springing up of the seed; it looks almost as if there is to be a great result -- but alas! there is only the name to live, but death is behind it.

"When the sun rose they were burned up." May we not apply this word also dispensationally? The rocky ground sowers will flourish, and they flourish and increase now with their empty profession and their enthusiastic show at religiousness and world improvement. But the sun will rise, tribulation will come. The great tribulation and the judgments, which precede the rising of the Sun of Righteousness will burn them up and sweep them away.

"And he that is sown among the thorns, this is he who hears the Word, and the anxious care of this life and the deceit of riches choke the Word and he becomes unfruitful" (verse 22).

This is so plain that it needs hardly any comment at all. "The deceit of riches" hinder the growth of the Word. It becomes choked and there is no fruit. How true this is of the present day we all know. The world, the pleasures of the earth, cares and anxiety in getting as much as possible of these phantom things seems to control more and more the outwardly professing masses. All that is of God becomes choked.

Thus we see in these three classes, in which the seed perishes and brings no fruit, the Devil, the Flesh and the World represented. The Devil snatches up and devours, the Flesh attempts and fails, the World surrounds and chokes. And yet how much else might be said in connection with these three classes! No human being could have spoken such a simple parable with such a deep and far reaching meaning. The Revealer of Secrets speaks, who knows the hidden things.

"But he that is sown upon the good ground, this is he who hears and understands the Word, who bears fruit also and produces one a hundred, one sixty, and one thirty" (verse 23). Hearing, understanding, which is in faith and through faith,

fruitbearing and producing, this is the process of the seed in the good ground, a receptive heart prepared by the Grace of God.

We come now to the second parable, in which we find the Kingdom of the heavens mentioned. It was not mentioned in connection with the first parable of the sower. "Another parable set He before them, saying, The Kingdom of the heavens has become like a man sowing good seed in his field; but while men slept his enemy came and sowed darnel amongst the wheat and went away. But when the blade shot up and produced fruit then appeared the darnel also. And the bondmen of the householder came up and said to him, Sir, hast thou not sown good seed in thy field? Whence then has it darnel? And he said to them, A man that is an enemy has done this. And the bondmen said to him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather it up? But he said, No; lest in the gathering the darnel ye should root up the wheat with it. Suffer both to grow together unto the harvest, and in time of the harvest I will say to the harvestmen, Gather first the darnel, and bind it into bundles to burn it; but the wheat bring together into my granary" (verses 24-30). Again we are not left to seek for an interpretation. After he had spoken two other parables we read that our Lord in answer to His disciples' question tells them what He meant by the parable. To this perfect interpretation by the divine speaker we have to turn to find the correct and far reaching meaning of this second parable. "Then, having dismissed the crowds, He went into the house; and His disciples came to Him, saying, Expound to us the parable of the darnel of the field. But He answering said, He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world and the good seed are the Sons of the Kingdom, but the darnel are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who has sowed it is the devil, and the harvest is the completion of the age, and the harvestmen are angels" (verses 36-39).

The connection with the first parable is clear. The same sower is in the beginning of the parable before us, and the seed is deposited in the field, which is the world. But our Lord says, "the good seed, these are the Sons of the Kingdom." This can mean only one thing, namely, that the good seed sown and fallen into a good ground, as we saw in the first parable, brings forth fruit, and the Word of the Kingdom produces the Sons of the Kingdom. Like begets like; the fruit is according to the seed. However, the leading thought in this parable is the enemy and his evil work. It is a work of spite, as it is yet quite often practiced in oriental countries. The enemy watches till his hated neighbor has deposited his seed into the field, then he goes to work and during the night, while men sleep, and begins to sow the bad seed of some weed. Not till the seed springs up and grows does the unsuspecting victim see the work of the enemy. The enemy, our Lord says, is the devil. As from the Word of the Kingdom the Sons of the Kingdom spring forth, so from the evil seed sown by the devil come the sons of the evil one.

It is important to notice the time when the enemy did this and the manner in which he attempts to counteract the work of the Sower, the Son of Man.

In regard to the time, we have two facts to consider. The first is: It was immediately after the Sower had deposited the good seed; and the second fact: It was "while men slept." No sooner had our Lord brought the truth, and the Holy Spirit had been given, than the enemy began its work. In the days of the Apostle Paul the work which the enemy had done became manifest, and the evil seed, which at the end of this age is full grown, is easily seen springing up in the beginning of the age. The mystery of iniquity began its work then, and continues throughout the age till the end is reached, when it is fully developed.

It was while men slept that the enemy did it. Not the Sower slept, He neither sleeps nor slumbers, but the men slept. Such an unwatchful condition soon developed in the beginning of the age. The first love was soon given up, and then the enemy did his work.

The manner was by putting a counterfeit seed in the field. The darnel looks in its seed like the wheat. When it springs up it cannot be distinguished from the wheat, yet it is a poisonous weed. The darnel represents the lie as it is put into the field by the devil. It is evil doctrine, a counterfeit of the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints. The denial of the Deity of our Lord, the denial of the resurrection and the inspiration of the Bible belong to this darnel seed, which makes itself felt in the very beginning of this Christian age.

In a certain sense this process still continues. Whenever the truth is proclaimed and the Word taught, it does not take long before the enemy comes and brings the counterfeit when "men sleep." Another strong lesson we learn from this parable is the character of this entire age. It is evil. Satan is the god of this age till the end of the age comes. The mixed condition of

good seed and darnel seed, Sons of the Kingdom and sons of the evil one, prevails to the very end. The servants of the bondmen were willing to root out the darnel but were not permitted to do so. It is an idle dream, which many hope to realize, to reform the world, to gather out obnoxious evils, to banish drunkenness and immorality, to purify the state and politics. Such efforts are nowhere taught in the Word of God. Men, under Christian profession, take such work upon themselves, and they little know how they sin and dishonor Christ with it. No, error and its fruits will continue to grow alongside the good seed and its precious fruit till the time of the harvest. Before we follow the thought of the harvest we turn our attention to still another matter in connection with the first part of this parable.

A vital error has been committed in regard to the place where the wheat and the darnel grow together. It has been said to us "we cannot have a pure church, or assembly, for the Lord Himself has said that the evil will always be with us and that we are not to put them out who are the sons of the evil one." This was said and is said on the supposition that our Lord speaks of the Church. However, this is not the case. The church, the assembly, is not before Him at all. As we have said before the Kingdom of the heavens is not the Church. When it comes to the revelation concerning the Church we hear our Lord say that evil is not to be tolerated in the assembly. "If thy brother sin against thee go, reprove him between thee and him alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he do not hear, take with thee one or two besides that every matter may stand upon the word of two witnesses or of three. But if he will not listen to them, tell it to the assembly and if also he will not listen to the assembly, let him be to thee as one of the nations and a taxgatherer" (Chapter 18:15-17). This is the way evil is to be treated in the assembly, or, as we generally say, Church. In the epistles we find numerous exhortations that evil doctrine and an evil walk contrary to the Gospel is not to be tolerated in an assembly. The assembly is to judge evil. It is not said of the Church "let them grow together."

The field is not the Church, but the world, and it is in the world that this takes place; in that part of the field where the good seed has been sown, in the entire sphere of professing Christendom.

The harvest is the completion of the age. Our authorized version has it "world." This has misled many readers of the Word. The end of this world is a good ways off yet. The end of the age in which we live is drawing rapidly to a close. What will take place then? Our Lord says, "As then the darnel is gathered and is burned in the fire, thus it shall be in the completion of the age. The Son of Man shall send His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all offences, and those that practice lawlessness, and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their father. He that hath ears let him hear" (verses 40-43). Before in the parable our Lord said: "I will say to the harvestmen, Gather first the darnel, and bind it into bundles to burn it; but the wheat bring together into my granary."

The completion of the age is the same as in Matthew 24, when the disciples asked for the signs of His coming and the completion of the age. The ending of the age will be Jewish; Jewish history resumed in the events which fall into the last week of Daniel, the seventieth week. Of this ending the Lord speaks. The angels will then be the harvestmen. It corresponds to what we read in Rev. 14:14-20. "And I looked and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having upon His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Some who teach the unscriptural theory, that the church will remain in the earth to the very end of the age and pass through the great tribulation, have used this parable to support their views. We repeat the parable has nothing to do with the Church. When our Lord speaks of the bundling up of the darnel and the gathering of the wheat into the granary, He did not teach that the wheat is the Church or represents the Church, and that the gathering in of the Church is to be His last act in this age. The wheat, of course, is the good seed, the good seed are the Sons of the Kingdom. That all true believers are the good seed and as such Sons of the Kingdom none would doubt. Yet, after the Church is removed from the earth, before the completion of the age, as foretold in prophecy, begins, there will still be wheat in the earth. There will still be sowing. Indeed it will then be "the Word of the Kingdom" which is preached. The Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed during that end and the seed will spring up. A great multitude will come out of that great tribulation having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. This multitude will be gathered in the time when the darnel are bundled up, preparatory to the burning. The wheat, these Sons of the Kingdom, will be gathered into His granary, kept and preserved for the Kingdom to be established in the earth. "Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." This reminds us very strongly of the language of Matthew 25:34. "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared

for you from the foundation of the World." These words are not addressed to the church, but to that multitude come out of all nations (Rev. 7) and the Kingdom is not the heavenly glory but the earthly Kingdom. The Church, her heavenly calling and destination, we repeat again, is not in view at all in this second parable.

Let us hold fast the three great facts the parable teaches. These are, as we have seen, the following:

1. The enemy, the devil, began his work in the beginning of the age.
2. The age is mixed, good and evil grow together. This condition cannot be changed throughout the age.
3. The mixed condition will cease with the completion of the age. The Sons of the Kingdom will inherit the Kingdom. The darnel after being bundled up are burned with fire.

The next two parables our Lord spake to reveal still more of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens are the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven.. They belong together. We shall learn in the exposition of these two parables, how the popular interpretation of them through the leading commentators of Christendom has turned everything upside down. The fact is, precisely the opposite our Lord meant is being taught by teachers in evangelical Christendom. The fault of this erroneous interpretation springs from the great fundamental error that the Lord has the church in view when He speaks of the kingdom of the heavens, and that the church is that kingdom. Therefore it is taken for granted by this exposition that when the Lord now speaks of a grain of mustard seed, which becomes a great tree and which gives shelter to the birds, that this is a prophecy relating to the expansion of the church. The leaven is therefore made to mean the gospel with its leavening power. All this is radically wrong. We turn to the parable of the grain of mustard seed first.

"Another parable set He before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which is less indeed than all seeds, but when it is grown is greater than herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches" (verses 31-32).

Here we have the outward development of the kingdom of the heavens as it grows and expands, in an unnatural way, and becomes the roosting place of the birds of heaven. As indicated above, the almost universal comment on this mustard seed and its miraculous growth, as it is termed, is that it fully declares the expansion of the church, and the birds of heaven are interpreted as meaning peoples and nations, who find shelter in the church. Growing and still growing, the mustard tree reaches over the entire earth, its branches spread out wider and wider, and soon (so they tell us) the tree will have covered the earth as the waters cover the deep. It is also a common occurrence that some denominational leader -- a bishop or an elder -- claims the parable for his denomination and illustrates with it the phenomenal growth of the sect to which he belongs, or claims a great future of success. Again, the history of the "church" is resorted to for the sake of showing the fulfillment of this parable and the statistics of Christendom, so many millions of Protestants (including all the infidels, unsaved masses of Germany, England, and every other "evangelical" country) so many more now than fifty years ago, etc.

If the Lord had meant His church by this mustard seed, which becomes a tree and the roosting place of birds, if it is really the church, which is His body, then this parable would be in flagrant contradiction with what He and the Holy Spirit teach elsewhere concerning the church in the earth, the mission and the future of the church. The greatest clash of teaching would be the result.

For instance, in His prayer our Lord says concerning His own, those who are one as the Father and Son are one: "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). The church then, composed of all true believers, is not of the world as He is not of the world. The church is from above, as every believer has a life which is from above; but for a little while the church is in the world, and in a little while the church will be above, where He is the glorified Head of His body. The mustard seed springing up in the field (do not forget the field is the world), rooting deeper and deeper in the earth and expanding in this unnatural way affording room for birds, is the picture of something entirely different. It shows us a system which is rooted in the earth and which aims a greatness in the world, expansion over the earth. The Lord never meant His church to be rooted and grounded in the field, the world. He never called the church to assume such proportions and become an abnormal growth in the earth. Whatever is spoken of Christ is spoken of the church. Suffering and glory, after lowliness, followed by exaltation, is the way Christ went; it is the way ordained for the church. She is to be lowly,

now suffering with Him, rejected and disowned by the world as He was, never to reign and rule now, but patiently waiting with Him for the moment when He is manifested and then to share His Throne and His Glory. The calling and destiny of the church is heavenly. Her mission is to shine out Himself and testify of His grace, but never to control and overspread the world. The epistles addressed to the church make this sufficiently clear.

But if the mustard seed and its growth does not mean the church, what does it mean? It means the Kingdom of the heavens, and this is, as we have seen before, professing Christendom. At once the parable becomes illuminated with light. Looked upon in this light, in full harmony with all the Lord teaches in this chapter, all is easily understood. The little mustard seed, which was not destined to be a tree but only a shrub, easily taken out of the garden where it had been planted, develops against its nature into a tree. That which came from Him, the Son of Man, the Sower, develops, committed into the hands of men, into an unnatural thing -- one might say, a monstrosity -- for such a mustard tree is. This unnatural thing, this monstrosity, is professing Christendom as a system of the world, professing Christ, without possessing Him and His Spirit.

Here we have to call attention to the third message to the churches in Revelation, the second chapter. That is the message to Pergamos, typifying the age of the history of Christendom, beginning with Constantine the Great in the fourth century. The suffering church was made a state church. The mustard seed suddenly became the tree, and ever since the professing church has delighted in looking upon herself as a big expanding tree. But notice the perfect agreement -- the third parable and the third church message.

The birds which roost in that tree would mean, if the parable applies to the church, converted sinners. Do birds ever represent clean persons? We need not go outside of the chapter to answer this. The birds which fell upon the seed which had fallen by the wayside were instruments of Satan. Birds of heaven, or fowls, never mean anything good in Scripture. Abraham stood in the midst of the pieces of the sacrifices and drove away the fowls which were ready to fall upon the pieces (Gen. 15). The animals divided there represent Christ and the fowls nothing good. Birds in this parable mean unsaved, unconverted people and nations who flock for selfish motives to the tree, the outward form of Christendom, and find shelter there. But they defile the tree.

At last the tree will be full grown. Of the full grown tree it is said, "Great Babylon has become the habitation (roosting place) of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hated bird" (Rev. 18:2).

But let us not forget there is a tree which is to grow up and spread its branches, taking sap out of the root, over the whole earth. This tree is Israel -- the good olive tree with its indestructible root. Some of the branches are now broken off and lie upon the ground. Romans 11, however, assures us that God is able to graft them in again. Yet, before this olive tree with its holy root, this olive tree with its long promised future, the covenant made with an oath, stands highminded, boasting Christendom, boasting itself against the branches and claiming to be the tree to overspread the earth and thus attending to Israel's earthly calling. Alas! the warning is cast into the winds, "if God spared not the natural branches take heed lest He spare not thee." What a fall it will be when at last that tree, the monstrous tree, falls and is destroyed forever root and all!

But we must now turn our attention to the next parable, the parable of the leaven. "He spoke another parable to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it had been all leavened" (verse 33). It is, perhaps, unnecessary to state the universal explanation of the parable of the leaven. All the leading commentators of the Bible have accepted it, and it is taught throughout Christendom. However, we must refer to it briefly. The leaven is taken to mean the Gospel and its power. The woman represents the church. The woman takes the leaven and puts it into three measures of meal, which, according to this general exegesis represents humanity, the entire human family. Here the leaven does, in a hidden manner, its work in an assimilating process in penetrating the whole mass of humanity.

(Thus writes P. Lange, often called "the Prince among commentators." "The woman is an apt figure of the church. Leaven, a substance kindred, yet quite opposed to meal, having the power of transforming and preserving it, and converting it into bread, thus representing the divine in its relation to, and influence upon, our natural life. One of the main points of the parable is the hiding or the mixing of the leaven in the three measures of meal. This refers to the great visible church, in which the living Gospel seems, as it were, hidden and lost.")

That the parable could mean anything but that, which we have briefly outlined, seems to the great majority of teachers and preachers of Christendom next to an impossible thing. It is such a general accepted view that but few can tear themselves loose from it, and see the true teaching our Lord gives in this fourth parable. One hears so continually statements about the Gospel leaven and prayer that the "good" leaven may do its work, etc., that another explanation of this parable puts one at odds with the bulk of Christian believers. Indeed, this little parable contained in a little verse is apt to revolutionize the conception of many truths revealed in the Word of God. If we then approach this parable with a candid mind, laying aside any prejudice and preconceived ideas and are willing to know and follow the truth at any cost, we shall certainly find the truth and with it great joy and peace. If it revolutionizes our views it will only put us right, for whosoever follows the accepted teachings of men is generally not right.

If then the leaven means the Gospel, and the woman the church, and the three measures of meal humanity, the Lord would teach that, the Gospel, through the instrumentality of the church, is to permeate humanity, and that the world is to be converted by the assimilating power of the Gospel in penetrating the whole mass of humanity. Such, of course, is the belief, the unscriptural belief, of Christendom. But if the Lord teaches any such doctrine in this parable He manifestly contradicts Himself, a thing impossible with Him, who is infallible. We have seen in the second parable that the wheat and the tares grow together until the time of the harvest. This excludes the thought of world conversion in this age. This age, as we have seen, is a mixed one, and these conditions prevail to the end of it. If our Lord meant the leaven to permeate the whole lump of humanity then He teaches something entirely different from what He taught in the second parable.

But let us turn our attention to the word "leaven." We should not forget that our Lord as the teacher, as Nicodemus called Him, come from God, was according to the flesh the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. These to whom He speaks were Jews. Now the hearers of the parable certainly understood what was meant by leaven. No Jew would ever dream that leaven used in illustrating some power of process, could stand for something good. Leaven with the Jews means always evil. It was excluded from every offering of the Lord made by fire. Conscientiously the orthodox Jew searches his dwelling before keeping the feast of the unleavened bread, if perhaps somewhere a morsel of bread with some leaven may be hid. He purges out the leaven.

The word leaven, however, is not used here exclusively. We find it a number of times in the New Testament; the question is for what does it stand in the other passages?

Three times our Lord uses the word leaven, besides here in the parable. He speaks of the leaven of the Pharisees, the leaven of the Sadducees and the leaven of Herod. (Matt. 16:12; Mark 8:15) Does He mean some good quality of the Pharisees and Sadducees when He mentions leaven in connection with them? Certainly not, He cautions His disciples to beware of that leaven. He terms the hypocrisy of the ritualistic Pharisee, leaven, and the rationalism of the Sadducees and worldliness of Herod is leaven. The Holy Spirit furthermore uses the word leaven only in an evil sense (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). It is then evident in Scripture language leaven never means anything good, always stands for evil and corruption. It is impossible that it should mean only once something good, and that the Lord without any further comment, should use it here as a type of the gospel.

But let us turn to the question of the three measures of meal. What do they represent? The faulty but accepted teaching is, that the Lord means corrupted humanity by it. However, this is as impossible as it is for leaven to be something good. Where does the meal come from? Surely any child can answer this, the meal comes from the wheat. Tares, the type of evil, corruption, never yield fine, wholesome meal. Meal is the product of the good seed only. Good, nutritious and pure as it is, it can never represent the unregenerated mass of humanity. But we have still greater evidence. Three measures of meal stand in type for Christ, the corn of wheat and the bread of life. When Abraham comforted the Lord (Genesis 18) it was by three measures of meal and a calf. Both are typical of Christ, His Person and His Work. He is good, pure, holy, undefiled, as well as that which He has given, His Word. It is therefore all folly to twist Scripture language around, and make the three measures of meal mean corruption, when it always denotes purity.

Again, if the Gospel is leaven, and this leaven is to permeate the whole mass of humanity, we have an additional contradiction. Does the Gospel really work like leaven? How does leaven work? It is put into meal and then it works by itself. That is all. Simply put it there, leave it alone, it is bound to leaven the whole lump. But this is not the way the Gospel works the power of God unto Salvation.

Conceding it is true, the Gospel is leaven and is to permeate the whole lump, then we can readily say the "Gospel leaven" is the biggest failure which has ever been put out. There is no nation, nor even a town or hamlet which has ever been successfully "leavened" by the Gospel.

The process is then a failure, the Gospel does not accomplish the leavening of the lump, it has not done it in 1900 years. The inference which comes next is, that in giving such a prophecy the speaker, our Lord, was mistaken.

We have now torn down the false explanation of the parable, and laid the foundation upon which we can easily build and grasp the true meaning of the parable.

Leaven is error, evil, corruption. The good pure meal stands for truth, for Christ and His Word. The leaven corrupts the meal, it changes that which is good, and attacks in a hidden way its purity, till it has pervaded the whole mass. The Lord teaches in the parable how evil doctrine will corrupt the fine meal, the doctrine of Christ. It follows the parable of the mustard seed. First the professing church was lifted up into prominence, and the next step was the woman who put leaven into the three measures of meal. Pergamos, the period of church history, in which the professing church is married (the meaning of Pergamos) to the state and the world, is followed by the fourth period, that of Thyatira. This fourth message corresponds to the parable of the woman and the leaven. A woman, the woman Jezebel, is mentioned in Revelation 2. No doubt she stands for Rome. The woman in the parable represents the same, the apostate church, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. She has with her evil doctrine, the leaven, corrupted the fine meal, the doctrine of Christ. And now this leaven works in professing Christendom. It cannot yet fully pervade all, the whole is not yet leavened. The true believers, the church, still in the earth, is a hindrance to the full leavening process of evil. But the church will be removed from the earth, then the whole lump will be leavened. The fire alone can arrest the leaven in its work. The fire will make an end of the leaven. This explanation is the only correct one, for it agrees perfectly, not only with the teaching of our Lord in the previous parables, but with Scripture as a whole. The evil conditions in which the kingdom of the heavens gets in the hands of men, during the absence of the Lord, is here fully declared. Christendom, Rome, the mother of harlots, and the daughters, is evidence enough and proof how the Revealer of Secrets revealed things to come.

All these parables show the growth of evil, and are prophecies extending over the entire age in which we live. May we bow before the Word and follow the Word and its clear teachings, the oracles of God, rather than the "voice of the church" or "the doctrines of men."

After our Lord dismissed the crowds, He went into the house and here, in answer to the request of the disciples, He expounded the second parable. It was given to them, as it is given to us, to know the mysteries of the kingdom. We have looked at this divine interpretation before, and so we can at once proceed with the three parables which follow and which our Lord speaks to His disciples in the house. Two of these, the parable of the treasure hid in the field and the parable of the one pearl of great price, belong together. After these the Lord concludes His teaching of the mysteries with the parable of the dragnet.

"The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hid in the field, which a man having found has hid, and for the joy of it goes and sells all whatever he has, and buys that field. Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchantman seeking beautiful pearls; and having found one pearl of great value, he went and sold all whatever he had and bought it" (verses 44-46). That these two parables are closely connected is seen by their similarity. In both a man is mentioned, and he sells in each all he has to obtain what he esteems precious. In the first, he finds a treasure in the field and hides it there, while he buys the field to possess the treasure. In the second, he sells all to obtain one pearl of great value. There is, of course, a difference likewise. The treasure is in the field; it is deposited there. The field is bought, and with it the treasure. The one pearl comes out of the sea; its value is greater than the treasure in the field, of which it is not said that it has a great value. Again, a treasure may be increased or decreased, there may be taken away from it or added to it; the one pearl, however, is complete, its value and beauty are fixed.

As we turn to the interpretation of these parables, we are obliged to follow the same course which we followed with the preceding parables. We have to set aside the commonly accepted view. We have to show once more that the almost universal exposition and application of the parables by evangelical Christendom is wrong, unscriptural and conflicting with other parts of God's Word. We shall have to use the sharp knife again, to lay bare the errors of the teachings taken from the treasure in the field and the one pearl. Only in this way can we get at the root of the matter, and see the true

meaning and understand the mysteries of the kingdom.

Perhaps the Best way to mention the erroneous interpretation is to quote the father of Protestantism, Martin Luther. His comment on these two parables is about the best expression of the accepted theories, what our Lord meant with the treasure and the pearl. Luther said:

"The parable of the treasure means, that we vainly seek the kingdom of God by our works and exertion, or the works of the law. For we are not born of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. The Jews had the field, but did not see the treasure in it. But the Gentiles bought the field with the treasure; that is the law with Christ The hidden treasure is the Gospel, which gives us grace and righteousness without our merit. Therefore when one finds it, it causes joy; that is a good, cheerful conscience, which cannot be secured by any good works.

"The parable of the pearl is almost of the same import as the preceding one, except that the former speaks of the finding and this of the seeking. Therefore he speaks here of a growing faith, and signifies therewith that the pearl was not unknown, but that it had been heard of, as being of great price. Here the merchantman is intent only, that he may possess the one pearl. For this is also the nature of the Christian life, that he who has begun it imagines he has nothing, but he reaches out for it, and constantly presses onward, that he may obtain it." (Luther's Explanatory Notes on the Gospels. p.82.)

This mode of interpretation has been strictly followed by commentators. H.A.W. Meyer, a leading expositor of the New Testament, declares "the kingdom, the most valuable possession, must be taken hold of by a joyful sacrifice of all earthly things." Another one says: "The treasure and the pearl are pictures of the great value of the kingdom of the heavens. To possess them one has to sacrifice all his other goods" (Prof. Holtzmann). P. Lange, so well known, declares: "True Christianity is like an unexpected discovery, even in the ancient church. It is the best possession we can find, a gift of free grace. Every sinner must find and discover Christianity for himself. In order to secure possession, even of what we found with no merit of our own, we must be willing to sacrifice all; for salvation, though entirely of free grace, requires the fullest self-surrender." But enough of this. It is the general way of interpreting these two parables by making the man who sells all to obtain the treasure and the merchantman, the unsaved sinner. The Gospel, salvation, the grace of God, or as some term it "religion," is, according to this, represented in the treasure and the one pearl of great value. That such a theory is unreconcilably clashing with the very heart of the gospel is but little considered.

Gospel sermons, so-called, are preached, in which the sinner is exhorted to give up, to sell all, in order to become a Christian, to surrender the world and himself and then to find the pearl of great value. But is this the Gospel? We answer, No! The sinner has no sacrifice to bring. All his trying to surrender himself or giving Up the world can never secure for him eternal life or the grace of God. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" was spoken by a self-righteous Pharisee, the young ruler, and the Lord answers him, who came to him with the law and as under the law, accordingly, and tells him to sell all he has and give it to the poor and follow him. But this is not the gospel, but the law, which says, "Do and live." To preach the Gospel to sinners and tell them to do, to give up and to receive, is fundamentally wrong. The Gospel of grace does not ask of the sinner to sell all he has to receive the grace of God and eternal life, but the Gospel of grace offers to every sinner eternal life as God's gift, a free gift, in Christ Jesus. The Word of God, it is true, speaks of buying; but what kind of buying is it? "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Is. 4:1, 2). It is buying without money and without price.

The giving up, the surrender, follows when a person is saved and has received the grace of God, but never before. We see that to teach, the man who finds the treasure is the sinner, and the sinner is to sell all to obtain the possession of Christ, or the merchantman is the sinner who obtains a pearl, eternal life, by giving up all, is wrong teaching. (How strange that even the simple Gospel is so little known, and there is more and more the preaching of a Gospel, which is another. A nauseating mixture of law and grace.) The Lord never meant in these parables to describe the seeking and the finding of the sinner.

The difficulty which is so apparent in the first of these two parables is but little dealt with by preachers who make the Gospel out of it. According to this wrong application the sinner would have to buy the field to obtain the treasure, the Gospel. What is the field? One of the above mentioned commentators makes of it "the external, worldly ecclesiasticism." This is simply a human opinion. We know what the field is. We need not to ask Dr. Luther, Lange, or any other man, what

means the field. The Lord has given us the key. "The field is the world." This is the meaning of the word field in the first two parables. Who would say that the word "field" means anything different in the fifth parable? The field is the world. If the sinner is meant by the man who buys the field, it would mean that the sinner has to buy the world. There is no sense whatever in giving these two parables such an application.

Again, in the two first parables a person is spoken of -- the sower, the man who sowed the good seed. This Man in the first two parables is the Lord Himself. In the two parables before us the man and the merchantman stand for the same person, and this person is identical with the man in the first and second parables; in other words, the man who bought the field and the treasure in it, and the merchantman, who sold all to obtain one pearl of great value, is the Lord Himself. It is not the unsaved seeking and finding salvation, but it is the Saviour seeking the sinner, purchasing the field, buying the treasure in it, giving up all to possess one pearl of great value.

As we look upon it in this light we have indeed the blessed Gospel. He, who was rich, became poor for our sakes, that by His poverty we might become rich. He, who subsisted in the form of God, emptied Himself. He came down, He gave up, He gave all and was obedient unto death, unto the death of the cross. Both parables teach the same great truth, Christ, the Saviour, who came to seek that which is lost and who has purchased the field and found in it a treasure, which is His, and obtained one pearl of great value. But the question arises, if this is the case, why two parables? If the finding man and the seeking merchantman is our Lord, why should His work in giving up and selling all be mentioned twice? Why is a treasure mentioned first and then a pearl? and why is the purchased treasure hid, while the one pearl of great value comes evidently first into the possession of the merchantman?

The Lord certainly speaks here of a twofold mystery of the kingdom of the heavens and of two different objects, which He obtained by His work of redemption. When He mentions the treasure hid in the field, which is His by purchase, He means His earthly people, Israel. The one pearl of great value, taken out of the sea; the one pearl, beautiful and complete, means the church, the one body. We have in these two parables the mystery of Israel and the mystery of the church; of both mysteries the Holy Spirit witnesses in the epistles by the Apostle of the Gentiles, to whom these mysteries were made known.

Israel is the treasure in the field. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:5). "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob for Himself and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Ps. 135:4). When He came from heaven He found His people in the field. He bought the whole world and with it, inclusive, the people who are His earthly treasure. "He died for that nation" is spoken of His blessed work (John 11:51). However, we do not read that He got possession of the treasure; it is rather the thought which we get from it, that the treasure found is hid still in the field which He bought by so great a price, for the sake of owning that treasure. And in this we have the key, why this is introduced in these parables of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens.

Israel is the Lord's peculiar treasure. He has purchased His earthly people. They shall be yet his peculiar treasure, displaying in the earth, in the coming age, all the excellencies of Himself. They will be justified, a separated and Spirit-filled people. In Balaam's prophecies the Spirit of God speaks of what Israel is in God's eyes through the redemption work of Jehovah. The Lord died for that nation, and still the results of His death are not yet manifested. Israel is hid in the field, in the world. The Lord will come again and return to the field, the world, once more. He comes to claim His inheritance. Then He will lift the treasure, then He claims His people Israel and they will rejoice in His salvation. During this age, the age of an absent Lord, Israel is kept hid in the field. This is one of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens. It corresponds to Rom. 11:25: "For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, that ye be not wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved. According as it is written: The Deliverer shall come out of Zion; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Alas! Christendom is wise in their own conceits and has ignored, yes completely ignored this mystery. It declares that "God hath cast away His people and there is no hope for Israel." Christendom forgets that Israel is the treasure in the field, purchased by the blood, the precious blood of the Son of God, and that He, who is like a man who has gone to a far country, will come again to claim the earth and lift His peculiar treasure Israel. Much more might be said on all this, but we are obliged to turn to the meaning of the one pearl of great value.

This one pearl is the Church. "He loved the Church and gave Himself for it," thus it is written, and here in the parable He declares this precious truth Himself. The pearl is taken out of the sea. Way down on the dark bottom of the ocean is the

shell, the house of an animal, and in this animal, by its work, the beautiful pearl is produced. A small grain of sand, we are told, imbeds itself between the animal and the shell and creates by its presence a wound in the side of the animal. Upon this miserable grain of sand the animal deposits a thin crust of a brilliant material. How often this is repeated no one can tell, one deposit after the other is made, till at last in the side of the animal there is found a most beautiful pearl, a pearl of great price, a pearl in which the colors of the rainbow of the heavens are wonderfully blended together. It is taken up and becomes the well nigh priceless jewel in the crown of some mighty monarch.

We see at once why our Lord used the pearl as the type of the church, which He loved and gave Himself for it. Like Eve who was taken out of the side of Adam, so His blessed side was opened and out of that side is building His church. Like the pearl, the church is one, though composed of many countless members known to Him alone. This one pearl is still forming out of His side. The one pearl is still in the dark waters of the sea. How many more members will be added to this one pearl we do not know. How long it will be yet, before the Lord takes her unto Himself into the air, to adorn Himself with that precious pearl, none can tell. The church belongs to Him, and will be with Him in the heavenlies. Of what great value must this one pearl be to Him, that He gave all for it? What glories will He receive from the possession of that pearl and what a beautiful object will be the pearl in the possession of the heavenly and eternal merchantman?

When He comes to take possession of Israel, the treasure, and of the world, His church will be with Him. And what else might be said of this precious parable! May we meditate on it, and rejoice in that love which gave up all to take us out of our ruin and loss untold, and make us the objects of His marvelous grace.

One more parable remains, the seventh. "Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and which gathers together of every kind, which when it has been filled, they having drawn up on the shore and sat down, gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless out. Thus shall it be in the completion of the age; the angels shall go forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verses 47-50).

This is not the Gospel net, as it is often called. After the one pearl is taken up the end of the age begins. This parable falls into the completion of the age. The dragnet is let into the sea, which, as we have seen before, represents the nations. The parable refers to the preaching of the everlasting Gospel as it will take place during the great tribulation (Rev. 14:6, 7). The separating of the good and the bad is done by angels. All this cannot refer to the present time nor to the church, but to the time when the kingdom is about to be set up. Then angels will be used, as it is so clearly seen in the book of Revelation. The wicked will be cast into the furnace of fire and the righteous will remain in the earth for the millennial kingdom. To follow all this in detail would take us into the history of the seventieth week of Daniel. It is the same "end of the age" which is described in Matthew 24.

We have learned from these seven parables the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, beginning with the apostolic age and showing us the conditions which prevail up to its end. It is significant that the last three parables -- containing, as we have seen, the mystery of Israel, the mystery of the church, and the mystery of the ending of the age -- were spoken in the house to the disciples. The great multitude did not hear them, as they contain truths for His own, to whom alone it is given through the Spirit of God to know the mysteries of the kingdom. And so we read: "Jesus says unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say to Him, Yea, Lord. And He said to them, For this reason every scribe disciplined to the kingdom of the heavens is like a man that is a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old" (verses 51, 52). The things old are the things revealed in the Old Testament and the new things those of the new dispensation, which are given in these parables in a nut-shell.

Upon this declaration there follows a symbolical action of our Lord. "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these parables, He withdrew thence." The revealer of the secrets has given His revelation and now He disappears from the scene. It stands in type for His bodily absence from the earth during this age.

The end of the chapter is in full accord with the beginning and the teaching of the entire chapter. "And having come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogues, so that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this man this wisdom and these works of power? Is not this the son of a carpenter? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren James and Joseph, and Simeon and Juda? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things? And they were offended in Him. And Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, unless in His country and

in his house. And he did not there many works of power, because of their unbelief" (verses 54-58).

What else is all this but evidence of His full rejection. His own knew Him not. They speak of His earthly relations. For them He is "this man." His Father they knew not. They call Him "the son of the carpenter." And thus He is rejected still by His earthly people; and alas! many of those who call themselves by His name during this age treat Him no better. With the next chapter we shall follow the story of His rejection.

CHAPTER XIV

The fourteenth chapter contains the record of events put together so as to harmonize with the purpose of this Gospel. The Lord had revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, mysteries, as we have seen, repeated by the Lord in His seven messages to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. At the end of the previous chapter we learned once more of His rejection. "They were offended at Him." In the chapter before us He appears as the rejected One. The right key to understand the events described here, is to look upon all dispensationally. We have in them a description of what takes place while the King is absent and rejected by His own people. At the end of this chapter He comes in the fourth watch, and with His coming brings the calm for the troubled sea and His troubled disciples.

The first incident we find is the martyrdom of John the Baptist. Herod stands with his kingdom and abomination for the world, the prince of this age, and his persecutions. The record is put in here to show that during the absence of the King, the world will hate and persecute those who are of the Truth, but it carries us on to the end likewise, when a false king will rule once more -- the Antichrist; typified by Herod.

The second incident is the miraculous feeding of the five thousand men, besides women and children. He had gone to a desert place, but the crowds followed Him, and He supplies their need in His own miraculous way. The keeping of His people is here demonstrated, while on the other hand, we find spiritual lessons, which lead us deeper, especially if we compare this section with the record in the Gospel of John.

The third incident is the storm on the sea, lasting a whole night, during which the Lord is absent. He went into the mountain apart to pray, which is a picture of His presence with the Father during this age. This section is especially rich in dispensational lessons. We learn from this short outline of the fourteenth chapter, that it forms a kind of bird's-eye view of the age, which follows the rejection of our Lord.

"At that time Herod, the tetrarch, heard of the fame of Jesus, and said to his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and because of this, these works of power display their force in him" (verses 1, 2).

The Herod mentioned here is not the Herod in the second chapter of the Gospel. The Herod under which the children of Bethlehem were slain was Herod the Great, an Idumean who had been proclaimed king of the Jews by Rome and exercised his evil reign under the protection of Rome. After his death Archelaus became tetrarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea, Philip of Trachonitis and Herod Antipas of Galilee and Peraea, who also had the title of tetrarch. It is this Herod who is before us in this chapter He was married to a daughter of King Aretas of Arabia. He lived, however, in open adultery with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Like his father, Herod the Great, he was a wicked man, the murderer of John the Baptist. He was followed by Herod Agrippa, under whose regime the persecution of the Christians broke out in Jerusalem.

The dreadful end of this wicked king is described in Acts 12. He was smitten by an angel of God and eaten by worms. His son, named likewise Herod Agrippa, took his place.

These Herods -- who ruled under Rome over Immanuel's land and were such bloody men, false kings upon a throne, which was not theirs -- are all types of Antichrist, that false king, who comes in his own name and will be received by the Jews.

During this entire age "the mystery of iniquity already works," and in the end of it that wicked one will be revealed. Satan rules over the world now, and by and by, his power will have full sway for a little while, and then through the revived Roman Empire, the beast out of the sea, a false king, the great final Herod, will rule and reign, as well as the beast out of the earth.

These dispensational facts make it clear why the story of John's martyrdom is introduced now in this Gospel. It is brought forth here to show that alongside of the kingdom of the heavens in its mysteries, there is the kingdom of the world culminating in a wicked leader, the man of sin and son of perdition.

The incident itself comes in at the time when our Lord sent out His disciples. In the fourth chapter we heard that John was delivered up (4:12). In the eleventh he sent his disciples from the prison to the Lord, and now his fate is made known after the Lord had revealed the secret things.

On account of the report concerning Jesus, Herod is troubled, like his father before him was troubled, when the wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. Conscience speaks with a loud voice, and though Herod was neither a Pharisee nor a Sadducee, he is superstitious and looks upon Jesus as John the Baptist risen from the dead. It is still so; where there is no faith, superstitions hold sway. And why was he troubled and uneasy? Why did his conscience speak? "For Herod had seized John, and had bound him and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. For John had said to him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And while desiring to kill him, he feared the crowd, because they held him for a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod; whereupon he promised with oath to give her whatsoever she should ask. But she, being set on by her mother, says, Give me here upon a dish the head of John the Baptist. And the king was grieved; but on account of the oaths, and those lying at table with him, he commanded it to be given. And he sent and beheaded John in the prison; and his head was brought upon a dish, and was given to the damsel, and she carried it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it and came and told Jesus. And Jesus having heard it, went away thence by ship to a desert place apart" (verses 3-13").

What a scene of wickedness and crime, lust and blood shed is here revealed! It is the true picture of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And this world, this age is unchanged. It is not improved and gradually subdued. This evil world is not getting better. It is not giving up its lust and pride, its hatred and persecution under "the civilizing influence of Christendom" as it is claimed. The things manifested here by the Spirit of God, as they transpired at the merry feast of Herod are the same today. The hatred of the Truth and the servant of the Lord is the same. The lust of the flesh and the eyes and the pride of life have not changed a particle. All is present with all its disgusting features in the midst of the boasted "civilizing influences of Christendom."

John had been faithful in discharging his God-given ministry. Openly he had confronted the despot with his evil doing and a dungeon becomes his lot. How often it has been repeated throughout the age. How many faithful servants have been hated and persecuted thus. The world receives not the truth, but hates it. Having rejected the Lord and hated Him, the world rejects and hates Him who is of the truth. How sad to look upon that which professes to be the church, that which professes to be Christian and to see it in friendship with the world! At last professing and apostate Christendom will form that great world center, and center of abomination and wickedness, "Babylon the Great," and in her will be found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all the slain upon the earth (Rev. 18:24).

Oh, let us herald it forth, separation from the world! "Adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, is minded to be the friend of the world is the constituted enemy of God" (James 4:4). May it reach our conscience that we may live indeed as such who are in the world but not of the world, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind. Like John the Baptist, let us be faithful in our testimony, no matter what the consequences may be.

John represents here also him who is one of the two witnesses. Elijah will come once more, not now, but at the Jewish end of the age; not in this country, but in Israel's land. As a witness, with his companion, he will witness against the beast, and will be slain by it, as John was slain by Herod.

We pass over the details of that libertine feast, the dance, unquestionably indecent, the beastly mother, with her awful request. Of Herod we read, he was grieved on account of the request. He feared the crowd on the one hand, and on the other he feared those who lay at table with him. He wanted to appear religious. If he made an oath and it was heard by those with him, and he did not keep it, they would surely tell it abroad. If his religiousness led him to commit a murder it is a small matter. How often it has been repeated! Under the garb of religiousness crimes upon crimes have been committed, and the end is not yet.

What a moment it must have been when the messenger entered the dungeon of John and his life is taken. "And he sent and beheaded John in prison." This is all the Spirit of God tells us of it. No doubt John met the messenger in the triumph of faith.

John's disciples came and took the headless body and buried it and then they came and told Jesus.

There they found the comfort and the hope of resurrection and life. What words of cheer He may have given to them we do not read here, but we are sure they came not in vain to Him. And shall we come in vain to Him with our cares and griefs, trials and losses? Go and tell Jesus Christ your Lord!

Such then is the world in its hatred and such what the servants of Christ may expect from the world.

Our Lord having heard the report went away to a desert place apart. He knew that it was only a little while longer and He would be rejected, condemned and crucified. But His time had not yet come. He would not hasten matters, however, even if then Herod would have attempted to do anything to him he would have not succeeded. How the Spotless and Holy One must have felt in that hour, when wickedness had reached such a climax! Yet He is silent No word comes from His lips. No word of disapproval no word of judgment or wrath. Thus He is silent throughout this present evil age until that day comes, His own day, when He will keep silent no longer.

And now as He goes away by ship into a desert place apart, truly as the Rejected One. The multitudes hearing of it follow Him on foot from the cities. They seek Him in the wilderness, in the place of rejection. In the Gospel of John, chapter 6, we have the full record of what follows and likewise the condition of the people. Here we have only a brief description. "And going out He saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion about them, and healed their infirm" (verse 14). A few words only, but how His grace shines in them. Though He knew their hearts, which were far from seeking Him, yet was He moved with compassion. This is the second time we read of His compassion for the people. Not alone did He pity them but He healed their infirm. It must have kept Him busy as He moved among them, touching the sick and healing their diseases. "But when even was come, His disciples came to Him saying: The place is desert and much of the daytime already gone by; dismiss the crowds that they may go in the villages and buy food for themselves" (verse 15). What a contrast between the compassionate Lord and His disciples! How little they had learned of Him and of His gracious ways. Most likely while He was still occupied with the people and still stretching forth His hands with healing power, they interrupted Him in His blessed work, reminding Him of the physical needs of the multitudes. As if He knew not Himself what they needed, as if He cared not for them and their welfare! It was unbelief which manifested itself thus. They even ask the Lord to dismiss the multitudes, to send them away. Heartless, they would have let them find their way back to their villages to satisfy their wants. Instead of looking to the Lord they looked to circumstances, to the numbers of the people. They did not reckon with Him and His power, who fed Israel for forty years in the wilderness, who sent the ravens to Elijah. Such is unbelief. How calm and sublime is the Lord's answer. No word of reproof falls from His blessed lips. "But Jesus said to them, They have no need to go; give ye them to eat." There was surely no need to go away empty from Him, no need to go elsewhere and seek what He so plentifully can give and does give to all who trust Him. They have no need to go. In this word He reveals Himself once more as the omnipotent Lord. A desert place, and He declares a crowd of five thousand men, besides women and children, have no need to go, to leave Him, to find bread to satisfy their hunger. But still more, He tells His disciples, "give ye them to eat." This they could not understand. They had very little to minister to the great needs of such a company. That the Lord could feed them they had not considered, and that they, in giving them to eat, could count on His power to minister to their need was far from their thoughts. Yet this is the lesson which the Lord wanted to teach them and us likewise. He is the All-sufficient One. He has all power, and there is no need for anyone to go away empty from Him. He wishes to minister to the needs of His people, through His own. "Give ye them to eat" is still His loving word, and He backs it up with all His grace and riches in glory. We mean, of course, all this of a ministry in spiritual things.

Let us think of this as we minister the things of God, whether it be the Gospel or the ministry of His Word, for the edification of believers. All is entrusted to us by the Head of the Body. He Himself will minister through our ministry if the heart rests believingly in Him and faith looks away from circumstances and difficulties to a rich and gracious Lord in Glory. He knows the needs of all. He is still the compassionate One, and as Lord in glory tells His servants: "Give ye them to eat." Oh for faith to count on Him and His gracious power.

And now they speak, "But they say to Him, We have not here save five loaves and two fishes" (verse 17). From the Gospel of John we learn that the Lord said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy loaves that these may eat? But this He said trying him, for He knew what He was going to do. Philip answered Him, Loaves for two hundred denarii are not sufficient for them, that each may have some little portion. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, says to Him, There is a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes; but this, what is it for so many?" (John 6:5~9). They even had not the small supply themselves, but it was in the hands of a little boy. How suggestive! It was little, very little they possessed, and it was in the hands of a little boy, one who was weak. It is so with ourselves and the little we have. Blessed are we indeed if we do know how little it is which is in our hands and how much is lacking. But let it not be in unbelief, thinking it is such a little bit, which cannot be used. Nothing is too small, nothing too little, if it is brought to Him; yea, He has chosen the weak things. "Bring them here to Me" is His command. What condescension, He does not despise the little we have, He does not set it aside in manifesting His power. How easy it would have been for Him to speak only a word in that desert place and bread would have fallen again upon the ground, for the crowds to gather and take with them. He wishes to use the little, the weak things, to show forth His power. It is the way He works throughout this age, in which He is the Rejected One.

"Bring them here to Me," and do we bring what we have to Him always? Is every service first brought to Him for blessing? Is the little put into His hands first for blessing? Are all our undertakings really brought to Him; our little, our all, put at His disposal? If we bring it to Him He will bless it and with His blessing we can go forth to minister to others. There can be and will be no lack in such ministry in dependence upon Him.

This is true ministry. How far Christendom has drifted away from it, and how short we come of it, with our unbelieving hearts. We ever reckon with circumstances and difficulties and not with the loving, gracious and all sufficient Lord in glory! May we learn and profit by His Word.

"And having commanded the multitudes to recline upon the grass, having taken the five loaves and two fishes, He looked up to heaven and blessed; and having broken the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the multitudes" (verses 18, 19). He blessed and broke the bread, and the broken bread is first put into the hands of the disciples, and after they received they gave it to the people. This is the divine order of ministry. The little handed over to Him, He blesses and we receive first of Him, and what we receive from His hands we can pass on to others. (In the Gospel of John He Himself feeds with His own hands the crowds. The ministry of the disciples is not mentioned there, because in John He is described as the Divine One.)

What a scene it must have been! Five thousand men besides women and children crowding about Him, and at His loving command they lay down upon the grass and after they found rest He feeds them with His bread. In looking upon that blessed picture we think of Him as Jehovah-Roi, the Lord, my Shepherd. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." It is fulfilled here. Jehovah, the Shepherd, is present with His people. Jehovah, the Shepherd, gives them rest and then in the green pastures He refreshes them. Thus He acts still. Rest and food in Him and through Him are still His precious gifts to all who put their trust in Him. He Himself is our Rest and our Bread. He satisfies the poor with bread. It is prophetic. He will yet be the great Shepherd of Israel and gather His people, His scattered sheep, and supply their wants. We read of it in that restoration Psalm, the one hundred and thirty-second: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion ; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread."

"And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was over and above of fragments twelve hand baskets full. But those that had eaten were about five thousand men besides women and children" (verses 20-21). Here is the miracle. The little was not only sufficient for all, but more was left over at the end than they had in the beginning. His blessing was not only upon the little for all, but He blessed it in such a manner that from it came an abundant increase. It is not different now in the ministry of spiritual things. The more we give out, having received from Him, the greater the increase and possession for us in the end.

In the Gospel of John the definite teachings of our Lord concerning life through Him and in Him the true bread come down from heaven, and the sustenance of that life, are connected with this episode. John's Gospel is the place for that. In the feeding of the people as recorded in Matthew and the applications we have made of it, we have brought out the

character of the age, the age in which Israel has rejected her King. Let us notice that the feeding of the multitude closes abruptly. In John 6:15 we read they would make Him king. But the attempt was carnal. No faith in Him, no devotion to His person was behind it, and the Searcher of hearts had to declare unto them when the crowds sought Him again: "Verily, verily I say unto you, ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:20). In Matthew's Gospel the whole scene closes without any record about the behaviour of the multitudes. Significantly we read at once: "And immediately He compelled the disciples to go on board the ship, and to go before Him to the other side until He should have dismissed the multitudes. And having dismissed the multitudes, He went up into the mountain apart to pray."

Every word here is pregnant with meaning. He compelled the disciples to go on board ship. A change is to take place by His own arrangement and the people are dismissed by Himself. All this indicates the setting aside of Israel, their rejection, though never complete nor final. He Himself goes up into the mountain apart to pray. The whole night is spent by Him there in the presence of the Father. He is absent, both from the crowds and from His disciples, and while the multitudes He had fed scatter, His disciples are tossed upon the sea. In the prophet Hosea we read that Jehovah saith "I will go and return to My place" (Hosea 5:15). His going upon the mountain speaks of His withdrawal and the place which He occupies in the presence of the Father, as intercessor and advocate. The third incident recorded, the stormy night, the storm-tossed disciples, the coming Lord in the fourth watch, Peter's separation to meet him, the morning which brings peace and the renewed healing by the returned Lord, all is full of meaning and rich in typical application.

The night is a picture of the time during which He is absent, this present evil age in which we live. His return from the mountain in the morning foreshadows His second coming and the beginning of a new age.

And now we read what happens in that night during His absence. "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves for the wind was contrary" (verse 24). While He is away night and storm reign and His own are in distress, the wind is contrary. Could we find a better description of the present age than a stormy sea, a contrary wind and a dark night? Surely the age is perfectly portrayed by these. It is an age of storm, peril and night. How strange that with the most emphatic as well as plain statements of holy writ concerning the characteristics of this age, the greater part of the professing church can teach precisely the opposite and speak of it as an age of peace, light and progress. Surely Scripture is very definite that Satan is the god of this age, and night increases under his rule; peace is impossible. We find in the very short description of that night in which the Lord was absent, a description of the age. It is true still and the one who believes otherwise and expects peace and calm now will be sadly disappointed.

But if the night, the rising waves, the contrary wind, are pictures of the age, what can the little ship mean, which sails across the storm sea? The applications which are made of the ship are manifold. A favored one is to use it as a type of the church and speak of the disciples as believers who are in the church and who have their fears and doubts, who tremble in view of the towering waves and the contrary wind. But such an application cannot be made to correspond with the teaching of the Word concerning the true church. The true church is above the waters, above the storms, in union with Himself who is in the presence of God. The frightened disciples, full of fears and expecting every moment the deep to swallow them up, could hardly be taken as types of the true believer, who knows his position in Christ. He, too, is above the storm, and though he may be storm-tossed, as much as this little ship upon the sea, though Satan's power may ever play about him and the wind be contrary, yet through it all does he not fear, but sings the song which is heard above the howling wind, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What does the ship mean? It may be taken in a general way to be a type of the Jewish people. The Lord absent from those who are in a sense His own to whom He came, and who rejected Him, who refused Him, are upon the sea. The sea represents the nations; the waves and the wind, the persecutions and the distress which come upon them. It is an excellent portrayal of the history of God's ancient people from the time they refused their King until He returns to be received by them. This ship with fluttering sails, broken masts, tossed like a ball from wave to wave, blown hither and thither, uncontrollable and yet controlled, ever in danger and never in danger of going down -- this ship is the type of the Jewish ship, the Jewish nation. It is still upon the sea. It is still the same old storm-tossed vessel. The winds more than ever contrary. It seeks an harbor now, trying to cast anchor on the shore of their own land, but a boisterous wind is coming and while the ship is miraculously kept, there will be no haven, no peace, till He comes again who is their King, the Son of

David.

But this application, correct as it is, is too general. We have spoken of the ship and not of the disciples. The disciples must be taken as the type of the Jewish remnant. We saw from the tenth chapter that the disciples sent forth then were representing the Jewish remnant. When the Lord Jesus Christ left the earth and went to the Father's house to prepare a place, He did not leave a church behind. There was no church on the earth when our Lord ascended upon high, and when He comes back to earth again He will not find the church on the earth, but He will come back to be received by the remnant of His earthly people. It is in this light the incident has to be interpreted, which however does not forbid applications in other directions.

"And in the fourth watch of the night He went toward them, walking upon the sea. But when the disciples saw Him walking upon the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition; and they cried out for fear" (verses 25, 26).

He had left His place on the mountain and returned. His return was in the fourth watch of the night, right before the dawning of the morning. And as He left that place on the mountain when He was here in the earth, so will He arise and leave the place on His Father's throne and come back to earth, to the very land where He was once rejected. First, He will leave His place and descend from heaven with a shout and come into the air, where we shall meet Him. The fourth watch is the time when He leaves His place and comes. The fourth watch is now. The gradual approaching of the Lord, His person seen dimly in the distance, the fear of the disciples who cry out for terror, instead of shouting for joy that He is coming, all finds its proper application. How many there are in Christendom, for whom the coming of the Lord and the events connected with it have no joy, but bring fear and terror to the heart. And these days, the days of the fourth watch, are filled with signs which herald His coming. The true believer, however, knows no fear in the fourth watch, for he waits and watches for His coming, and if it were possible to get a glimpse of the Coming One leaving His Father's throne, descending into the air, the believing heart would rejoice. We love His appearing, and the fact that He is coming but intensifies the longing of the heart to see Him as He is. The believer knows no such fear as the Jewish disciples had, when they saw Him walking on the water. Had they known, it is the Lord, and that He comes to bring peace and safety, we doubt not their cries would have ceased. All has a meaning for the Jewish remnant, which will be on the scene when our glorious hope has been realized.

"But immediately Jesus spake unto them saying, Be of good courage: it is I; be not afraid" (verse 27). These precious, comforting words were heard above the roaring of the hurricane and the noise of many waters. May we hear them continually in the midst of increasing difficulties, in the hour of test and trial, in affliction, in the dark valley of suffering and in the experiences we call "disappointments." Blessed are we if we do. The darkest place, even if it is the dungeon, will become illuminated and resound with joyous praise. Surely Paul in Rome must have heard these precious words, "Be of good courage -- it is I -- be not afraid!" May we take all from His hands by believing we are in His hands and thus face every trial, every tempest, with the assurance that there is nothing to be feared.

But in the ship, in that company is one who recognizes the voice, one who recognizes Him through the mist of the storm and the vanishing shadows of the night. And Peter answered and said: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me to come to Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter having descended from the ship, walked on the waters to go to Jesus." Here another significant type is before us. We shall soon learn from this Gospel that the Lord announces the building of His church. In the sixteenth chapter we find the words, "Upon this rock I will build My church." We learn that it was Peter who said, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," and upon this rock, Christ in resurrection, the Lord announces His church will be built. To Peter also the keys of the kingdom were committed, and how he could use them we find in the book of Acts. Now church means "out-calling," not only an out-calling from the nations, but an out-calling from that which is passed, the Jewish things. Peter, so prominent in this incident, in his act of faith in leaving the ship, turning his back upon his frightened kinsmen, stepping on the waters, going to Jesus to meet Him, stands as a type for the church. It is true all the truth concerning the church was revealed through Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. It is true, through Paul the company was led forth out of the ship to go forth to meet the Coming One, but Peter also stands in his action typically for these truths, which we have later so fully revealed in the Pauline epistles.

It is separation, and this separation was an act of faith which we see here. It is the true position of the church, as well as the individual believer. The old Jewish ship is to be left behind. The path for the church is the path of faith. The object before the church is the coming Lord. The word from Him is, Come. The walk to be like His walk. He has triumphed over sin and

death, the world and Satan; the waves and storms cannot harm nor hinder Him. And we are associated with Him. He wants us to walk on the water. This is the calling of the church. Separation first unto Him. Obedience to His Word and then walking on the water to meet Him.

Alas! where is it now, this church separated, gone out to meet the Bridegroom? That which calls itself church is a miserable ship, worse than the Jewish ship after which the modern "church" is only too often modeled. As individual believers, however, separation is possible. You, dear reader, in the midst of all the confusion and failure, in this fourth watch, you may hear His voice, "Come." He is coming. He wants you to take the path of faith, the path He walked Himself. "Behold the Bridegroom! Go ye out to meet Him!" Have you gone out to meet Him?

"But seeing the wind boisterous, He was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

All is again pregnant with meaning.

What made Peter sink after he stepped out so boldly and walked on the stormy waves to meet his Lord? It was a boisterous wind; and Peter, instead of looking to Jesus only, was frightened by that boisterous wind and began to sink. Has this not been repeated in our own experience? We heard His voice, we separated ourselves, we followed Him, and then the enemy raised some boisterous wind. He always does when we desire to follow the Lord in all things. Oh, how often we made the same mistake which Peter made! Looking away from the Coming One, the One who is able to save to the uttermost, our feet began to sink and to slip back. But could Peter ever have sunk down? Never! Nor can the believer ever perish. But Jesus lifted Peter up, and he stood again on the waves, triumphing now through His power over the boisterous wind, and then he walked not towards Jesus, but he walked with Jesus. Even so He deals with us in His great mercy, never leaving nor forsaking us, saving us out of the tempestuous sea.

How beautifully this fits into the dispensational picture we have already given. There is a time coming when Satan will bring on a very boisterous wind. It is called the "hour of temptation" in Revelation. That old serpent is even now getting ready for it. But the Lord will never let His own sink. Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught Peter. He takes him by the hand, and both go now to the ship. So will He catch up His waiting church, and will return with His saints to bring peace.

And as they came into the ship the wind ceased. Satan's power was at an end as soon as Jesus was in the ship. When He comes back to earth again there will be peace, and not before. The great need of the world is to have the King back. What a glorious picture that must have been -- Jesus and Peter coming to the ship! The sun was now shedding the first rays over the sea, the dark night was over, the anxiety of the little flock was turned into joy and laughter, while the raging sea became as calm and smooth as if there had never been a storm. How much grander it will be when the Lord comes back with His saints, and the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings!

"Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying: Truly, Thou art the Son of God."

It seems they had never believed this. The great stumbling block with the Jew is yet, "He made Himself God." Again and again we are being asked by them, "Can God have a Son?" Many of the Jews acknowledge Jesus today as a reformer and a good man, but never as Son of God. They will know Him when He comes, and the nation will fall at His pierced feet and worship Him as the King and Son of the Living God.

The closing verses of the fourteenth chapter of Matthew speak of Jesus going to the opposite shore, where He healed the diseased. "And when they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had recognized Him, they sent in all that region round about, and they brought unto Him all that were sick. And they besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." It happened in the place where they had rejected Him. This may be taken as a true type of the blessed work of redemption, salvation and restoration which will take place during the millennium.

CHAPTER XV

This chapter introduces us more fully into the events which follow the rejection of the King by His people and which manifest the enmity, the Satanic hatred against the Lord. He has now set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem and soon He will reveal His sufferings; His death, His resurrection and His return to earth. While going on steadily towards the cross, which was ever before Him, that departure He should accomplish in Jerusalem, the enemies swarm around Him, they test Him and bring their questions, but He silences them all. The wisdom of Him who is wisdom Himself is gloriously manifested. At last the tempting and accusing scribes and Pharisees have spent their last arrow upon Him. He asks them a question which they could not answer (chapter 22). He then reveals their wickedness and hatred of Him and pronounces His "woes" upon them followed by His last word to Jerusalem (chapter 23). But while these evil men with their evil hearts, under the leadership of Satan, approach the Lord from time to time, He also teaches His disciples and utters parables all in harmony with the scope of the entire gospel. We shall fully show this as we continue in our exposition.

"Then the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem come up to Jesus, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress what has been delivered by the ancients, for they do not wash their hands when they eat bread?" (v. 1, 2).

We can easily learn from this that behind this deputation from the religious Jerusalem stood the whole company of Pharisees and scribes, and that it was a cunningly devised and concerted attempt to ensnare Him. The Lord in answer asks them another question and lays bare their wicked hypocrisies, after which He addresses the people and answers Peter's question. Before we follow these events a more detailed explanation of the question of the Pharisees and scribes is in order.

We are aware that the two questions, the one by the Pharisees and the other, the Lord's counter question in the beginning of the fifteenth chapter, are not fully grasped by many readers of the Word. The Jews believed and still believe (at least, the orthodox) in a written law and in an oral law. This they founded upon Exodus 34:27 and taught that while Moses wrote down a law another oral law was given to him and that this oral law was handed down from generation to generation. It is believed by them that Moses received both the written and the oral law on Mount Sinai. They placed the oral law above the written law. (The words of the scribes are lovely above the words of the law; for the words of the law are light and weighty, but the words of the scribes are all weighty. -- Beracoth.) Circumstances, however, forced them to commit the oral law to writing, which was done in the Talmud (meaning doctrine), from which we can learn all the ridiculous paraphrases and wicked additions to the law the ancients had made under the plea that it was given by God. To illustrate what interpretation they put upon certain statements of the law we select Exodus 34:26: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." The oral law has expounded this to mean that it is a sin to eat meat and drink milk at the same time, and the elders have gone so far as to declare, if a pot of milk boils over and some of the milk drops into a pot of meat, the meat is unclean and must be thrown away. Butter, coming from milk, is likewise not to be eaten with meat, etc.

Such a question these tempting scribes and Pharisees brought to the Lord. It is the question about the washing of the hands. It will interest the reader to learn a little more about this unscriptural act and what emphasis the Pharisees and the present day talmudical Jews lay upon the washing of hands.

Nothing whatever is said about such washing of hands in the Old Testament scriptures, but the oral law has precept upon precept upon this ceremony, which, if neglected, is looked upon as a great sin, worthy of excommunication. One even was permitted to eat unclean meats, forbidden in the law, and drink unclean drinks, as long as he fulfilled the traditions of the elders and washed his hands before he broke the law. The Pharisaical righteousness consisted in this: "Whosoever hath his place in the land of Israel, and eateth his common food in cleanness, and speaks the holy language, and recites his prayers morning and evening, let him be confident that he obtains the life of the world to come." Volumes were written and are in existence which enlarge in the most critical and minutest way upon the washing of hands. Dissertations we find here on the simple washing and the plunging into water, on the manner of the washing, what hand is to be washed first, the time when it is to be done, the quantity of water to be used, and many other rules. Besides this we find the grossest superstitions. We read some years ago in a jargon book, published in Poland, that evil spirits light upon the hands over night and if the hands are not washed as prescribed by the oral law these evil spirits find their way into the mouth and stomach of the transgressor and defile him. (This is undoubtedly founded upon the following talmudical statement: "Shibta is an evil spirit which sits upon man's hands at night. If any touch his food with unwashed hands, that spirit sits upon that food, and there is danger from it.")

But enough of this. Such were and are the traditions of the elders. The Lord might have easily dismissed the question of the Jerusalem deputation by telling them that their oral law is invalid, but He aims at something higher. He aims at their conscience and uncovers their true condition. With His divine wisdom He has the answer ready which will completely shut their mouths.

"But He answering said to them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God on account of your traditional teaching?" For God commanded saying: "Honor father and mother; and he that speaks ill of father and mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift (corban) whatsoever it be by which received from me thou wouldst be profited; and he shall in no wise honor his father or his mother; and ye have made void the commandment of God on account of your traditional teaching" (v. 3-6).

The great lesson from this is the fact which our Lord makes so prominent, that traditional teachings lead to the transgressing of God's commandment and make it void. This is true in every case. If we look upon religious Christendom with its traditions and man made rules and institutions, we find ample proof of it and could illustrate it in many ways. The one who follows the traditions of Christendom most, finds himself soon in Rome and then in out and out opposition to God's revealed will and purpose, and he who has nothing at all to do with traditional teachings and rejects them altogether is in submission to the Word of God and looks to it as his only authority.

Surely ritualistic Christendom, the so-called religious world, is the direct offspring of Phariseeism. Its traditions, lent, holidays, man made ministry and many invented ceremonies, have superseded the Word of God and made it of non-effect. We could easily digress here and enlarge upon this thought. We leave it to the reader to make the application. But think of the awful sin, dear reader, that men can dare to set aside with their own inventions and traditional teachings the very Word of God, eternally settled in the heavens! This has been done, and God will judge Christendom for it in His own time. The Pharisees had no room for the Christ of God; they hated Him. Modern Phariseeism may talk of a Christ and use His name; it rejects the Christ, His person and His work.

The Lord, to uncover the hypocrisy of the Pharisees with their traditions, refers to the commandment which demands the child to honor father and mother. To this Jewish tradition had added, "A son is bound to provide his father meat and drink, to clothe him, to cover him, to lead him in and out, to wash his face, hands and feet. A son is bound to nourish his father, yea, to beg for him." (Kiddushim.) But with all this strictness tradition had found a way how to avoid this obligation. A person had only to say "corban" -- a gift, something dedicated to the temple or a vow of personal obligation, and the son was completely released from any duty towards his father and mother.

"And so stringent was the ordinance that it is expressly stated that such a vow was binding, even if what was voiced involved a breach of the law. It cannot be denied that such vows in regard to parents would be binding, and were actually made. Indeed, the question is discussed in the Mishnah, in so many words, whether "honor of father and mother" constituted a ground for invalidating a vow, and decided on the negative against a solitary dissenting voice. And if doubt should still exist, a case is related in the Mishnah, in which a father was thus shut out by the vow of his son from anything by which he might be profited by him." (See Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah.")

And now follows the righteous word of condemnation by Him who searches the hearts of men. "Hypocrites! well has Esaias prophesied about you, saying, This people honor Me with the lips, but their heart is far away from Me; but in vain do they worship Me, teaching as teachings commandments of men" (v. 8, 9).

The same verdict He pronounces upon the religious world, modern Phariseeism. There is much talk of worship and approaching God -- the Lord has only one word for the whole thing, "Hypocrites"! May we through the rich grace of God be delivered from Phariseeism in any shape or form and keep delivered. It will need great heart-searching and self-judgment.

"And having called to Him the crowd, He said to them, Hear and understand. Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man, but what goes forth out of the mouth, this defiles the man" (v. 10, 11). Without fear, which He never knew, He declares publicly the evil teachings of the sayings of the elders. Simple truth, indeed, and yet how many who are professing Christians have not hold of the very first principle, that the evil is within which defiles the man.

Of course the Pharisees were offended. It lowered their dignity with the common people. They looked upon themselves as the leaders of the people and here, after so strongly proving the contrary teachings of traditions, He corrects in a few simple words the errors of the Pharisees.

"Then His disciples coming up said to Him, Dost thou know that the Pharisees, having heard this word, have been offended? But He answering said, Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Leave them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind; but if blind lead blind, both will fall into a ditch" (v. 12-14). These words not alone show the doom of the Jewish Pharisees, but they speak also of the doom of that which His heavenly Father has not planted -- Christendom. It will be rooted up and then cast out with its boasted leaders, who are but leaders of the blind.

But even the disciples did not understand His plain and simple language. Peter calls that which was plain teaching "a parable."

"And Peter answering to Him said, Expound to us this parable. But He said, Are ye also without intelligence? Do ye not apprehend that everything that enters into the mouth finds its way into the belly, and is cast forth into the draught? but the things which go forth out of the mouth come out of the heart and these defile men. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnessings, blasphemies; these are the things which defile man, but the eating with unwashed hands does not defile man" (v. 15-20). How slow they were to understand the full meaning of what He wanted to convey to their hearts. Our Lord shows the true source of all defilement. It is within. The Pharisees did not believe in the utter corruption of the heart. "I the Lord search the heart" (Jer. 17:10). And this searcher of hearts is present here on the scene and throws His own light upon the source of evil, of which He had said through Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Blessed is he who bows before this verdict.

The incident which follows is in closest connection and fullest harmony with all this inasmuch as it reveals deliverance from the evil which is within.

The first part showed us how the Lord tore down the mask from the Pharisees and uncovered the human heart. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The One who uncovers here and knoweth the heart, desperately wicked, the Heart-searcher, is the same who called in Eden, "Adam, where art thou?" What else are the religious observances, the traditions of men, than miserable fig leaves to conceal the nakedness of the sinner! But He stripped off these fig leaves, He removed the covering and aimed at the conscience. His divine light revealed the darkness and defilement within. Blessed is the man who puts himself in that light and lets that light uncover and undo him!

The Holy Spirit now connects with the manifestation of Christ as the One who uncovers the heart -- another incident. It is the Syrophenician woman and the healing of her daughter. If we have in the first part of this chapter the manifestation of Jehovah, who reveals, we find in the second part Jehovah revealed, who covers and delivers His poor, naked and needy creature. The blessed story before us is the full revelation of the loving heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"And Jesus going forth from thence, went away into parts of Tyre and Sidon." He left the religious Pharisees with their hypocrisies and deceitful dealings. He turns His back upon all, and chooses for His path a country where religious observances were unknown, where sin and misery held sway. How significant once more! A foreshadowing again of what should happen soon: the Gospel to be sent to the Gentiles. And now we read of her who is the object of His divine compassion, and through her the Lord manifests His rich grace and power to deliver from evil.

"And lo, a Canaanitish woman, coming out from those borders, cried to Him, saying, Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is miserably possessed by a demon. But He did not answer her a word."

Assuredly He knew her and her need, her struggles and her faith, and as He went through Samaria on account of that one soul who came to the well, so here He enters these parts to meet the needy one and deliver her. His heart is all for her, and His divine love and desire is toward her. But who is this miserable, crying woman, with her face marred by suffering, lifting her imploring eyes to Him in whom she recognized her Deliverer? She is a Canaanitish woman, or, as she is also called on account of her living in that country, a Syrophenician. She belongs to a race which is cursed. The Canaanite was to perish. Israel was called to carry out the divine sentence. She directs her prayer for help to Him as Son of David.

Perhaps she had heard of Him by that name, and how He, the Son of David, drove out demons, healed the sick and raised the dead. Faith she possesses, and faith casts itself upon Him, trusting in His power and willingness to help. But had she a claim upon Him, the Son of David? Had she a promise anywhere that the Son of David would come and deliver and heal a Canaanitish woman? No, not one. For the Canaanite is no hope held out in connection with Israel's Messiah. When at last the Son of David has taken His place upon the throne of His father David, the Canaanite will have been driven out of the land (Joel 3:17; Zech. 14:21). For this reason He did not answer her a word. If He had opened His lips it could have only been to speak with the authority of the Son of David, and that would have meant her doom. But nevertheless is His heart full of grace and sympathy for her. He who read the hearts of the proud Pharisees reads her heart too, knows her state and that faith will triumph. So He answered her not a word. In that silence was hidden all His rich Grace towards her. It told her: You have no claim on Me as Son of David; you have no promise to claim Me as David's Son. In calling Him "Son of David" she claimed what was not hers. He wants her to know that she is to come with no claim, as one stripped of all. This is the gracious object before Him in being silent to her pitiful cries.

We next hear the voice of the disciples. "And His disciples came to Him and asked Him, saying, Dismiss her, for she cries after us." They did not suggest that her request should be granted. Perhaps they meant it by their expressed desire, "Dismiss her." Had they not seen multitudes healed? Did they not see the blind, the deaf and dumb, the fever-stricken and the infirm press around Him, and He had healed them all? The centurion with his sick servant, too, was a Gentile, and now they ask Him to dismiss her. How little they knew of His ways. He could not dismiss her without the blessing she craved. He could not give her the blessing she wanted as long as she appealed to Him as Son of David, laying claim to that to which she had no right.

"But He answering said, I have not been sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

His answer was not only meant for the imploring disciples but it was meant for her. He speaks, of course, as Son of David. And oh! how wonderful is this word, though it has often been declared as harsh. He puts her, so to speak, in the right path to receive the blessing. It is one little word around which all is centered. The little word is "lost." He gave her thus to understand He had come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and if they were lost and needed a Saviour, how much more she, a Canaanitish woman? And it is this word, lost, which faith lays hold upon, and through which she is enabled to draw near and ask His help simply as a needy one. "But she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me." She has understood; her heart grasped the meaning. She fully realized her place outside of the commonwealth of Israel, and because she knows it she drops His title, Son of David. With this she declared, "I have no claim upon His mercy." But she came. Yes, she came into his divine presence, and worshipping she falls at his feet with a cry of need, "Lord help me." She has taken her place before Him, and casts herself upon Him with all her need. "Lord help me" -- what a blessed prayer it is!

And that she had taken the true place in which He, the Son of God, could bless her, is soon to be brought out. Her faith is to be tested -- to pass through the fire. He knew her; He knew the answer she would give, and in testing her He points out the way to Himself and to the blessing once more. Oh! how gracious and tender He is! And still He deals with the soul in the same tender and loving way.

"But He answering said, It is not well to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs." What would she say to this? A dog -- a Gentile -- the bread for the children! Is her faith truly paired with humility (and true faith always is) to stand this word? Does she really know herself as such an unworthy outcast? Before we read her answer let us glance at the word "dogs." The word used by our Lord is a diminutive; it really means "little dogs." It denotes the dogs which enter the house to find something to eat there and not the homeless animals which roam through Oriental villages. In the use of this word she understands once more His readiness and willingness to bless her. And so He led her down, deeper and deeper, and as He leads her down her hope becomes brighter and brighter. Thus He deals with the soul which seeks His help.

But now faith bursts forth in all its fragrance. Crushed she lays before Him, the Lord. Tenderly His eyes must have rested upon His poor creature. Her appeal to the Son of David was hushed, her need and help, her expectation from Him alone, and now the word which had crushed her still more and yet which holds out to her the brightest promise.

Listen to her answer as it comes from her trembling heart and lips, "Yea, Lord, for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their master." She admits it all. She has nothing to answer back. She assents to it: "Yea, Lord." Thou

art right! But faith rises higher. She takes His word in her lips, "the dogs" -- the little dogs -- "eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their master." The little dogs are cared for and in the confession of being one of these little dogs she claims from Mercy's hands a few crumbs. She has conquered. Once more greater faith is found than in Israel. And now He speaks the Word which must have filled her with praise: "O, woman, great is thy faith; be it to thee as thou desirest. And her daughter was healed from that very hour." But how it all must have refreshed His heart -- the heart of the rejected One -- moving on towards the cross!

However, while we learn the way of grace and spiritual lessons from these events, let us not forget the dispensational phase of it. The first part of this chapter (verses 1-20) stands for the apostasy of Israel and Israel set aside. The incident of the Canaanitish woman stands typically for the call of the Gentiles and Salvation going forth to them. The third part of the chapter reveals the dispensation to come: the Kingdom age.

"And Jesus going away from thence came towards the sea of Galilee, and He went up into the mountain and sat down there. And great crowds came to Him, having with them lame, blind, dumb, crippled and many others, and they cast them at His feet, and He healed them; so that the crowds wondered, seeing dumb speaking, crippled sound, lame walking, and blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. But Jesus having called His disciples to Him said, I have compassion on the crowd, because they have stayed with Me already three days and they have not anything that they can eat, and I would not send them away fasting lest they should faint on the way. And His disciples say to Him, Whence should we have so many loaves in the wilderness as to satisfy so great a crowd? And Jesus says to them, How many loaves have ye? But they said, Seven and a few small fishes. And He commanded the crowds to lie down on the ground; and having taken the seven loaves and the fishes, and having given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples and His disciples to the crowd. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was over and above of the fragments seven baskets full; but they that ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And having dismissed the crowds, He went on board ship and came to the borders of Magadan."

Here, then, we have once more a foreshadowing of the coming age. The God of Israel is glorified, which will not come to pass in the earth until the King comes back and establishes His kingdom. Then it shall be, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth." The feeding of the second crowd of people has the same meaning. Three days they were with Him and on the third day He fed them miraculously. As we have shown elsewhere, the third day stands always for resurrection and the completion. The seven loaves and seven baskets of fragments teach us the same lessons. _38

CHAPTER XVI

After the wonderful manifestation of Jehovah among His people, in the healing of the great multitudes and the feeding of the four thousand men, besides women and children, the Pharisees appear again upon the scene, and this time with the Sadducees to tempt Him.

"And the Pharisees and Sadducees came and asked Him, tempting Him, to shew them a sign out of heaven" (verse 1). The Pharisees were the strictest sect among the Jews. They were the religious class, the Ritualists who not alone held to the letter of the law, but who enforced the traditional teachings. They were hypocrites, and fully exposed as such by our Lord in the previous chapter. There He uncovered the hypocrisies and the wickedness of their hearts. Once before the Pharisees and the scribes had come to Him with their subtle cunning and asked to see a sign from Him (chapter 12:38). The scribes were in fullest sympathy with the Pharisees, being as religious and ritualistic as they were. These scribes had the care of the written law and studied it. They made the transcripts, expounded the law, explained difficulties, kept the records and were also called lawyers.

The Sadducees were the very opposite from the Pharisees and the scribes. The Pharisees hated the Sadducees, and the Sadducees were the sworn enemies of the Pharisees. Sadduceeism was the reaction of Phariseeism. It was a reform movement, and as such (like all reform) a big failure. The Sadducees were Freethinkers, Rationalists. They denied the supernatural. Up to this chapter they are mentioned only once before. In the third chapter we read that the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to the Baptism of John. We can well imagine how the Pharisee, when he saw a Sadducee on the road out to the wilderness, would gather his long, flowing robe around himself for fear that the hem of his garment would become defiled by brushing up against that unrighteous Sadducee, while the Sadducee had nothing but looks of scorn and hatred for his brother. John greeted them with the title which belongs to them both, "Offspring of vipers!"

Now, here in the beginning of the sixteenth chapter, this event happens, the Pharisees and Sadducees agree together to tempt the Lord. Both make a common cause in opposing the Lord. Most likely they came together in Conference. Well could they meet together, though outwardly separated, yet inwardly possessed by the same satanic hatred against Him, whose words had so completely unmasked Phariseism and whose deeds and mighty miracles had so perfectly exposed the fallacy of Sadduceism. While they could not agree in doctrine and practice in one thing they could agree and were perfectly harmonious, and this was, the hatred and rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as before indicated in our exposition of this Gospel, these Pharisees and Sadducees, these sects among the professing earthly people of God in the past, are perfectly reproduced in the professing sphere of Christendom. The modern "Christian" Phariseism is the religious, ritualistic part of Christendom, having a name to live but being dead, the form of godliness, but denying its power. Sadduceism in its "Christian" aspect is the liberal current so strong in our day, the new theology which puts supernaturalism out of the way, the higher critics who deny the inspiration of the Bible, beginning with the denial of the written Word and rapidly ending with the denial of the living Word. And these two great parts of Christendom, modern Phariseism and Sadduceism are opposing the Person and the Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The day is not far off when there will be a great union of Christendom, a union which will take in the most ritualistic and the most liberal, a union which will also include the reform Jew and which will aim at a universal religion founded upon that anti-Christian doctrine of "a Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of men." All this is seen approaching by the modern drift of things throughout Christendom. This union to come will be upon the ground of opposing the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement He made on the Cross. That coming union will be "the devil's millennium." When the Lord Jesus Christ comes the second time He will find that monstrosity fully developed in the earth.

And thus they came asking a sign out of Heaven. Before it was only "asking a sign of Him." But now it was to be a sign out of Heaven. Perhaps the Sadducees had asked this and the Pharisees were well satisfied. He had done many signs among them and He Himself, God manifested in the flesh, was the Sign, and now they desire a sign. Would they have believed if He had given them a sign? Supposing He had with His omnipotent power opened the Heavens and shown out of Heaven with the rays of glory; what would have been the effect upon their unbelieving hearts? Would they have bowed in worship before Him? We believe not. The Sadducees, with a sneer, would have explained it as a phenomenon of nature. They do it so now. During a visit to California a brother told us how the leading preacher of a certain city, a "Congregationalist," had told his hearers that it was a stroke of lightning which fell upon the sacrifice of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. And the Pharisees would have only blasphemed the more. They would have repeated their previous blasphemy in saying that the sign was given through Beelzebub's power. Indeed, the ritualistic, Jewish fanatic believes to this day that our Lord did His miracles through the mysterious and unlawful use of the Holy Name. A sign out of Heaven! Infidelity still demands it occasionally through its disciples. "If some one came back from the 'other world' we would believe," persons have often told us. But would they believe? "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, not even if one rise from the dead will they be persuaded" (Luke 16:31). That awful delusion "Spiritualism" with its satanic abominations has for a bait that ridiculous assertion, "the evidence of a future life, the demonstration and sign of a hereafter," and many have been ensnared by these demon doctrines. No signs any more; the Sign of all signs has come, Christ Himself. But a sign will yet come, the sign of the Son of Man followed by the Manifestation of Himself out of Heaven. Of this we shall hear more in the closing verses of this chapter.

"But He answering said to them, When evening is come, ye say, Fine weather, for the sky is red; and in the morning, A storm today, for the sky is red and lowering; ye know how to discern the face of the sky, but ye cannot the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it, save the sign of Jonas. And He left them and went away" (vv. 2-4).

They understood the signs of nature, the warnings of the coming storm and the harbingers of a beautiful day. The Jews in general closely observed the seasons and signs in nature. ("In the going out of the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, all observed the rising of the smoke. If the smoke bended northward, the poor rejoiced, but the rich were troubled; because there would be much rain the following year and the fruits would be corrupted; if it bended southward, the poor grieved and the rich rejoiced, for there would be fewer rains that year, and the fruit would be sound; if eastward, all rejoiced; if westward, all were troubled." From Talmud, Bal. Ioma. -- Horae Hebraeicae.) All the changes in nature they observed, but the signs of the times they did not discern. They were blinded to these. If their eyes had been open they would surely have known that a great change of seasons in another realm than nature had come. They could have seen the evidences of a fast approaching judgment upon the apostate nation and likewise the blessed evidences of the visitation from on High, by the Presence of the Lord, which had taken place.

And is professing Christendom less blind? Alas; almost everything is discerned and studied, the records of the past, the history of Christendom, everything else except the signs of the times. This strange, unscriptural optimism, by which Christendom closes wilfully the eyes, so as not to see the signs of an approaching crisis, this false cry of "Peace and Safety," is indeed blindness as great, perhaps greater, than the blindness of those who asked a sign of the Lord.

But thanks be to God, not all are blinded, but many do discern the signs of the times and know "the morning cometh, but also the night."

They were "a wicked and adulterous generation;" this solved the whole problem why they could not discern the signs of the times. The sign of the Prophet Jonas was to be the only sign they were to receive and that refers us to the death and resurrection of our Lord.

"He left them and departed." Significant words as well as a symbolical action once more.

"And when His disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. And Jesus said to them, See and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, Because we have taken no bread. And Jesus knowing said, Why reason ye among yourselves, O ye of little faith, because ye have taken no bread? Do ye not yet understand nor remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many hand baskets ye took up? nor the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How do ye not understand that it was not concerning bread I said to you, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Then they comprehended that He did not speak to them to beware of the leaven of bread but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (verses 5-12). Here the slowness of heart and the unbelief of the disciples stands exposed. The Lord turns to His own, right after He had turned His back upon these enemies, and He warns now that even His disciples, believers, are to beware of the terrible leaven of Ritualism and Rationalism. How significant that after He left the offspring of vipers and before He unfolds the truths concerning the church which was to be built, He warns to beware of the leaven and its pernicious work and effect. At no time perhaps is this warning to be heeded so much as in the times we live.

But they understood Him not. They thought of the bread which perishes and even then unbelief was mixed with it. Instead of being occupied with Christ Himself and spiritual things they minded earthly things and so He had to tell them in plain words that He did not speak of the leaven of bread, but of that which leaven typifies, the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

What follows now after the warning words of our Lord is one of the most important sections of this Gospel. Around the contents of the second half of the sixteenth chapter cluster indeed the most vital and solemn doctrines. We approach, therefore, the exposition of this part with much prayer, that His Word may be made very plain to every reader and all may learn the lessons which are put before us.

We find the Lord and His disciples in Caesarea-Philippi, and there He asks His disciples what men say concerning Himself. After the disciples had answered He turns to them with the same question and Simon Peter gives that wonderful answer upon which the Lord announces the fact of the future building of His church, as well as His coming suffering, death and resurrection. Before we begin the study of these events in detail we wish to say that only in Matthew do we find the full answer to Peter's confession and the fact brought out that the Lord is to have a church. The other Gospel records do not mention these words at all. The Holy Spirit put them here in this dispensational Gospel because there it is where they belong. He, as the writer of this Gospel, is like a goldsmith who has numerous precious stones and pearls, each a costly gem in itself, and forms them in a perfect chain. He arranges all in His divine order, in perfect beauty, to work out and show forth the perfection and worth of the Lord. And so He put the events before us into the very heart of the Gospel of the King.

"But when Jesus was come into the parts of Caesarea-Philippi, He demanded of His disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some, John the Baptist; and others Elias; and others, again, Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (verses 14, 15).

It is significant that this takes place in Caesarea-Philippi. It is on Gentile ground, so to speak, where it happens and where on the one hand it is demonstrated once more that His own had not received Him; and on the other, He is truly confessed and His revelation concerning the church is made known.

In putting the question to His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" He knew, of course, perfectly well what men said of Him, for He knows all things. Nor does He include in this question those proud and evil Pharisees with their blasphemies, but He means the multitudes who had followed Him, the men who had listened to His words and who had seen His miracles. The answer they give Him, the echo of the different voices in Israel, proves only too well that they knew Him not. John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias, or one of the prophets, these were the estimates of Him who is God manifested in the flesh. And is not this yet the burning and important question, "Who is He? What think ye of Christ?" It is still so, and the attacks of the enemy are ever aimed at the person of the Lord. The answer is a manifestation of the unbelief of His earthly people Israel, and this unbelief which became more and more evident indicated the setting aside of Israel. So it is likewise at the end of this Christian age. The ever increasing denial of the Deity of Christ and of His Glory, as it is going on in that which claims His name, Christendom, is the forerunner of judgment. (2 Pet. 2)

But now the Lord turns to His own. "He says to them, But ye, who do ye say that I am? And Simon Peter answering, said to Him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The question was addressed to the disciples, but Peter answers as the representative of the disciples, and is also the mouthpiece of the Father, whose revelation has come to his heart. But what does this confession mean and what does it all include? It includes more than the prophetic statements contained in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Deity of the Messiah, that He is the Mighty God, Immanuel. It is more than the expression of faith in the prophecies and the fulfilment of them in the person of Him who was standing in their midst. The confession is personal faith in the Christ, the Son of the living God, and as such He had been revealed unto Peter by the Father, and Peter, knowing Him as the eternal life, realizing Him as the one who hath life and who imparts life, gives utterance to it. The confession goes beyond the cross and the grave and shows forth Christ the Son of God in resurrection, though Peter had not the full grasp of this when he spoke. It includes all that, realized in personal faith, of which the Lord speaks of in the Gospel of John. "For even as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to the Son also to have life in Himself,"... and that which precedes this statement in John 5, "Verily, verily I say unto you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live." But all is, of course, in anticipation of His resurrection from the dead, as we read in the Epistle to the Romans, "marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4).

And thus Peter's confession includes all upon which personal faith in the Son of God rests. The first Epistle Peter wrote by the Spirit of God shows forth the word "living" in connection with the resurrection of Christ. There we read of "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead," and "the living and abiding Word of God," and the Lord is termed "a living Stone," while believers are "living stones." The confession of Him by Peter, through the Father's revelation, is then something altogether new. It denotes a new departure and is the very opposite from Israel's unbelief. How it must have delighted His heart, when for the first time the full truth concerning Himself comes forth from human lips as the result of divine revelation! And now He is ready and free to give as the Son of the living God a new revelation. He is now giving a glimpse of what is going to be and He speaks of that mystery hidden in former ages, the church or assembly, which He calls "My church."

"And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens. And I, also, I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church (assembly), and hades' gates shall not prevail against it" (verses 17, 18).

The blessedness of Peter is announced first, a blessedness which is equally upon each sinner who believes in the Christ, the Son of the living God. "Bar Jona," as the Lord calls Simon, means "son of a dove," and the dove is the emblem and type of the Holy Spirit. Flesh and blood could not produce such a revelation and such faith, it was the work of the Father; and upon this He, the Son, speaks, "I also, I say unto thee..." So in the event before us we have the Father mentioned as well as the Son and the Holy Spirit.

With His own divine authority the Lord now speaks to Simon. Simon Bar Jona receives a new name. Thou art Peter. The Greek word *Petros* means "a stone;" and then the Lord gives the declaration of the building of His assembly upon this rock. The new revelation is concerning His church. The word "ecclesia" is found here for the first time in the Bible. It

means literally "to call out," and denotes an assembly of persons. It would be much better if the word assembly could be substituted for the word "church," as that term is so much misused. By speaking of "my church" the Lord indicates what He is going to do with those who, like Peter, with a God-given faith, confess Him as the Son of the living God. They are to form His church, one great assembly.

This passage containing the word "church" for the first time, and the Lord intimating that it is still a thing of the future, should be sufficient in itself to clear up all the unscriptural views held and taught throughout Christendom about the "church."

The Lord's speaking of the church as to be built upon this rock makes it clear that there was no church in existence up to that time. It is therefore all wrong to speak, as it is done so often, of the Old Testament church. There was no such institution in Old Testament times. It is altogether unknown on the pages of the Old Testament prophetic Word. There are, of course, types which indicate that a church was to be called into existence and which we now understand after God's hidden secret has been made known. We remember some years ago, after giving an address on the church, how a number of brethren took exception to our statement that there was no church in the Old Testament. The argument they brought was from Stephen's address in Acts 7, where it speaks of "the church in the wilderness," and because this referred to Israel these brethren took it for granted that Israel was the church of Christ in the wilderness. What havoc and confusion such a view produces and leads to! All the sad conditions about us in Christendom originate from the prevailing ignorance of what the church is. The miserable method of applying promises made to God's earthly people Israel to the church, and forcing the fulfilment of them into this present age, has its starting point from the same misconception.

Now if the term "church in the wilderness" is mentioned in the Book of Acts, it simply means "a congregation, an assembly of people in the wilderness," and such was Israel. The word "ecclesia" church is likewise used in Acts 19:32. The mob there is called "ecclesia," but, unlike Acts 7:38, the translators used the word assembly instead of "church."

However, the emphasis here is upon the word "my." He is going to have an assembly of people, a church; this out-called people is for Himself. The formation of His assembly could only begin after the work of redemption had been accomplished. He had first to suffer and die, to be raised from the dead and by it become Lord and Christ, to be received up into Glory and the Holy Spirit sent down, ere the building of His assembly could begin. Therefore He says here, "I will build my church;" not I am building it now, or it has been building since Adam's day, but "I will build." Get this clearly settled in your mind and the fuller revelation about the church, the body and bride of Christ, her heavenly calling, heavenly relationship, heavenly hope and heavenly destiny, will soon be understood. And the gates of hades, death, cannot prevail against it because He whose is the church and who builds it has prevailed over death and has annulled him, who has the power of death, that is the devil.

This fuller revelation we do not find here. This is not the place for it. Nor do we find the full truth concerning the church revealed on the day of Pentecost. If Peter were the rock, a statement we shall follow closely, the rock upon which the church is built, we could surely expect that on that wonderful day, when the Spirit was poured out, Peter in his preaching would refer to himself and to the church. But he uses the word "church" not once in his address. When at last all is to be brought out and that mystery hidden in former ages is to be made known, the Lord does not commit these truths at all to Peter, but he chooses another instrument to whom He intrusts His secrets, Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. Through Paul the full revelation of the assembly, the one body, is given.

As it is so well known, Roman Catholicism founds upon the Lord's words to Peter the assertion of Peter's supremacy, and as an outflow from this the Papacy. Peter, according to the poor Romanist, is the stone upon which the church is built, and the infallibility of the church is claimed from the words "hades' gate shall not prevail against it."

What then does the Lord mean when He says, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my assembly?" He did not mean Peter or He would have said "upon thee will I build my church." The word Peter -- petros -- means a part of a rock, that is a stone. When the Lord says upon what He is going to build His church, He no longer speaks of petros, a stone, but he uses the word _petra, which means a rock, out of which the _petros, the stone, is hewn. The word petra, rock, He uses for the first time in Matt. 7:24, 25. The house there is built upon a petra, a rock, and cannot fall, and this rock is He Himself. "This rock" upon which the assembly is built is "Christ, the Son of the living God" as confessed by Peter.

But why this peculiar use of petros and petra -- a part of a rock and the rock? Ah, it brings out the most precious truth that Peter and every true believer in possession of eternal life, this life imparted, is associated with Him, is a part of Him, for He is the Eternal Life.

Let Peter answer from the God-breathed words of his first Epistle, "To whom (Christ) coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:4-6). Here is the same relation of stone and stones, and Peter himself settles the question of who the stone is -- not he, but Christ -- and Peter, like every other true believer, is but a living stone built upon Himself. It would take us too far to look to the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 28:16, the basis of Peter's words.

But the Lord has more to say to Peter. "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be bound in the heavens; and whatsoever thou mayest loose on the earth, shall be loosed in the heavens" (verse 19).

These words have been very grossly misapplied and the most abominable doctrines have been built upon it. It is indeed strange that but few Christian believers are clear about their meaning. From these words to Peter the very ridiculous, Christ and the Gospel dishonoring picture is drawn, which represents Peter with keys in his hands guarding the entrance of heaven, and that it is left to him, who shall be admitted and who rejected. The Lord did not say the keys to heaven were given to him, nor did he say that the keys to the church were in his hands and with the loosing in the earth and loosing in heaven the Lord never meant that the eternal destiny of one single soul was left in Peter's hands.

Let us see that the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens were given to him. The Kingdom of the heavens is not heaven nor is it the church, and upon this fact rests the true meaning of the words before us. Notice the place Peter has in the church, not different from the place every believer holds in the assembly through the Grace of God, is given first and when the Lord speaks of giving him keys of the Kingdom of the heavens, He confers upon him authority for actions not in the church, but in the Kingdom of the heavens. It is therefore wrong to say that the Lord gave the keys of the church to Peter, except one assumes (which is so often done) that the church and the Kingdom are identical.

We have learned before (Matt, 13) what we have to understand by the Kingdom of the heavens in its present form. It embraces the entire sphere of Christian profession, all Christendom. Every one who confesses the name of Christ is in the Kingdom of the heavens, though that one may not at all be a true believer. This Kingdom of the heavens is in existence in the earth during the absence of the King; it is committed into the hands of men, and it is to be administered by men. Now, if the Lord tells Peter that He will give to him the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens, He puts the administration of the Kingdom into his hands. The question arises next, Did the Lord assign to Peter a special place distinct from the other disciples? Are the keys peculiar to Peter and only to Peter? Was Peter to have these keys exclusively? These are important questions.

It is easily proven that the Lord did not mean to single out Peter and give to him a work distinct from the other disciples, nor did he give him a peculiar place or one of supremacy.

The Lord adds immediately after the declaration that He will give to him the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens -- "and whatsoever thou mayest bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, etc." Now, if we turn to the eighteenth chapter of this Gospel (verse 18) we find that the Lord repeats this very commission and He addresses it no longer to Peter but to the whole company of disciples. Peter must be looked upon in the whole passage as the representative of the disciples and as such of all true believers. If the Lord calls him "a stone," He certainly did not mean him alone, but every one who believes is a living stone, and so when He speaks of the keys and the binding and loosing He commits this authority not upon Peter exclusively, but upon every disciple, and as true believers form His assembly, upon the assembly as such.

It is generally taught that Peter used the keys on the day of Pentecost, and when he preached to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10). It is assumed that the Lord gave this commission to him exclusively and that the words of the Lord were fulfilled at these occasions. However, this cannot be proven from the Scriptures, nor does Peter refer to any special authority in preaching on the day of Pentecost or in the house of Cornelius. (After all that Rome and ritualism and even more evangelical systems have found in these keys it may be hard to credit such a view as this; and with many it has been

customary to point to Peter's eminent place on the day of Pentecost in opening the kingdom to the Jews, as afterwards in the person of Cornelius to the Gentiles. But an eminent place may be fully allowed him in this way, while yet we deny him an exclusive place; and, in fact, we cannot exclude others on the day of Pentecost; nor even at Caesarea allow that this was the sole use of the key in relation to the Gentiles, any more than the use of another key than that which before had opened the kingdom to the Jews. One act did surely not exhaust the service of the key, nor to open the door twice require two keys. Can it be thought that the door once, opened simply remained open, and needed no more opening? On the contrary, I believe it can be conclusively shown that the administration of the kingdom, which these keys stand for, is not yet over, is not at all come to an end in one initial authoritative act. Men still receive and are received in; and if the power of the keys speaks of admission into the kingdom, and the kingdom be the sphere of discipleship, then the key is in fact but authority to disciple. -- Numerical Bible.)

But what are the keys? The answer is, Knowledge (teaching and preaching) and Baptizing. "Go ye therefore and teach (disciple) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). These are the doors of entering into the professing sphere of Christendom, that is the Kingdom of the heavens. These keys are still used. The binding and loosing refers only to discipline on the earth. It has nothing whatever to do with remission of sins or eternal salvation. We pass this over at present, but shall enter into it more fully when we reach the eighteenth chapter, where we find these words in connection with the statement, "where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

"Then He enjoined on His disciples that they should say to no man that He was the Christ" (verse 20). As the promised Messiah His people had rejected Him; He is now to go on towards Jerusalem to be delivered up and then raised from the dead to be announced as Lord and Christ. Therefore He enjoined His disciples not to publish Him as the Christ.

And now after the Lord had made known for the first time, upon Peter's confession, the future building of His assembly, He speaks likewise for the first time in this Gospel of His rejection, death and resurrection. "From that time Jesus began to shew to His disciples that He must go away to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised" (verse 21).

In the beginning of this chapter the fact was brought out that Israel had no heart for Him and His own knew Him not nor would they receive Him. What they would do to Him He now reveals. It was more than mere rejection of His Person and His words. He would have to suffer many things from the hands of the leaders of the nation and be killed; after death His resurrection. And when this solemn announcement came from His blessed lips He knew the full meaning of what was included in "the suffering of many things and be killed." He knew before He entered into the world what work He was to do. "Wherefore coming into the world He says, Sacrifice and offering thou wilt not; but thou hast prepared me a body. Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. Then I said, Lo, I come, in the roll of the book it is written of me to do, O God, thy will" (Heb. 10:5-7). He knew the suffering, for His own Spirit was in the prophets of old, testifying before of the sufferings which belong to Christ (1 Pet. 1:11). He began then to speak of these sufferings to His disciples, but He alone knew what it all meant. He had entered into the world for this very purpose to give His life and as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. We must also lay emphasis upon the words "from that time began Jesus." The building of His assembly and His suffering, death and resurrection are closely connected. The beginning of the assembly, the building of the same, could only be possible after the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ was finished. We read in Genesis 2:22 how the helpmeet of the first Adam was made. She was taken from Adam's side while he slept. She was built out of his side. It is that well known and blessed type of the last Adam and His assembly, Christ and the church.

No sooner had the last word of the announcement of His passion fallen from the lips of the Lord than the enemy is manifested, attempting to keep Him from going to the cross. It is Peter who interrupts Him. "And Peter taking Him began to rebuke Him, saying, God be favorable to thee, Lord; this shall in no wise be unto thee" (verse 22). The same Peter who had uttered that glorious confession, the revelation of the Father, becomes all at once the mouthpiece of the adversary. He had not been asked by the Lord what he thought of His statement; he speaks in the impulsiveness of the flesh, as a natural man. Perhaps the conception of Messiah's kingdom, His glory as an earthly King in which He as a Jew with his fellow disciples so strongly believed, was in part responsible for this hasty word, and explains why he became so readily an instrument of Satan. May be the words addressed to Peter by the Lord, the giving of a new name and the commission, lifted up Peter and gave him a spiritual pride, which brought on his hasty action. The way he acts seems to indicate this.

He acts in an astonishing forwardness. He takes his Lord aside and then began to rebuke Him. The Lord, who rebuked the winds and the sea, rebuked by His creature! What ignorance of the person of the Lord and what failure this action of Peter reveals. And what does he say to the Lord? He desires that God should be favorable unto Him by keeping Him from such a fate. But only through His sacrificial death could God's favor flow forth to lost men, and so Peter gives expression to the very endeavor of Satan, who would have kept the Lord Jesus Christ from going up to Jerusalem to die on that cross of shame.

And now turning round to Peter, the Lord speaks: "Get away behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence to Me, for thy mind is not on the things that are of God, but on the things that are of men" (verse 23). The Lord recognizes the enemy behind Peter's words and He addresses that unseen one in almost the identical words He had used upon yonder mountain, from which Satan had showed Him the kingdoms of the world, offering the same to Him. We learned from the fourth chapter in the Gospel, from the temptations of our Lord by Satan, what the aim of the enemy was with every one of these temptations. He attempted to keep the Lord from going that path of humiliation, of obedience unto death, unto the death of the cross. Satan knew all his dreadful power, the power of death, would be broken and his complete defeat wrought on the cross, and to keep Him from going there was his aim. Here is a blunt attempt of Satan through Peter to hinder the Lord in His path.

And there is still another lesson which we cannot pass by. We read in the Epistle of James concerning the tongue, "Does the fountain, out of the same opening, pour forth sweet and bitter? Can, my brethren, a fig produce olives, or a vine figs?" Alas! it may be so with any believer, as it was with Peter, going on from the sweet revelation of the Father to the bitter things of the enemy and giving expression to them; and he was not conscious of it. "Thy mind is not on the things that are of God." What a word this, is for our consideration! As soon as the mind ceases to be occupied with the things that are of God, and we turn to the things that are of men, we are stepping on the territory of the adversary. "For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8, 9).

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, If any one desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (verses 24, 25).

These words are addressed to the disciples and not to unbelievers. It is therefore not a question of salvation. We are not asked to deny self and take up the cross in order to be saved. These words tell us that the way the Lord went is the way of all His true disciples. He states in a few words all the great truths of the association of the believer with the Lord, which the Holy Spirit brings out so fully in the Epistles. We read of the same association in the Gospel of John, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If any one serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there also shall be my servant" (John 12:24-26). Of course there is an immeasurable difference between Him and the believer. He alone could drink the cup, and yet the path He went is our path. In the third chapter of Joshua we read of the passage of God's people over Jordan. The ark of the covenant led the way and all the people followed. Between the ark and the people, however, was maintained the space of two thousand cubits. And yet they all followed after. It is the type for us. He has made the way and we follow Him. "For to this have ye been called; for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). But how little of the denial of self and the losing of the life is known in these days. Many are, no doubt, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; but do they follow Him? Is His path ours, too? It is not only possible to believe in the Lord and not follow Him, but it is the most common thing we see today about us. If we are loyal to Him in a world which has rejected Him and which is unchanged, we shall share His rejection. We may not be called upon in these days to lay down our lives for His sake, but we should be willing for it, should it become again a test of following Him. Surely as we desire to follow Him and He is before us, we shall find abundant occasion to deny ourselves and take up our cross. In the degree we look upon Him, our adorable Lord, and He is the object of our affection, in that degree shall we be obedient to Him, deny self and take up the little cross. It will be a pleasure, a joy and a blessing then. As the martyrs went to the stake with singing or faced the wild animals with holy laughter and praises on their lips, so shall we praise Him for the little suffering with Him in these evil days. ("Take up his cross. These words are not to be understood as meaning that we should choose a cross. Begin only with self-denial and then the cross will come of itself. He says 'his cross'; for He does not teach that we should bear the identical cross which He bore. Everyone's cross has been prepared according to the measure of each one's strength" (1 Cor. 10:13). -- Martin

Luther on the Gospels.)

"For what does a man profit if he should gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (verse 26). What solemn questions these are! And who could answer them? Surely if anything is taught in them it is the immense, immeasurable value of the soul. The soul is immortal; if it were not these questions would be unreasonable.

The denial of the immortality of the soul and with it the teaching of man dying like the beast, if he dies without Christ, is one of Satan's lies which has gained ground throughout Christendom in these last days.

The last verse of this chapter contains another revelation. "For the Son of Man is about to come in the Glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will render to each according to his doings. Verily, I say unto you, There are some of those standing here that shall not taste of death at all until they shall have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (verses 27, 28).

These words refer to His second coming, His coming in power and in glory. They have puzzled not a few readers, and all kinds of spiritual meaning have been read into them. They are, however, very clear if we read at once the first part of the seventeenth chapter, where we find six days after the Lord and three of His disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. What the disciples beheld there was the type of His glorious second coming as Son of Man in His Kingdom. Our exposition of the next chapter will lead us deeper into this fact.

The sixteenth chapter has brought before us seven revelations:

1. The Rejection of the Lord.
2. The Confession of the Lord as the Christ the Son of the Living God.
3. The Building of His Assembly.
4. The Authority of His Assembly.
5. The Death and Resurrection of the Lord.
6. The Path of the Disciple.
7. The Return of the Lord. _60

CHAPTER XVII

The first part of this chapter gives us the record of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. The portion before us is one of the richest in the entire book of Matthew; so full of precious teachings and suggestions that one almost shrinks from attempting an exposition, for it seems impossible to touch on all the phases and lessons coming from this great event.

Let us remember that the Holy Spirit has given us three accounts of the transfiguration. Besides the one here we have one in Mark and in Luke. In each, special points of the great event are made prominent in full accord with the meaning and scope of the three Gospels. We find no record of the transfiguration in the fourth Gospel. It would be out of place in that Gospel, for John is the instrument to reveal Christ as the Son of God and the eternal Life. In Luke we find that something is said which is not found in the other two accounts. We read there: "And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance became different and His raiment white and effulgent." The Gospel of Luke presents our Lord as Son of Man and we read there often that He prayed, and thus the information given to us in Luke is in full accord with that Gospel. In Matthew we learn something which is only reported there, namely, that His face shone as the sun. The importance of this fact we shall discover in the course of the exposition. In Mark and Luke the voice out of the cloud says, "This is my beloved Son; hear Him"; but in Matthew alone we read, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight; hear Him." These and

other differences are the mark of divine inspiration; the Holy Spirit, being the narrator of the event, reports the occurrence in harmony with the purpose of each one of these Gospels.

And now as we turn to the divine record of the transfiguration in the Gospel of Matthew we desire first of all to quote the inspired words of the man who stands out so prominently in the sixteenth chapter and who is likewise one of the witnesses of the transfiguration; that is Peter. In his last Epistle we read: "For we have not made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, following cleverly imagined fables, but having been eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from the Father honor and glory, such a voice being uttered to Him by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I found my delight; (The "Hear Him" is here omitted.) and this voice we heard uttered from heaven, being with Him in the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic Word made surer, to which ye do well taking heed as to a lamp shining in an obscure place until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:16-20).

That Peter refers in these words once more to the scene of glory on that mountain top which his eyes beheld long ago needs no further proof. He does so "knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is speedily to take place" (verse 14).

We learn therefore that the transfiguration as interpreted not by men but by the Holy Spirit, is the pattern of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That wonderful scene on the holy mountain of which Peter had been eye-witness was a pattern of the return of the Lord, visibly and gloriously to the earth surrounded by His saints. The entire Old Testament prophetic word speaks of this great event, and for this reason the transfiguration of the Lord is a confirmation of these prophetic predictions, and more than that, the earnest of their final and complete fulfilment. We have the prophetic word made surer in the scene on the holy mountain, for in the transfiguration we behold that which prophet after prophet had declared.

What we have just stated is a most important key to the right understanding of the passage before. Let us call to mind again, the Holy Spirit tells us that the transfiguration is the pattern of the coming of the Lord.

Now this should silence once and for all the strange interpretations which are made of the last verse of the preceding chapter, which is, by the unfortunate division of these chapters, wrested from its true place. Some, the Lord had said, were standing with Him there who should not taste death at all until they should see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. The favorite expositions are that the Lord meant "the destruction of Jerusalem," and others tell us "they were to see the Lord coming in the triumphs of the Gospel," etc.

All these opinions are the opinions of men. Some of those standing there did not taste death until they saw Him coming, for after six days Peter, James and John beheld Him in His power and Glory, a pattern of the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

"After six days." -- Even the number six is full of meaning as the number "eight" has a similar meaning in Luke where it says, "After these words, about eight days." The number eight is the number of resurrection, and as the Son of Man in resurrection He appears in Luke; while "six" is man's number, the number signifying the days of work -- after six days -- after work and man's day is run out, the day of the Lord, the kingdom. And with Him He takes Peter, and James, and John his brother, and brings them into a high mountain apart. The mountain may have been Hermon, which is not far from Caesarea-Philippi. The men who were later with Him in the garden in that awful night scene, when they slept, while He prayed and His sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth, are here on the mountain with Him to witness His Glory. But here, too, while He prayed they were oppressed with sleep (Luke 9:32). How this manifests what man is and how it brings out the perfection of Himself! The fact that the disciples were oppressed with sleep makes it evident that the transfiguration must have been at night. The Lord so often spent His nights in prayer and came down in the morning. Blessed type of His presence with the Father now as our intercessor and advocate and His coming again.

"And He was transfigured before them. And His face shone as the sun and His garments became white as the light" (verse 2). What a transformation it must have been! How the garment of light and glory is put upon Him and rays of glory shot forth from His person, the One whom Pharisees a little while ago had blasphemed and who had said, "The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." The One who had hidden His glory beneath the form of a servant bursts forth in glory, and it was His glory. The word used here in the original for "transfigured" is used only twice besides in this passage. We find it in Romans 12:2 and 2 Cor. 3:18. His Grace transforms

us now, and by and by in resurrection we shall be transformed according to the same image -- "conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the first born among many brethren." We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Thus may we, as children of God, look upon His glory here and know it is our Glory. Beloved! look upon Him and rejoice, for "when the Christ is manifested, who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory."

And His face shone like the sun. He is the Sun, the Sun of righteousness, and as we have in Matthew the dispensational side, it is once more the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to put this description here and omit it in the other Gospels. The sun is the great light which rules the day, and when the sun is absent night rules. He does not shine now as Sun of Righteousness, the moon only -- the type of the church -- gives her faint light; it is night. But day will come and the Sun of Righteousness rises with healing in His wings. Then He the Sun cometh forth "as a bridegroom of His chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and His circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (Ps. 19:5, 6). Thus shall He come again, and the Sun He created will pale before Him in His wonderful Glory.

"And lo, Moses and Elias appeared to them talking with Him." Two departed saints come into view first of all. Moses, the representative of the law, one who had passed through death, and Elias, standing for the prophets, the one who had never seen death, but had been removed in a fiery chariot, appear alongside the Lord. We may well think of Him as standing in the middle. He is the center of the Heavens and of heavenly beings. In the Gospel of Luke we read that Moses and Elias, appearing in glory, spoke of His departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Both Law and Prophets speak of His suffering and of His Glory as well. He the one in the middle is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.

Looked upon from the standpoint of a pattern of His coming into His kingdom, Moses is the type of those saints who died in Christ, who were put to sleep through Jesus, and whom the Lord will bring with Him when He comes. Elias, the one who did not see death, who was caught up from the earth, is the type of those believers who shall not sleep but be changed in the twinkling of an eye -- caught up to meet the Lord in the air. So we have even here the precious revelation in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 "made sure." When He comes He will bring us all with Him.

And of course Moses and Elias were known. Their individuality was not swallowed up by death or removal from the earth without death. This should answer definitely the oft made inquiry, shall we know each other in resurrection glory? Of course we will. As Moses and Elias were easily recognized by the disciples, so shall every saint be recognized. What joy it will be then to see him first of all and to be with Him, whom we have never seen and whom we shall see as he is, the Man in Glory. What joy to look upon a Paul, John, Peter and all the beloved of God! Yes we shall know each other, though all human, earthly relationship ceases forever in resurrection.

The three disciples who gazed upon this glorious scene typify here the remnant of Israel, those who in the night look up and see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. Thus the kingdom scene is complete.

And Peter answering said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good we should be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; for thee one, and for Moses one, and one for Elias" (verse 4).

Poor Peter! What a failure he makes of it again. Once more he acts as spokesman for his fellow disciples and intrudes himself upon the scene of glory. He had absolutely no conception of what all this meant. He had of course later by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven and opening the eyes of his heart. (How often in prayer meetings one hears requests that feelings of joy and blessing may come upon the meeting, that they might say "it is good for us to be here -- let us make here three tabernacles." This is a much used phrase and indicates how little the vision is understood by Christian people.) But what was the harm in making the suggestion? It was simply the flesh speaking and Peter uttered still words as he did previously, which flowed from a mind which is not on the things which are of God, but that are of men. In the sixteenth chapter he rebuked His Lord and tried to keep Him back from going to the cross and was an instrument of the enemy, and here once more his words show the subtle cunning of the same enemy, whose tool Peter so readily became even on that holy mountain.

He lowers the dignity and person of his Lord by putting Him on the same level with Moses and Elias. And behind it lurked another thought, the very same attempt to keep the Lord from being obedient unto the death of the cross, which was made in the temptations in the wilderness, which was hid in Peter's "God be favorable unto Thee," is made here once more. Peter

would have a Christ in Glory and the state of the kingdom there without the cross, and he is even willing with his two associates to work for it, for he says, "Let us make here three tabernacles."

All this foreshadows what would be done with the Lord of glory. The corrupt forms of Christianity have put the Lord Jesus Christ alongside of holy men (holy in their estimation), or alongside of great men of the world, and thus robbed Him of His Glory. Not for a moment could this be tolerated. Peter is still babbling -- while he was still speaking something happens. It is God the Father Himself who interferes and who bears witness that this Jesus, this Son of Man, is His Son, is God. "While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and lo a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight, hear Him" (verse 5).

Wonderful heavenly answer. "And the disciples hearing it, fell upon their faces and were greatly terrified." The heavens opened and the Glory of the Lord in that bright cloud is manifested. These three men well knew what that cloud meant. It was the cloud which spoke of Jehovah's presence. That cloud which had been withdrawn from Israel for centuries had all at once appeared again. Then Jehovah had returned and condescended to be with His people once more. They knew they stood in His presence as Isaiah knew it when he saw the glorious vision. Therefore, they were terrified, for they knew as sinful men they stood in the Holy of Holiest and they had no sacrifice. And now the voice out of the cloud. The Father speaks and He speaks of the Son. He bears witness to the eternal relationship of Himself with Him, who was ever with Him and ever His delight. He calls them away from occupation with Moses and Elias; neither law nor prophets can help you and make you acceptable. Here He is -- my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him! He has pleased the Father and in Him the Father and the Father's heart is revealed. Men are to hear Him, and refusing Him means refusing God. In Him we are brought to God. Of course the work of the cross is here anticipated. And thus in Him the Father speaks, to Him the Father directs us, through Him we are brought to the Father, and by Him the heavens are opened. And all the precious thoughts which here crowd to the heart and the mind we must leave untouched. Oh, may we find our delight in Him in whom God finds His delight! Never can we make too much of Him. As then the cloud appeared and there was an open manifestation of the Glory and Jehovah's presence, so in the coming day of His return all will be repeated. Then He must be heard.

"And Jesus coming to them touched them, and said, Rise up and be not terrified. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus alone" (verse 8).

He touched them as He will touch His poor frightened people, the remnant of Israel, in that day. But they saw Jesus alone. Blessed are we if we see Him and Him alone.

We have learned then from the transfiguration that we have in it a perfect picture of the kingdom to come. Christ in Glory, His face like the Sun, in the center. Resurrected saints and those who were caught up are with Him. His Glory covers Him and them. Living men are in His presence terrified. The heavens are opened and mercy and peace flow forth.

"And as they descended from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man be risen up from among the dead" (verse 9).

The sounding forth of His Kingdom glory was no longer in order, for the Kingdom had been rejected; after His resurrection this vision was to be made known and fully understood, but not before. The disciples, the witnesses of the transfiguration, had indeed little knowledge of its meaning. From the Gospel of Mark we learn that they kept this saying and questioned themselves what rising from the dead was (Mark 9:10). How all this became changed after the Lord had risen, ascended on high, and the Holy Spirit had come down from heaven!

The appearance of Elijah in that glorious vision on the holy mountain leads to a question which the disciples bring to their Master. The coming of Elijah as the forerunner of King Messiah was firmly believed by every Jew, and it is still held by all orthodox Jews. Elijah is first to come, and when he is come then the Messiah is about to come and with His coming begins the *_olam _habo* (the world or age to come), this is a strong article of talmudical Judaism. The disciples bring their question, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first have come? And He answering said to them, Elias indeed comes first and will restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias has already come, and they have not known him, but have done unto him whatever they would. Thus also the Son of Man is about to suffer from them. Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (verses 10-13). The difficulty which the disciples had about Elias was about the

prophecy contained in the last prophetic book of the Old Testament: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5, 6). They had seen Elias in glory. In the land and among the people all was dark; no restoration, no turning of the heart of the fathers to the children and the children to their fathers was noticeable. On the contrary, they had witnessed how He in whom they believed as the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, was being rejected and the nation knew Him not. And still they hoped for the kingdom and that age of blessing for Jerusalem. What then about Elias? Would he yet appear and restore all things? The Lord answers their difficulty, as He always does when His own turn to Him and put their difficulties before Him. He does not deny the fact that Elias comes first and will restore all things. Furthermore, He told them that he had come and they had not received him, but rejected him and his testimony. As he was rejected, so He the Son of Man was now about to suffer from them, is His third statement. All at once they understood that He meant John the Baptist. They were right. John the Baptist had come in the power and spirit of Elijah. He was the voice in the wilderness, the way preparer, the one in whom the last prophecy in Malachi might have been fulfilled, but they did not know Him. His rejection was the prelude to the rejection of the Lord as we have seen before (chapter 11). John surely was the Elias for that time.

But this does not fulfill Malachi's prophecy. That prophecy is yet to see its fulfilment. Before the Lord returns to earth in power and glory another forerunner, an Elijah, will come and his testimony will not be rejected then; he will indeed be Elijah who restores all things and he will be followed by the coming of the King to set up His kingdom. This brings before us the questions, when will the Elijah who restores all things appear? where will he appear, and what will his work be? These questions are important in view of men who have of late arisen claiming that they are Elijah, one especially calling himself Elijah the Restorer, and boldly and boastfully declares that his mission is to establish a Zion in the earth and restore things before the Lord comes. When will Elijah appear? He will come upon the scene at the time of the end. This prophetic time of the end is specified in the entire prophetic Word; it is Jewish history resumed. As long as the church is in the earth that end time does not begin. The removal of the church will be followed by the last stage of the ending of the age. During that time, the great tribulation, Elijah appears. Any believer who holds the scriptural doctrine of the coming of the Lord for His saints before the great tribulation is in no danger to follow deceivers who claim to be something, for he knows he shall see not Elijah nor the Antichrist.

Where will Elijah appear? Certainly not in America, Australia or Europe, but in Israel's land, where Elijah of old witnessed and John the Baptist, as herald of the King, stood. His ministry is confined to the land of Israel. What will his work be? It will not be a work to restore Christendom or to restore the church, or to purify the politics of this world and rid society of certain evils, but his work is exclusively among the people who are the kingdom people. His witness is to the remnant of Israel. Like John's call to repentance, he will preach repentance and his testimony will be received; he will accomplish the mission of Malachi 4:5, 6.

The appearance of Elijah, therefore, does not come as long as the church is present; he appears in Israel's land and his work is not among Gentiles, but among the remnant of Israel. This stamps every man who arises at this time with the assertion that he is Elijah as one who is deceived or a deceiver, perhaps, both, deceived and a deceiver. It is not at all strange that such men find listening ears among Christians.

And now the Lord and His disciples are down in the valley again. They had descended from the holy mountain and once more they are among the multitude, who perhaps had waited through the night for Him. At the dawn of the morning He appears.

"And when they came to the multitude, a man came to Him, falling on his knees before Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and suffers sorely; for often he falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to the disciples and they were not able to heal him. And Jesus answering said, O, unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to me. And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon went out from him and the boy was healed from that hour. Then the disciples, coming to Jesus apart, said to Him, Why were we not able to cast him out? And He says to them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Be transported hence to yonder place, and it shall transport itself; and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting" (verses 14-21). (It is interesting to know that the twenty-first verse is not found in the two oldest manuscripts dating back to the fourth century, the Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.)

This is another very suggestive passage. It has many dispensational and spiritual lessons. The coming down of the Lord, the one who has been transfigured, from the mountain in the morning is clearly typical of His coming again in Glory. And what does He find when He comes? He finds Satan exercising his soul and body-destroying power. The boy possessed by a demon suffering sorely is the type of Satan's dominion when the Son of Man comes again. Multitudes wait for His return, and when He comes He finds misery, suffering and unbelief. The disciples had the power conferred upon them to cast out demons, but they were helpless; they could not do it, and unbelief was plainly at the root of their inability. We must, however, be cautious to apply this in the right way. It would be incorrect to make these disciples the church. We have seen before that they represent the Jewish remnant (chapter 10). Such a remnant of Jewish believers will be in existence after the body of Christ, the church, is complete and come into the presence of the Lord. This future Jewish remnant will preach the Gospel of the kingdom and they will go once more through the cities of Israel manifesting the powers of the kingdom. And yet they will not be able to cast out the demon which holds dominion. The coming Lord can do this and does it with His manifestation.

However, the principles underlying the incident have a deeper spiritual application. Here is a company of believers, for such were the disciples, and the Lord had put power into their hands, yet they were not able to use it. Perhaps, as over and over again they attempted to drive out the demon and failure followed, the multitude jeered at them, and the effect upon the child must have been awful. Their failure made the case worse. Thus we are as believers in the midst of an evil world, which is under the sway of its god, the devil, and his demons. Complete victory and power over the world and its god is given to us by, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet here are many of God's people as helpless and powerless as were these disciples at the foot of the mountain. Weakness and failure is seen everywhere, and instead of exercising full control and having full power over that which is evil, the evil has full control. And why? Oh, let us put the words prominently before the eyes of our hearts, "Because of your unbelief." Unbelief is the only reason for this failure. Unbelief gives the world and Satan all their power. Faith lays him low and the walls of Jericho (the world) must crumble to dust without even a single hand lifted up against them. Nothing is impossible for him who believes. Faith can remove and does remove mountains, which mean obstacles and difficulties in our way. How little such faith is exercised among believers. And we may go still further and ask what is the reason of lack of faith? A severed communion with the Lord and occupation with self. If the Lord is ever before our hearts and self is out of sight, faith can readily be exercised. Therefore the Lord gives the remedy, "Prayer and Fasting." Prayer means communion with the Lord and dependence on Him. Fasting (the least meaning of it, abstinence from food), the losing sight of self; self-denial.

The healing of the lunatic is followed by a second announcement of His suffering, death and resurrection. "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is about to be delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and the third day He shall be raised up. And they were greatly grieved" (verses 22, 23). This new declaration of His passion, following the transfiguration scene and the manifestation of His power over the devil, is a reminder that through the cross alone the glory could be accomplished. In the sixteenth chapter the announcement of the fact that He would build His church is followed by the first statement of His suffering, and there the elders, chief priests and scribes are mentioned, and His glory as the Son of Man is manifested. He speaks again of His death, and the chief priests and elders are not mentioned, but He speaks of being about to be delivered into the hands of men. This head of the body, His church, and head of the new creation as Second Man He was to become by death and resurrection. And His disciples, in hearing these words, were greatly grieved. All these sayings of the Lord were mysterious unto them. They knew not that all the hope of glory and the kingdom could only be realized by His death and triumphant resurrection, or they would not have been grieved.

The closing paragraph of the seventeenth chapter contains a most precious incident, which we shall find again full of most suggestive and blessed teachings. The scene is at Capernaum, meaning village of comfort. Let us read the text first. "And when they came to Capernaum, those who received the didrachmas came to Peter and said, Does your teacher not pay the didrachmas? He says, Yes. And when he came to the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What dost thou think, Simon? the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive custom or tribute? from their own sons or from strangers? Peter says to Him, From strangers. Jesus said to him, Then are the sons free. But that we may not be an offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish which comes up, and when thou hast opened its mouth thou wilt find a stater; take that and give it to them for me and thee" (verses 24-27).

One is at a loss how to give out a little of the wonderful riches of grace and glory which are manifested in this little incident there by the sea of Galilee. And even if we would bring out every point and lesson the Holy Spirit has put here for

us, it would all be but imperfect stammering. The grace and glory of Himself is here most wonderfully brought forth. He manifests Himself as the omnipotent Lord; His divine majesty and power is shown forth in the miracle of the fish, and in wonderful condescension this Lord is servant, to make us sons with Himself, and as such, free. But let us point out the details.

The temple-tribute is here meant, which, according to Jewish custom, was collected at the end of the month Adar (March). That it was not the ransom money for the soul, spoken of in Exodus 30:11-16, is obvious. The amount of tribute was in our money about sixty cents. The collector came to Peter, perhaps for the reason that the Lord was not present. And Peter acts once more in his hasty manner. Without thinking he answers with a ready "yes." But, Peter, hast thou forgotten thy wonderful confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" Is the vision from the holy mountain so quickly gone that thou canst put again thy Lord down on the level with every other Jew who is obliged to pay temple-tribute? Alas! even so it was. The dignity and glory of His Lord was quite forgotten and out of sight.

We see Peter after his hasty reply in the house surprised by the Lord. He knew his heart and the question which had been asked, as well as the answer which Peter had given. Jesus anticipated him, and addressing him as Simon, He asks, "the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive tribute? from their own sons or from strangers?" What a strong proof this is once more of the Divinity of the humble Jesus. He knew the thoughts of His disciple; this Jesus is the omniscient God, God manifested in the flesh. Peter now gives the correct answer, "From strangers;" to which Jesus replies, "Then are the sons free." In this declaration all His glory is once more revealed. He is the Son, He is Jehovah, whose glory had appeared in the temple; how could He then pay tribute to that which is His own? As Son He was free, no such obligation was upon Him. Oh, how the dignity of His Person stands before us in these simple words. He shows His place as Son, and as such He is exempt from the tribute. But while thus He shows His divine right, He does not insist upon it. "But that we may not be an offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou wilt find a stater; take that and give it to them for me and thee."

And here still greater grace and glory is revealed for our hearts to enjoy. First notice that the Lord speaks not of Himself alone, but also of Peter. He had not said that He as the Son is free, but the "sons are free." In speaking of giving offence He says "we," and when the money is miraculously provided it was to be "for me and thee," for the Lord and for Peter. What precious thoughts these facts bring to us! The Lord, the Son of God, who is free, identifies Himself with His disciple, with Peter, who, as we have seen before, is the representative of the disciples. In this gracious identification of the Lord with His own, every believer is included. He is Son and we are sons with Him; He is free and He has made us free. "If therefore the Son shall set you free ye shall be really free" -- He has identified Himself with us and we are sharers of His grace, His humiliation and His glory. But what an example it is which He in His gracious action puts here before us for our consideration and "to go and do likewise." He surrenders His personal right for the sake of "not giving offence." Surely "He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps." It behooves us now, though we are sons of God and sons of glory, to walk in humility, without asserting our right, willing in all things which concern ourselves to suffer. Alas! how little it is done -- how great the offence given again and again, by the self-assertion, the ungracious and worldly behavior of those who through the grace of God are not of the world as He is not of it. May we learn of Him in this sweet lesson. He could say, "I am meek and lowly of heart," and His humility shines forth in His action. Like He the Son becoming a servant may we as sons be servants too. And then, think of it, He provided for all which was needed. Just the amount which was needed "for me and for thee" was at His command; it was ready and prepared. All is His and unto the riches of Himself He has taken us. "For me and thee" speaks of individuality and intimacy. Faith is to take hold of it and realize even better and more fully that all need is supplied by Himself and that from Him all comes to us. And by what a mighty miracle He provides the need. Once more His glory flashes forth. Again we learn that this Jesus who speaks here is God, God the Creator; as such He manifests Himself. It is a practical illustration of Col. 1:16 and Hebrews 1:3. He knows the deep sea, for He made the sea. He knows the mysteries of the deep, nothing is hid from Him. He knows the piece of money in the bottom of the sea, for the silver and the gold are His. As He spoke before to the restless sea and wind and waves obeyed Him, so here, the deep obeys His voice. A creature of His is there, a fish, and He commands the fish to take up a piece of money. Then He brings the fish to Peter's hook. Omniscience and omnipotence is here which belong to God and God is present. And this Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever. He who knew the fish and commanded that fish to take the stater and guided it to Peter's hook, is our Lord, with power in heaven and on earth. In view of such gracious and wonderful demonstration of His power the heart cries out -- Oh why do we not trust Him fully at all times and circumstances! Why do we not even hasten to such a Lord whose grace and power is all for us, and ever trust Him for all we want?

Perhaps here is also the thought of death in type and that through death our need is provided. Out of the water the fish was taken, and out of the deep provision was made.

CHAPTER XVIII

So closely is this chapter connected with the events of the previous one that it should not be divided into a separate chapter at all. It was "in that hour" the disciples came to Him with their question. When the Lord had just uttered the great truth "the sons are free" and added His gracious Word "that we may not be an offence to them" and the disciples asked their question about being greatest in the kingdom, the great Teacher continues His teachings.

"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens? And Jesus having called a little child to Him, set it in their midst, and said, Verily I say to you, unless ye are converted and become as little children, ye will not at all enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens" (verses 1-5). In the Gospel of Luke (chapter 9:46) we read that they were reasoning amongst themselves who should be the greatest. Perhaps the Lord's words to Peter about the keys of the kingdom produced this strife among the disciples. While the Lord had set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem and spoke of His coming suffering and death, they had these selfish thoughts and reasonings. And so they approach the Lord, in the hour when He, who had become poor, had manifested His divine power in bringing the fish with a piece of money from the bottom of the sea to Peter's hook. And how graciously He teaches them. He knew their hearts and read their thoughts. He knew the depths of their natures and that one of their numbers was not His own. What love that He so patiently instructs them.

The disciples meant of course the kingdom of the heavens, as they understood it, that kingdom which was and is to be established in the earth, and their selfish ambition was reaching out for a great earthly position in that kingdom. They thought of the time when service, self-denial and suffering would be rewarded by the King; who then would be greatest? And the Lord takes a little child and sets the little one in their midst and through this object lesson teaches them who will be the greatest in the kingdom. What the Lord tells His disciples here is practically the same which Nicodemus heard from His lips in that night visit. The kingdom must be entered in and that means conversion, to turn about in a different direction, and become as a little child, in other words, a new life is given, a new existence begins, the believer is born again and enters the kingdom as a little child, as he entered by the natural birth into the world. He gives therefore the great characteristics of those who have entered the kingdom and the great principles which are to govern them. It is lowliness, littleness and dependence. These are the characteristics of a little child. "Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens." Having entered into the kingdom by being born again, we are to act practically according to these principles and he who does so is the greatest. The new life will grow and develop, but in regard of these characteristics the believer is ever to remain a child in simplicity, dependence on the Lord and in lowliness of mind as well as self-forgetfulness. It is by the constant following of these principles that growth in Grace is attained. Nothing is more detrimental to the development of spiritual life than self-consciousness, self confidence and pride. How often the Lord has to do with His children what the earthly father has to do with his children when they are wilful. He has to discipline them, and that means to show them their true place as a little child. "Moreover, we have had the fathers of our flesh as chasteners, and we revered them; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed chastened for a few days, as seemed good to them; but He for profit, in order to the partaking of His holiness" (Heb. 12:9, 10). Lowliness of mind, that self-forgetfulness and dependence on God, was the path of the Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His humiliation. Let this mind, therefore, be in you which was in Christ Jesus.

"And whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me. But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me, it were profitable for him that a great millstone had been hanged upon his neck and he be sunk into the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; yet woe to that man by whom the offence comes! And if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; it is good for thee to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than have two hands or two feet to be cast into eternal fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is good for thee to enter into life one-eyed, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire" (verses 5-9).

The great thought put here before us is the identification of the Lord with every little one, each who has become a little child, that is born again. He is their Father and their Lord, closely identified with them. It reminds us of that beautiful word "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2:8). It is spoken of Israel, it finds a still higher application in

us. We also may think of that other statement: "In all their affliction, He was afflicted" (Is. 63:9). And so honor done to one of the little ones is done unto Him, injury done to one of them is injury done to Him. What glory of the believer this reveals! How this fact should teach us how to behave one towards the other and not despise any one who is Christ's. How apt we are to do this. This one or that one is so little taught in the Word, he is so ungracious -- and with all our criticism we forget he is after all one of Christ's own.

Care, however, must be taken in interpreting the passage concerning those who offend, the casting into the sea with a millstone* and into eternal fire. (Christ here speaks of a kind of death, perhaps nowhere, certainly never used among the Jews; He does it either to aggravate the thing, or in allusion to drowning in the Dead Sea, in which one cannot be drowned without something hung to him, and in which to drown anything by a common manner of speed implied rejection and execration. -- *Horae Hebraicae*.) That this cannot mean the true believer, who gives offence is obvious. The true believer may give offence, as alas! he often does, but the fate "eternal fire" or "hell of fire" is not for him. But in the kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens as it is now, there are not alone those who are truly born again, but also many who are mere professors without possessing life. These are of course indifferent and careless about grieving Him. The "eternal fire" is surely for those who though professing, continue deliberately in sin and unbelief. And yet the exhortation has a most solemn meaning for every true believer. Whatever is in your way, whatever is a stumbling block it is to be removed. If it is the hand by which we serve and act, or by the foot, the walk, or by the eye, the very best we have, put it away so as not to give an offence.

And our Lord continues: "See that ye do not despise one of these little ones; for I say unto you that their angels in the heavens continually behold the face of my Father who is in the heavens" (verse 10). It would take many pages to follow or state all the different interpretations of these words and the various theories and doctrines which have been built upon it. That there are difficulties here none would deny.

Much has been made of this passage in teaching that there is a "guardian angel" for every believer. That angels have ministries which we cannot fully grasp now, cannot be denied.

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). Faith can enjoy it, child-like faith, without going into speculation. However the passage does not teach that every believer has an angel who guards and protects him and who sees the Father.

The question is, does the Lord still speak of believers or does He now refer to actual little ones? We believe the latter is the case. With the tenth verse ends properly the exhortation of the Lord in answer to the question of the disciples. The little child He had put in their midst was most likely still there, and it is now concerning little ones, little children, He speaks, that they should not be despised. Children are subjects in the kingdom of the heavens. How little the disciples understood their Lord and how they needed the very exhortation not to despise one of these little ones is seen in the next chapter, when they brought little children to the Lord and the disciples rebuked them. The Lord then declared: "Suffer little children, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven is of such" (chapter 19:13, 14). And when the Lord now speaks of "their angels in the heavens continually behold the face of my Father," what does He mean by it?

All of course depends on the interpretation of "angel." At the first glance it would seem as if these little ones have angels in heaven. There is a passage in Acts 12 which is the key to solve the difficulty here. When Peter, rescued by an angel, led forth miraculously from the prison house, knocked at the door of the praying assembly and Rhoda maintained that Peter stood outside, they said "It is his angel." They believed that Peter had suffered death and that his angel stood outside. What does "angel" mean in this passage? It must mean the departed spirit of Peter. This fact throws light on the passage before us. If these little ones, who belong to the kingdom of the heavens, depart, their disembodied spirits behold the Father's face in heaven; in other words, they are saved. Surely heaven is peopled by these little ones. What a company of them is in the presence of the Lord! The little ones perish not. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ was for them. The verses which follow and which have been said to be an interpolation, belong rightly here; indeed, they fit in most wonderfully, though in the Gospel of Luke we have the substance of these words enlarged. "For the Son of Man has come to save* that which is lost." (The omission of "to seek" is significant. They (little children) are lost ones needing a Saviour, but seeking implies a condition of active wandering from God such as in their case is hardly begun yet. -- *Num. Bible*.) "What think ye? If a certain man should have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine on the mountains, go and seek the one which has gone astray? And if it should come to pass that he find it, verily I say unto you,

he rejoices more because of it than because of the ninety and nine not gone astray. So it is not the will of your Father who is in the heavens that one of these little ones should perish" (verses 11-14).

The words of our Lord, which follow His gracious declaration, that it is not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish, are very important. Here for the second time in this gospel and the last time, the Lord uses the word "church," or as we translate it "assembly." We must have therefore additional teachings given by our Lord concerning His church, which He had announced in the sixteenth chapter He is going to build. We have learned before that the building of the church was future, that when He gave that statement there was no church in existence. And so the words He spoke to His disciples in the passage before us are in anticipation of the gathering out of the assembly or church.

Some have taught that the word "church" means a synagogue. Church and synagogue, however, are totally different terms. (Of late this argument has been pressed in certain quarters that the word church means synagogue. However if the Lord had meant synagogue the Holy Spirit surely would have used the Greek word "synagoge" instead of "ecclesia.") Others have failed to see the close connection which exists between the first part of the chapter and the continued teachings of our Lord going now on about the authority of the church. That all is vitally connected in this chapter may not be discovered at the first glance, but it is so nevertheless. He had answered their question about the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens and true believers were described by Him as little children, born of God and in possession of the characteristics of a little child. No offence should be given to any of these little ones. He then spoke of His own mission, that He came to save that which is lost and of His Grace in seeking the sheep which has gone astray till He finds it and rejoices over it. And now He speaks of a brother who has sinned. How is he to be treated? The connection then is clear. If He sought us and saved us when we were lost in our sins, so we, in possession of His life, in the spirit of a little child in dependence upon Him and in meekness, are to seek our brother who has sinned. The instructions He gives, however, soon refer us to the church and her executive power on the earth during the absence of the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. But we have to examine these words in detail.

"But if thy brother sin against thee, go reprove him between thee and him alone. If he hear thee, thou hast gained a brother" (verse 15). The question is how sin in a brother is to be treated. What kind of a sin is meant, whether a sin against a person or sin in a wider sense of the word, we shall not attempt to discuss. He is a brother who has sinned and the first thing to be done is that the one who knows about it is to go to him personally and reprove him, that is, show him his fault. The object of his reprover is not perhaps to defend himself, if a personal matter, a false accusation, is the sin, but it is to restore and gain the brother. But to go to the brother who has sinned needs great caution, earnest prayer, meekness and self judgment. If the reproving is attempted in a wrong spirit it will work untold harm. The Holy Spirit has given us in Galatians the description of the brother who should go and reprove him who has sinned and the manner in which he is to do it. "Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Alas! how little this is done. Instead of going at once to the brother who sinned, after earnest prayer and with the love and grace of God in the heart, the sin of the brother is often spread about and by this un-Christlike behavior magnified. Bitter feelings are stirred up, resulting in greater evils, slanders, backbiting, lying and other sins. If at last some one makes an attempt to see the brother, he finds the case perhaps beyond hope. How simply our gracious Lord has pointed out the way for us, what the first step is to be if the brother has sinned. It is to be treated as a personal matter and the sinning brother should not needlessly be exposed. Such grace manifested is able to gain the brother.

But in case he does not hear, what is to be the second step? "But if he do not hear thee, take with thee one or two besides, that every matter may stand upon the word of two witnesses or three" (verse 16). Of course the two, which are to be taken along in this second step to restore a brother, must have the same spiritual characteristics as the brother who came to him first. It is to bring still greater love to bear upon him, but at the same time to show the brother that unconfessed sin, sin not put away, cannot be tolerated in a brother. Should he stubbornly refuse to see his fault, his case would appear hopeless and the last step to be done would hardly reach him, for from the very outset he has been hardening his heart against love and grace, the love of Christ, which sought to restore him.

And so the Lord gives the last injunction, "But if he will not listen to them tell it to the assembly." The sin is now to be made public, the whole assembly is to hear of it and of course from the side of the assembly or church there is to be renewed seeking to gain the brother in love. Hasty judging is to be avoided and in all these steps impatient haste, the fruit of the flesh, is to be avoided.

The assembly is mentioned, we repeat, in anticipation of its building in the future. The injunction given here could not have been kept at the time when the Lord gave it, nor before the day of Pentecost. (It is very interesting though to find that the Elders and Rabbis of old had many sayings about reproving a brother which remind one strongly of the words here. It was also customary among the Jews to note those that were obstinate and after public admonition in the synagogue to set a mark of disgrace upon them. The words by our Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my Name there I am in the midst of them," is also found in the talmudical writings. The old Rabbis say, "Two or three sitting in judgment, the Shekinah is in the midst of them." However all this does not authorize to say the synagogue is meant here.) First of all the church had to be called in existence. That the church is a gathering of persons unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we find later. This assembly then, the church, is to act as a body in the case of the brother who has sinned. Of course it means a local church gathered unto the name of the Lord of which the offender is a part.

"And if also he will not listen to the assembly; let him be to thee as one of the nations and a taxgatherer. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven." These are solemn and important words, as they not alone give us light on what is to be done with an impenitent brother, but also show us the responsibility and authority of the church on earth. He is, after refusing to hear the church, to be considered as one outside, one who has forfeited his place. This however does not mean that further attempts should not be made to restore him. The action of the assembly is to prove that holiness is to be maintained.

And now the "verily" of the Lord. Whatever has been read into these words of binding and loosing by the assembly we pass by. The words simply tell us that the Lord conferred authority to act on the earth for Himself, and the authority is absolute. But to whom does He give this authority? To the disciples, apostles to be conferred by them upon others? Never! That is the unscriptural, man-made doctrine which has displaced the person and the work of Christ, one of Satan's most powerful inventions. The authority is given to the church. He gives the church executive power. She is to act according to His rules laid down and in acting in fullest harmony with the absent Lord and obedient to His Word as well as guided by His Spirit, the action of the assembly is valid in heaven. The Lord sanctions it in heaven, whether it is binding or loosing. If, therefore, anything is done which deviates from His Word and is not according to His mind, He cannot sanction it. The case must be a very plain one. If there is disagreement, diversity of opinion, taking of different sides, it is evidence that the Lord cannot sanction what is done.

Alas! how little these injunctions have been followed! How little the church has understood the way of grace as well as her heaven-given, solemn authority. That which professes to be the church has made attempts to follow these injunctions, but being disobedient to the Word, has failed long ago and is powerless to carry out these words. Much of that which calls itself church is simply a human man-made institution, having adopted a set of rules, a form of government much like a club. Saved and unsaved are taken in and as for discipline that is all out of question.

And those who returned to the first principles how great their failure! The flesh has come in and worked havoc; things are done often in a sectarian spirit, a spirit which the Lord can never sanction. Yet all failure is no proof that what is spoken here by the Lord is impossible to carry out. It is possible and ever will be possible as long as our Lord is gathering out a people for His name. And while failure is everywhere failure may be avoided from our side if we are obedient to Him and to His Word.

He then continues with the words of comfort just on account of the difficulty: "Again I say to you, that if two shall agree on the earth concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from my Father who is in the heavens. For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" (verses 19-20).

The Lord knew the difficulty of such a path and the responsibility which rests upon believers as an assembly with such an authority put upon them, and therefore He gives this exceeding great and precious promise. It is a promise which tells us that He and His strength and wisdom is on our side and that He is willing to supply that which we lack. The promise stands first of all in connection with the restoring of a brother who sinned. United prayer is first of all needed. Yet the promise is not limited to this. We are told to ask touching anything and the assurance is given that it shall be done for us by the heavenly Father. Prayer in secret is blessed and made in His Name has the assurance likewise of an answer, but united prayer, even if only by two who are agreed, who know their place, their responsibility, is what the Lord here emphasizes.

And there is much need in these days of believers being agreed and casting themselves upon this promise, in confession of their weakness and with their responsibility resting upon them, making their requests known unto God. What mighty works have been accomplished in this way! It would take pages to record some of the victories gained, doors opened, barriers broken down, hundreds and thousands of souls saved, all accomplished through united prayer. He is still the same; the promise still holds good. And how graciously He puts the number the lowest; not a hundred, not fifty, not twenty-five -- but if two shall agree.

The words "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name,* there am I in the midst of them" gives us the center to which the assembly is gathered. (Not in My Name. This is a wrong translation. It is _unto My Name.) Not the name of a man, but unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the exalted Head of His body. The promised presence of the Lord is for those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the One to whom they are gathered. Alas! that the very passage should have been used to foster the same sectarianism which has been the snare of the professing church! And still it is true where two or three are gathered unto the Name, which is above every name, rejecting all other names, there is an assembly and there is the Lord in the midst of them.

Peter now comes once more to the foreground. He is again the spokesman of the disciples. The mention of the word "church" most likely revived in him the memory of the words the Lord had uttered after Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter had, of course, then no knowledge of the full meaning of that which came from the lips of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times? Jesus says to him, I say not to thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven" (verses 21, 22). The question is in closest connection with what the Lord had said. But He had not said a word about forgiving a brother. The word "forgive" was not used once by our Lord; He had spoken of gaining a brother who had sinned. Did Peter perhaps mean how often he should forgive his brother before the case should be taken up in the order as indicated by our Lord? We think it is now specifically the question of personal grievances we may have against a brother. Peter thinks and speaks of self. The Rabbis had given the following rule: "Pardon a man once, that sins against another; secondly pardon him; thirdly pardon him; fourthly do not pardon him," etc. (Bab. Joma.)

Peter, quite well acquainted with the traditions of the elders, most likely thought of this and he desired to show his appreciation of the gracious words he had heard by declaring his readiness to forgive his brother not three times, but twice three times and a little over. Until seven times? he asks. Surely, he must have thought the Lord will be pleased with such generosity and brotherly love. Ah, how little he knew the Grace of Him whom he had followed. The answer of the Lord must have been a revelation to Peter, "until seventy times seven." This is unlimited forgiveness. This God in Christ has forgiven us and forgives us, and the same Grace, unlimited Grace is to be shown towards the brother who sins against me. It is the same blessed word God the Holy Spirit gives us in the Epistles, "forbearing one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13). "And be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

This human question of Peter brought out the fullness of divine Grace.

And now the heavenly Teacher utters in connection with this a parable. "For this cause the kingdom of the heavens has become like a King who would reckon with his bondmen. And having begun to reckon, one debtor of ten thousand talents was brought to him. But he not having anything to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and his children, and everything that he had; and that payment should be made. The bondman, therefore, falling down did him homage, saying, 'Lord have patience with me and I will pay thee all.' And the lord of that bondman, being moved with compassion, loosed him and forgave him the loan. But that bondman having gone out, found one of his fellow bondmen who owed him a hundred denarii. And having seized him, he throttled him, saying, Pay me if thou owest anything. His fellow bondman therefore, having fallen down at his feet, besought him, saying, Have patience with me and I will pay thee. But he would not, but went away and cast him into prison until he should pay what was owing. But his fellow bondmen having seen what had taken place, were greatly grieved, and went and recounted to the lord all that had taken place. Then his lord having called him, says to him, Wicked bondman! I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow bondman, as I also had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry delivered him to the tormentors till he paid all that was owing to him. Thus also my heavenly Father shall do to you if ye forgive not from your hearts every one his brother" (verses 23-35).

In looking closer at this parable we must first of all be clear on the fact that it is a parable of the kingdom of heaven, and as such does not present to us the conditions as they prevail under the Gospel of Grace and in the church.

It is not the assembly which is before the Lord, but the Kingdom of the heavens, therefore the parable describes conditions as prevailing in the Kingdom. The parable illustrates an important principle. Here we have a picture of the sinner in the servant who owes the king ten thousand talents, about twelve million dollars. He is unable to pay this immense debt, as the sinner is unable to pay his debt. The servant is threatened with complete loss of all he has and possesses; and then appeals to the king, asking his patience for his willingness to pay all. But what does the king do? He ignores the plea; he knows the impossibility that this penniless servant could ever pay the debt he owes, and then in marvelous compassion he sets the bound servant free and forgives him. All this illustrates the hopelessness of the sinner and the Mercy of God without bringing out the blessed facts of the Gospel. This would be beyond the scope of the parable. But what happens? The liberated and forgiven one finds a fellow servant who owes him a hundred denarii, which is about seventeen dollars. Fresh from his terrible experience, his narrow escape and the great mercy shown to him, he flies at the poor fellow's throat, a thing the king had not done, demands his pay, and without taking his plea at all into consideration casts him into prison. The mercy shown to him had not touched his heart; and with all that rich mercy extended to him, he is a wicked man and addressed thus by the king, who gives him over to tormentors, to suffer till he should pay all that was due. Thus a mere professor of the Gospel may act; his profession outwardly is that he is a sinner, that he owes God much and he professes to believe in the compassion and forgiveness of God. His heart, however, knows nothing of the Mercy and Grace of God. He goes on acting wickedly, and his evil heart is manifested by the way he treats his fellow servant. Where Mercy is given, Mercy must be shown. If the heart has really apprehended the Grace of God and realizes what God has done for us in His wonderful Grace, it will ever be gracious and forgive; if we do not act according to this principle we must expect to be dealt with by a righteous and holy God.

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CHAPTER XIX

In the first part of the nineteenth chapter we find a continuation of teachings concerning the kingdom. This, we repeat, is not the same kingdom promised to Israel, as it was preached by the Lord and His disciples, in the first part of this Gospel, but it is the kingdom in its condition during the absence of the King, that condition which we saw revealed in the thirteenth chapter. The teachings given now by the Lord concern the institution, which the Creator in His infinite wisdom had established in the beginning. Are the relationships of nature to be given up in the kingdom? Is there to be a change from that which God originally instituted? We shall learn that the Lord teaches that these natural relationships are not to be dissolved or set aside in the kingdom. We shall find, however, that we have here not the fullest teaching concerning these earthly relations. In the Epistles are given the exhortations to husbands, wives and children; and always after the Christian believer's position and standing has been clearly defined. To be in the kingdom does, therefore, not free from natural relationship. Indeed, it is just in these that the life of Christ in love, patience, meekness and forbearance is to be manifested. The exhortations in Ephesians, Romans, Colossians, Titus and other Epistles teach this most positively.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, He withdrew from Galilee, and came to the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan ; and a great multitude followed Him, and He healed them there. And the Pharisees came to Him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for any cause?" (verses 1-3). Galilee is left now behind and He nears Judea and Jerusalem ; and again He is followed by a multitude and many are healed by His loving hands and His divine power.

The subject of the earthly relationship instituted by God before the fall, called marriage, is brought into the foreground by tempting Pharisees. We have heard nothing of these enemies of the Lord since the beginning of the fifteenth chapter. These traditionalists and strong ritualists are now coming upon the scene again. Once more it is a question about their oral law, their man-made rules. He had silenced them about the Sabbath day and declared that He, the Son of Man, is Lord even of the Sabbath. When they came with the ridiculous tradition of the elders about the washing of hands, He had boldly declared, "Ye hypocrites!" and that they teach as doctrines the commandment of men. And now they are going to tempt Him once more. How awful this attempt appears when we consider the dignity of the person whom they try to tempt! He is the Wisdom, the Lord, who created all things; the one who instituted marriage and whose fingers wrote upon the tables of stone. Instead of worshipping Him and taking their place at His feet, to be taught by Him, they try in their blindness to

ensnare Him. But why do they bring this special question about putting away a wife for any cause? Most likely the utterance of the Lord in the fifth chapter was reported to these men. There the Lawgiver Himself had declared: "It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a letter of divorce. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife except for cause of fornication makes her commit adultery, and whosoever marries one that is put away commits adultery" (5:31, 32). This word must have been a very hard saying for those men, for it flatly contradicted the rabbinical sayings. And now they think they have a fine case against Him. If He but commits Himself on some of these fine rabbinical distinctions about the cause for divorce (later collected in the talmudical tract Gittin) they would have an accusation against Him.

Two great opinions divided then the Pharisees about divorce. Some held to the views of Hillel and others to the views of Shammai. Hillel had taught that indeed for almost every cause a wife may be put away. We care not to fill our space with a record of all the different causes for divorce and the rules, which the elders had laid down and which, at least among the extremely orthodox Jews, are still conscientiously followed. (It has often been our experience to talk with some poor Jewish woman, left by her husband, who got a divorce from the rabbi. We remember one case where a man got a "Gett" -- a bill of divorcement from his wife for an insignificant cause and came to this country to marry again. His divorced wife followed him here. These conditions have been quite a problem in New York courts.) The school of Hillel declared openly, and practised this, that if the wife cooks her husband's food badly, by over salting or over roasting it, she is to be put away. The school of Shammai, to which other Pharisees held, permitted not divorces except in the case of adultery. This will shed more light on the temptation of these Pharisees.

And now the Lord speaks in answer to their question: "But He, answering, said unto them, Have ye not read that He who made them from the beginning, made them male and female, and said, On account of this a man shall leave father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh? What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man separate" (verses 4-7). The Lord passes over all their scholastic reasonings; He ignores all their different opinions and has not a word to say about the law as given through Moses. He goes to the very beginning and shows marriage to be a divinely instituted relationship. And marriage, as instituted by the Creator, is an argument against both polygamy and divorce. Blessed institution indeed, and blessed fact, two shall be one flesh. In the new creation the relationship of marriage has a still deeper significance. The second half of Ephesians 5 acquaints us with what the believing husband and wife represent. Christ and the church and the love of Christ, the obedience of the church, the oneness which exists between Christ and the church, all practically to be seen in the relationship of husband and wife. "For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ, the church; for we are members of His body; of His flesh and of His bones. Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ and as to the church" (Eph. 5:29-32). But the Pharisees have an answer ready. "They say to Him, Why then did Moses command to give a letter of divorce and to send her away?" But even in this they were erring. It was not a "command," but something which Moses allowed. The law had much to say about the suspicion of adultery, in which case the wife had to undergo a trial by the bitter waters (Num. 5). Actual adultery was punishable by death. And so the Lord has His answer for their objection. "He says, Moses, in view of your hardheartedness, allowed you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not thus. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he who marries one put away commits adultery" (verses 8, 9).

Moses but allowed them divorce (Deut. 24:1). Adultery, however, such was the divine law, meant death. The Lord, now in His divine authority as the great "I am," gives a law about divorce, which is binding. Divorce, putting away a wife is wrong, except in case of unfaithfulness, adultery. All divorce for other causes is sin, and whosoever marries such a wrongly divorced person commits adultery. Many questions which arise here, difficulties in individual cases, complications of different nature, we must pass by. And yet we cannot conclude our meditation on these verses, without calling to mind the condition, which prevails about us, in professing Christendom, on these very things. The sacred institution of marriage has never been so misused as in these days. Society, so called, is corrupt in morals. Divorces and scandals are becoming almost fashionable. The frightful increase of unlawful divorces and prostitution is alarming to the moralist and reformer. We know, however, that it will be so in the last days, for He said, "As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh."

"His disciples say to Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. And He said to them, All cannot receive this word, but those to whom it has been given; for there are eunuchs, which have been born thus from their

mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs of men; and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs of themselves for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens." He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (verses 10-12).

The disciples, with their question, lay bare their own hearts. If such was the case, they think, that the best thing is not to marry at all. He speaks then of what incapacitates for marriage. Some are unfitted for this divinely instituted relation by nature, others have been made so by wicked men, a custom still largely prevailing in the Orient. There is a third class who are exempt, and these are those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens. This does not mean mutilation. It means, no doubt, living in an unmarried state for the sake of the kingdom. It is not a law, not an obligation, nor a "sacrament." Celibacy is a man-made and wicked doctrine, contrary to Scripture. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." It is then something to be received, a gift from above. The grace and power of God is able to lift some to whom it is given, above the natural things of life. Paul undoubtedly was such a one to whom it was given. "For I would that all men were even as myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.... But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh; but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none.... But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:7, 28-32).

And now the scene changes once more. The Pharisees with their temptation had been silenced by the Lord and their question resulted in definite teachings from the lips of the great Teacher concerning the institution of marriage in the kingdom. Another question is now to be answered by Him, the question of the relation of children to the kingdom. In the eighteenth chapter the Lord had put a little child in their midst and had said "Unless ye are converted and become as little children, ye will not at all enter into the kingdom of heaven;" but here little children are brought to Him.

"Then there were brought to Him little children, that He might lay His hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked them" (verse 13). It was an old custom among the Jews to bring children to an acknowledged teacher and pious man, that he might pronounce a blessing upon them. The laying on of hands was done to symbolize the fulfilment of the blessing upon the head of the little one. These little ones were, therefore, not brought to Him for healing of any bodily disease, but they were brought to be blest by Him. Whose children they were is not stated. However, it is very improbable that they were the children of unbelieving Jews; these were rejecting the Lord and would hardly bring their little ones to Him. They must have been children of such, who believed in the Lord, and bringing these little ones to Him they manifested their faith that He would be willing to bless them and occupy Himself with them. Most likely the act of the Lord in putting the child in the midst of the disciples, and his previous teaching about the little ones, was an incentive to bring boldly the children to the Lord for a blessing. How strange once more the behavior of the disciples! The disciples rebuked them. They had listened to His gracious declarations about the little ones and how He told them, that he who humbles himself as a little child is the greatest in the kingdom, and yet they understood Him not. Did they want to keep an annoyance from the Lord? Was it a selfish motive which prompted them to act in this spirit? Perhaps they thought these little ones too insignificant, too unworthy for Him to bless. What could He do with these little ones?

This event brings out a very important and alas! too often forgotten declaration from our Lord. The declaration is that the little ones are recognized as the subjects of His kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens. There is a place for little children in the kingdom; they are a part of it is the emphatic teaching of the passage before us.

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children and do not hinder them from coming to me, for the kingdom of the heavens is of such; and having laid His hands upon them, He departed thence." With such a definite word it seems next to impossible that anyone could doubt the love of God for the little ones. Still it has been done; there is an interpretation of the gracious words of our Lord, which makes the little children types of believers, and that only such who have believed are meant. In Mark and in Luke (Mark 10:13; Luke 18:15) the Lord adds, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein," but here no such addition is given by the Holy Spirit, because it concerns the relation of actual little ones to the kingdom. The Lord takes up these little ones and approves of the faith, which had presented them to Him for a blessing. He puts His hands upon them and declares that these little ones are a part of the kingdom. How much like Him who loves to take up that which is weak and lowly! The passage is sufficient to teach believers that the Lord Jesus Christ has a loving interest in the little ones, looks upon them as belonging to His kingdom and is ready to bless them. But where is the faith from the side of believing parents, fully entering into His

thoughts and looking upon the little ones as in the kingdom presenting these to Himself? Alas! how great the failure! He tells us of His willingness to receive them, that they are subjects of His kingdom and faith should act upon this and put them into His loving hands. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Faith should take hold of this gracious family promise and claim it. Of course, this does not say that personal faith is unnecessary from the side of children.

In the epistles we find children mentioned. In the epistle, which contains God's highest revelation, Ephesians, children are treated as belonging to the Lord in the believing family. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment which has a promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest be long-lived on the earth. And ye fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-4). The last means to instruct them in the things of the Lord. We have come occasionally in touch with good Christian people, who declared it wrong to teach a child to pray and who refused to tell little ones to pray to God. As far as certain forms of prayers are concerned we are, of course, fully agreed that a parrotlike repetition of prayers is to be avoided and harmful. But to teach the child prayer, the expression of weakness and dependence on God, as well as confidence in Him, is the first lesson to be taught. We think it a wrong, where this is not done. No day should pass in the home of believers, where the Word is not read and the knees of all bow before Him, who is the Head over all, the Lord Jesus Christ. And if through the grace of God the sweet instructions of Ephesians 5:22-32 are carried out in the Christian family, the home will become a place of fragrance, influence and blessing.

But now we behold another one appearing, one who had been a little one, a young man, and he is asking the way to eternal life. "And lo, one coming up said to Him, Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have life eternal? And He said to him, What askest thou me concerning goodness? One is good. But if thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments. He says to Him, Which? And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man says to Him, All these have I kept; what lack I yet? Jesus said to him, If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me. But the young man, having heard the word, went away grieved, for he had large possessions" (verses 16-23).

This is a most instructive incident. It is a striking portrayal of many who are in the professing sphere, in Christendom, their natural and moral condition; and the teaching of the incident is, that salvation is not of man, not depending on the deeds of man, but salvation is of God.

The young man is a typical religious, moral and natural man. In the Gospel of Mark we read, that he came running and kneeled down and that the Lord loved him; and in Luke we find that he was a young ruler, holding an ecclesiastical position. The question is the all important one for the religious man, the question of how to obtain eternal life. He is in ignorance about eternal life. In spite of all his religious observations, his position, his good moral qualities, he had no certainty, no assurance of life eternal; though a member of the professing people of God, he gropes in the dark. And is this not the case of the so-called Christian masses of our day? He furthermore expects eternal life from God as the reward of having done some good thing. He wants to earn eternal life, "do and live," as the law demands. He is ignorant of the great fundamental fact, that he is with all his religiousness and good moral qualities a guilty and lost sinner. He does not know (the blindness of the natural man) that he never did a good thing, which pleased God and that he can never do any good thing from himself. And this is equally true of a large number of subjects in the kingdom of heaven, who are mere professors of Christianity and who are unsaved and strangers to the grace of God. And now the Lord's dealing with him. He gives him, first of all, to understand that only One is good and that One is, of course, God. "Good master," said he, according to the other record. He looked upon the Lord as a good man merely, and this He at once repudiates. God alone is good, and the One the young man addressed is "God manifested in the flesh." He was ignorant of His person. The Lord then meets him on his own ground. The ground upon which he stands is the law, and with the law the Lord answers his question. How else could He treat him? The first need for him was to know himself a lost and helpless sinner. If the Lord had spoken of His grace, of eternal life as a free gift, he would not have understood Him at all. The law was needed to make known to him his desperate condition and to lay bare his heart. And the Lord who searches the hearts does this for him. With a few sentences he uncovers the true state of the young man, who leaves Him grieved, full of sorrow; he had many possessions and he would not part with them. He had declared that he loved his neighbor as himself; had he done so he would have readily sold his possessions, given them to the poor and followed the Lord. As a natural man, he could not and would not do it.

In type this young, religious man "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless," stands for the self-righteous Jewish people, turned away from the Lord with sorrow and yet loved by Him.

"And Jesus said to His disciples, Verily, I say unto you, a rich man shall with difficulty enter into the kingdom of the heavens, and again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to enter a needle's eye than a rich man into the kingdom of God" (verses 23, 24). The verse tells us that the natural man, like the rich ruler, burdened by his possessions and under the control of the world and the god of this age, cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The illustration of the camel and the needle's eye was a well-known Jewish phrase in the days of our Lord. It is an impossible thing that a camel laden down with goods could pass through the eye of a needle; just as impossible is it for the natural rich man to enter the kingdom of God. In astonishment the disciples now turn to the Lord with the question, a question perfectly in order after such a solemn declaration. "And when the disciples heard it they were exceedingly astonished, saying, Who, then, can be saved? But Jesus, looking on them, said, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (verses 25, 26). Here is a bright and glorious flashing forth of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. His words are a blessed indication of what His loving heart knew so well, that salvation is of God. With men salvation is impossible, to get into the kingdom of God an impossibility, but God, in His marvelous grace in Christ Jesus has made it possible. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And now the last paragraph of this most interesting chapter.

It is Peter once more who steps into the foreground as mouthpiece of the disciples. Again he acts and speaks in the flesh. Indeed, all through this Gospel Peter shows himself self-centered and self-seeking and intruding in that spirit into the things of the Lord. Only once was this not the case, and that was when the Father in heaven had given to him the revelation concerning His Son (Matt. 16). With what self-consciousness and feeling of superiority Peter must have looked upon the young ruler as he sneaked away with hanging head. And then, instead of bowing in silence and wonder after the Lord had flashed forth His grace and truth, he thinks of himself. "Then, Peter answering said to Him, Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee; what then shall happen to us?" Self is here prominently before us. But the Lord in His graciousness is far from rebuking Peter; He makes the self-gratifying question the basis of still further teaching by speaking of the future rewards of His own who follow Him and share His rejection.

"And Jesus said to them, Verily, I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit down upon His throne of glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life. But many first shall be last, and last first" (verses 28-30). Here is the declaration of an important principle, the principle of rewards in glory. Whatever a disciple, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ has done or suffered for His sake will not be forgotten. This, however, does not mean that we can earn a position in glory; it is grace and grace alone, which has brought us there. Service and self-denial of a believer are the results of grace, and so the rewards are mercies, nothing else. But it is glorious to think, He remembers all, yea even the cup of cold water given in His name and for all we shall find in His presence a recompense.

Besides the principle of rewards we have here dispensational teachings. The Lord speaks of the time of regeneration. There is a time of regeneration coming, when all things will be made over, when groaning creation is delivered and the reign of Satan and of sin ends. It is the millennial age. Throughout the Old Testament the prophets declare this great regeneration, in the promises, which are so universally spiritualized in our day. This regeneration is not yet; and it cannot come as long as the Son of Man does not occupy the throne of His glory. He will not occupy that throne as long as His fellow heirs are not with Him. Everything then in its order. The completion of the church, as to numbers, the removal of the church to meet Him in the air, His coming with His saints in glory, His own throne, which He will occupy and then, and not before, the regeneration.

The promise here to the disciples is a specific one for them, and does not mean other believers. In the kingdom, the reign of Christ over the earth, the disciples will hold a glorious position in connection with the government of the earth through Israel and occupy twelve thrones. The saints will judge the world. As He received of His Father, so shall the overcomer receive from His hands. (Rev. 2:26-28.)

We have gone through a most blessed chapter in which all is connected by the Holy Spirit. The teaching is continued in the next, and the last sentence of the nineteenth chapter belongs to the twentieth chapter. "But many first shall be last, and last first," its meaning is explained by the Lord in a parable.

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CHAPTER XX

The Lord had spoken about the rewards to be given at the time when the kingdom is to be established on the earth in power and glory, the time of regeneration. His last word in the nineteenth chapter was the statement, "many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." If we turn to our chapter we find the same words again. "So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called ones, but few are chosen ones" (verse 16). It is evident by the word "so" that the Lord gives us the interpretation of this sentence in the first part of the twentieth chapter, and, as already indicated, the last verse of the nineteenth chapter belongs properly to the beginning of the chapter which follows. A parable it is by which the Lord continues to teach about the rewards of the kingdom. "But many first shall be last, and last first. For the kingdom of the heavens is like a householder who went out with the early morning to hire workmen for his vineyard. And having agreed with the workmen for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And having gone out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market place idle; and to them he said: Go also ye into the vineyard, and whatsoever may be just I will give you. And they went their way. Again, having gone out about the sixth and ninth hour, he did likewise. But about the eleventh hour, having gone out, he found others standing, and says to them, Why stand ye here all day idle? They say to him, because no man has hired us. He says to them, Go also ye into the vineyard and whatsoever may be just ye shall receive. But when the evening was come the Lord of the vineyard says to his steward, Call the workmen and pay them their wages, beginning from the last even to the first. And when they who came to work about the eleventh hour came, they received each a denarius. And when the first came they supposed that they would receive more, and they received also themselves each a denarius. And on receiving it they murmured against the master of the house, saying, these last have worked one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. But he, answering, said to one of them, My friend, I do not wrong thee. Didst thou not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is thine and go. But it is my will to give to this last even as to thee, is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first and the first last; for many are called ones, but few chosen ones."

This parable has difficulties to many readers of the Bible, and all kinds of interpretations have been attempted. Some of these are altogether wrong and contradict Scripture. Among them we mention the exposition of the denarius or penny to mean eternal life and salvation. Thus Luther states on this parable, and after him many other commentators, "the penny which each receives, whether he has labored much or little, is His Son Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, His Holy Spirit, and finally He gives eternal life." That this is wrong needs hardly to be mentioned. The salvation of the sinner is here not at all in view. If it were true that the penny, which all receive alike, means salvation, then salvation would have to be worked for and earned by man as a laborer. This strikes at grace and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. No, the question of the parable is not the question of salvation.

Again, others, recognizing that it is about rewards in the kingdom of which the Lord speaks, have claimed that the teaching is that there will be no diversities or degrees of rewards in the kingdom, but all will receive alike from the hands of the Lord. This, too, is wrong, for it is in opposition to the teachings of the Scriptures. The difficulty of this parable will easily be overcome, if we take into consideration that a parable is an allegorical representation by which a principle is demonstrated or a moral is drawn for instruction. It is, therefore, not at all correct to think that everything in a parable must have a specific meaning and must be spiritually applied. As soon as we enter into the details of this parable and attempt a detailed exposition and try to make an application of these, we shall miss the true lesson, and, perhaps, in the attempt, teach exactly the opposite from what the Lord teaches. We do not think that the penny, or, as it is correctly translated, denarius, has a special spiritual meaning at all. It simply stands for something received. Men have tried to ascertain the time when the laborers were hired, what is meant by the morning, by the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour and the eleventh. Some have fixed these different hours and declare that the early morning laborers were the apostles, the early Christians, and the eleventh hour workers, the laborers living in our days. Now, if we are authorized to seek a meaning in all these terms and give it such an interpretation, then we must do so with every statement found here. According to this the early morning workers would murmur in the presence of the Lord of the vineyard, then there would be murmuring in

the day when the rewards are distributed.

We have to pass over the details and look for the great lesson which our teacher desires to bring to our hearts in this parable. We have already shown how closely the parable is connected with the events recorded at the close of the previous chapter. There one, who was rich in himself and knew not his true condition, and rich in possessions, had gone away sorrowful from the Lord; and the Lord had declared, while salvation is impossible with men, all things are possible with God. Salvation is of God. It is grace which has saved us. "For ye are saved by grace, through faith" (Eph. 2:8). That grace has brought salvation, what all is included in this we cannot follow here. But then one, a saved one, Peter, spoke and though it was self which uttered these words, the Lord gave Peter and the disciples a gracious answer. He assured them that there was a time coming when they should receive a reward and that He would not forget the service, self-denial and sacrifice of His own.

But with this declaration, so comforting to the hearts of the disciples, there is a great danger connected. The danger is that the believer may forget that he is a debtor to grace and to grace alone, that all he has, he is and he ever will be in all eternity is the result of grace. He may become occupied with his service, his sacrifice and expecting rewards, lose sight of grace and become thoroughly self-righteous. God does not want us to get our hearts away from His riches of grace in Christ Jesus. He is delighted with His children when they magnify that wonderful grace, when they cast themselves upon it; never can we make too much of grace. To keep the disciple from a spirit of self-righteousness as well as occupation with service and rewards, the Lord brings in this parable. The great principle which He teaches is, that God will give the rewards in His own sovereignty, as it seems best to Him, never out of harmony with His wonderful justice. "Should not the judge of the whole earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25) "The principle is this, that while God owns every service and loss for the sake of Christ, yet He maintains His own title to do as He will."

While we labor, our labor is not to be for the sake of reward, as one who is hired for a certain sum of money. We are to be laborers with no trace of legality about us. The servant, the laborer who has the thought before the soul to earn something by his service and sacrifice, lives but to himself, and would be only a hired servant, which the believer is not. Such a one, though he has stood the heat and burden of the day, would find the Lord acting on the principle expounded here by Himself. He will hear from Him: "Take what is thine and go. But if it is my will to give to this last even as to thee; is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs?" The Lord wants us to trust grace and trust the rewards, the recompense to Him and His own will to give as it pleases Him, and not think anything of our service. Thus the parable appears as a rebuke to Peter, who was occupied with what he had given up.

"The first shall be last;" thus the parable began, and it indicates the human failure. At the end of the parable the order is reversed, the last shall be first; the Lord, in His sovereign grace will lift up those who trusted in His grace. "Many are called, but few are chosen ones," which has nothing to do with salvation, but is in connection with rewards.

And now we are told that the Lord went up to Jerusalem, and as He directs His steps there He announces once more the fact of His coming passion, death and resurrection. "And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples with Him apart in the way, and said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death; and they will deliver Him up to the nations to mock and to scourge and to crucify, and the third day He shall rise again" (verses 17-19). And as He uttered these solemn words, His soul knew all what it meant for Him and the bitter cup He was to drink to the very last drop. Some have taught and teach that it dawned upon Him gradually and that He was not conscious of all which was before Him. But He knew everything which would happen to Him in Jerusalem, for His own Spirit had revealed these sufferings in the prophets (1 Pet. 1:11). What awe and silence must have rested upon the disciples as He acquainted them with the path He was to go! In Mark we read that they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid (Mark 10:32). In the Gospel of Luke the Holy Spirit gives additional information: "And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things which were spoken" (Luke 18:34). He alone knew the meaning of all before Him, and as the hour draweth near, for which He had come into the world, when He was to be delivered up and to die, we see Him setting His face like a flint to go to Jerusalem.

But now we hear the silence broken. It is a woman who approaches Him. "Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, doing homage and asking something of Him. And He said to her, What wilt thou? She says to Him, Speak the Word that these, my two sons, may sit, one on thy right hand and one on thy left in thy kingdom" (verses 20,

21). Self-seeking, the ambition of the flesh, is here again in evidence. Most likely the words of our Lord in answer to Peter's words in chapter 19 prompted this desire. He had spoken of those that followed Him, that, in the regeneration, they should occupy twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. This word impressed itself, no doubt, upon the mother of the sons of Zebedee, as well as upon the sons themselves, John and James. It was a custom of Oriental kings to have a person sit at their right hand and one on the left; and so the wish is uttered for places of honor in His Kingdom. The mother of Zebedee's sons here leads; from the Gospel of Mark we learn that John and James made the request. This is no discrepancy, as often called by unbelievers in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Both mother and sons came together, having both the same wish. The mother's desire and request was the desire and request of the sons. In Mark's Gospel the sons are in the foreground, and in Matthew the mother. This is seen by the fact that the Lord does not answer the mother at all. And the ten were indignant about the two brothers. The parable the Lord had just given concerning the workmen in the vineyard was not understood by them all. The request is the manifestation of self. Peter had been uncovered in the presence of the Lord, and now we find that in the beloved disciple, in John and in James, the same evil thing is present. But all brings out His own perfection and His glory; the imperfection and selfishness of His disciples reveals His perfection.

"And Jesus, answering, said, Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink the cup which I am about to drink? They say to Him, We are able; He says to them, Ye shall drink indeed my cup, and to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared by my Father" (verses 22-24). (The words "and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with," are left out, also the same words in the 23rd verse. They are an interpolation in Matthew.) How lovingly and with what patience He reproves her. There is no harshness about it, but it is all tenderness and grace. They did, indeed, know not what they asked. He asks them if they could drink the cup He was about to drink. A cup was to be drunk by Him, and this cup stands for all the agony He was about to suffer. They knew nothing of that cup He was about to drink; nothing of the suffering and the cross which was before Him. It was their own selfishness and a presumption that they answered in the affirmative. They think they are able without knowing what the cup was.

He tells them that they should indeed drink His cup. They were to be partakers of His sufferings and have fellowship with it. That this does not mean the sufferings our Lord had to undergo from the side of God is evident. He alone could suffer thus, and no human being could follow Him there. They would drink His cup, which not alone contained the suffering from God, but sufferings from men, rejection, reproach, and much else besides. In His rejection and sufferings from men they had to enter in. And to this we are also called. "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Paul speaks of the sufferings of Christ. "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Phil, 3:10).

And now we see the place the Lord Jesus Christ takes in His humiliation. He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. To say that He did not know to whom the places of honor in the kingdom belonged, or that He has no right to give these places and bestow these honors, would be dishonoring to His person. He both knew it, and had a right to place in the seats of honor whomsoever He chooses. He had humbled Himself and had come to exalt the Father, and here He shows forth His place He had taken. He declares in that perfect humiliation that it is not for Him to give these places, but for the Father. Here is a marvelous depth of precious truth. The One equal with the Father in all eternity, One with the Father, truly God in all eternity, without any beginning, came and humbled Himself, made of Himself no reputation. He came to do the will of the Father to the Glory and Praise of His name. He put Himself in the place of humiliation, under the Father, though ever Jehovah while in the earth. Raised from the dead, highly exalted, seated on the right hand of God, though absolutely and eternally one with God, the Father, He yet, as glorified Man, does the Father's will, subject to the Father. When every knee at last bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, it will be to the glory of God the Father. It is the glory of the Father which is His aim. In this light 1 Cor. 15:27, 28 are correctly understood: "For He (the Father) hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is exempted, which did put all things under Him." The Father is meant and the Son of God incarnate, as glorified Man is under Him, though as God the Son absolutely One with the Father. But still more: "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him, that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Such passages have ever been used by the subtlety of the enemy to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of His absolute Deity. So has the word in our chapter been construed to mean that the Lord is inferior to the Father.

"And the ten, having heard of it, were indignant about the two brothers" (verse 24). This is a verse which tells us much. One could easily draw a picture of the ten Jews, how they gesticulated and showed their indignation by looks and words. What kind of an indignation was it? Did perhaps Peter say, "too bad for John and James to intrude thus upon the Lord, and after He made such an announcement to disturb Him; and then the mother came also; what do they mean anyway by such a selfish desire?" did he speak thus? We think not. Most likely Peter was very much occupied with his own case, and the words, "keys of kingdom," were ringing in his ears. The pride in these two they most likely recognized, as well as the forwardness of the mother. It was, however, their own pride which moved them to indignation. And thus it is repeated over and over again. The fault-finding spirit is rarely anything less than the manifestation of the same evil. What often a brother accuses his brother of is just that what he himself does.

This indignation of the disciples brings out another gracious instruction from the Lord. Once more he teaches in perfect patience His poor erring ones. And oh! Praise to His name! He is ever the same. We are all His dull and weak disciples, and the graciousness and patience He manifests here He has manifested towards us a thousand times. And still He teaches; He bears us and treats us with such loving tenderness. Why do we not learn from Him how to deal with a weak and erring brother?

"But Jesus, having called them to Him, said, Ye know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship over them, and the great exercise authority over them. It shall not be thus amongst you, but whosoever will be great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever will be first among you, let him be your bondman; as, indeed, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (verses 25-28).

The mistake the disputing disciples had made was to think of His Kingdom, like the kingdoms of the nations. He dispels this conception; it would be the very opposite from what it is in the kingdoms of the nations. The greatest in His Kingdom are those who are servants and the bondman is the first. He Himself, the Son of Man, came to serve. Blessed words are these indeed, lowering all that is of self, dethroning pride and ambition, teaching us to let this mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus.

The closing scene of this chapter is the healing of the two blind men. The Lord is departing with His disciples from Jericho, followed by a great multitude, going up to Jerusalem to fulfil all that which was written concerning Him. The incident before us is the beginning of the end and one of the last miracles of healing recorded in this Gospel.

"And as they went out from Jericho a great multitude followed Him. And lo, two blind men, sitting by the wayside, having heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David. But the multitude rebuked them, that they might be silent. But they cried out the more, saying, Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David. And Jesus, having stopped, called them and said, What will ye that I shall do to you? They say to Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. And Jesus, moved with compassion, touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes had sight restored to them, and they followed Him" (verses 29-34).

We had before a similar miracle in this Gospel. In the ninth chapter, when Jesus departed, two blind men followed Him, and they, too, cried to Him as Son of David, and He touched and healed them (chapter 9:27-31). The miracle there preceded the sending out of the twelve to preach that the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. Here the healing of the two blind men stands at the close of the Galilean ministry and precedes His triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

It has significance in different directions. These two men were witnesses to Him. They cried to Him as Lord and Son of David. When in Caesarea-Philippi He had asked His disciples what men say of Him. The answer showed then that His own knew Him not. None said that He is the Son of David, His messianic title. Before a Gentile, the Canaanitish woman, had called to Him as Lord, Son of David, and He had not answered till she had dropped "Son of David." There was no confession from the side of the multitudes of Him as Son of David, no appeal to Him as such. This fully shows the condition of the people, the great multitude who had seen Him, beheld His miracles and heard His words. They did not believe on Him as the promised One, the Son of David, the King and Redeemer of Israel. Quite true we read in the next chapter that the multitudes who went before Him and who followed cried, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" But this never came from the heart. It was the temporary enthusiasm of a great multitude of excitable Jews. Soon their cry changes and they say: "This is Jesus the prophet, who is from Nazareth of Galilee!"

While then the great mass of people presses around Him, following Him from Jericho, there comes the voice of the two blind men, moved, no doubt, by the Holy Spirit, and they confess Him as Son of David. Had they cried to Him as Jesus of Nazareth or simply as "Lord" their witness would have not fitted into the scene at all. But as Son of David and Heir to the Throne of David, He was to be presented to Jerusalem, and ere this takes place He has the witness of two witnesses that He is the Son of David. According to the law the testimony of two witnesses was necessary. The Holy Spirit here supplies these in the cry of the two blind men at the wayside. This is the reason why two blind men are mentioned exclusively in the first Gospel, the Jewish Gospel, while Luke and Mark speak of only the one. And so while the Lord is on His way to Jerusalem and no voice from the multitude is heard declaring Him and confessing Him as Son of David, and therefore as the King, a confession from these two sitting in darkness is heard.

That these men had heard of Him is evident, that their chief desire was to be healed is equally certain; and they had faith in Him, that He could do it, but it was the Holy Spirit who put that confession and cry in their hearts and lips: "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David." And the multitude rebuked them that they might be silent. Surely this is proof enough of the unbelief and condition of this great company of people following Him. Why should they have rebuked these men, commanding them to be silent, if they had shared the faith of these two? The confession of this Jesus as "Son of David" was obnoxious to the multitude. But they could not be silenced. The Holy Spirit had moved them, and as they are rebuked they cry the more with their solemn witness, "Son of David."

And full of compassion He touched them, and their sight was restored. We have learned before the typical meaning of healing by touch in this Gospel. Whenever the Lord heals by touch it has reference, dispensationally, to His personal presence on the earth and His merciful dealing with Israel. When He heals by His Word, absent in person, as it is in the case of the Centurian's servant, and the Canaanitish woman, or if He is touched in faith, it refers to the time when He is absent from the earth, and Gentiles approaching Him in faith are healed by Him.

Now here we have a dispensational foreshadowing, the importance of which should not be overlooked. These two blind men sitting at the wayside, groping in the dark, crying to the Son of David for deliverance, are types of the poor and feeble remnant of Israel in the end of this age, after the testimony of the church for Christ the Son of God by resurrection from the dead, has been finished and the church is no longer upon this scene. That remnant of Israel will cry to Him as Son of David and call upon Him for deliverance. The entrance of Jerusalem, which follows in the next chapter, foreshadows also that coming of the Son of David to Jerusalem, when He comes as King crowned with honor and glory. And as the two blind ones called upon Him when He was on the way to Jerusalem, and He heard and delivered them, so will that remnant of His earthly people seek Him, and in that darkness which precedes His return to Jerusalem cry to the Son of David, without seeing Him in person, though they believe on Him, that He is the promised One. And as the cry of the blind men was the work of the Holy Spirit, so will the seeking, the longing, the prayer of that future remnant be produced by the Spirit of God.

The multitudes which rebuked the two at the wayside and tried to silence them foreshadows that part of the people of Israel, which in that great tribulation remains in unbelief and which hates their own brethren, who are expecting the Coming of the Messiah and cry to him for deliverance. In Isaiah 66 we read of this: "Hear the Word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His Word. Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let Jehovah be glorified, and let us see your joy! But they shall be ashamed" (Isa. 66:5). Those in Israel, who at the end time tremble at His Word are the godly remnant. They are hated by their own brethren and are cast out. They also mock at them and their expectation; but they shall be ashamed.

The two blind men were healed and followed Him. Their eyes were suddenly opened. So shall the remnant behold Him, and as, no doubt, these two were witnesses of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and shouted out the Praise and Glory of His name, so will the delivered remnant of Israel sing forth His Praises.

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CHAPTER XXI

We are now reaching the beginning of the end. The King with His disciples draws near to Jerusalem to hold his triumphant royal entry into the city, and to be presented as King to the same. What scenes have passed before our eyes in the study of

the Gospel. We have followed the mighty events connected with the manifestation of the King in the midst of His people, the miracles of messianic power, which demonstrated before the eyes of Israel that He is Jehovah. We learned how the kingdom was preached and rejected; how His own to whom He came received Him not. In all these events and miracles the most complete dispensational facts were seen foreshadowed, while we learned the same facts from the Words and parables of the King. We are in the last stage now, one intensely interesting, of great importance and solemn meaning. May He Himself through His Spirit open this Gospel still more to our understanding and give us much light and great blessing through the meditation on His Word.

His entry into Jerusalem, which is before us first of all, was witnessed by immense multitudes of people, as we shall learn from the text. Criticism has given a strange motive for the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem. It has been said that He was carried away by enthusiasm and expected that the people would now surely receive Him as the Messiah-King; while other critics explained His entry to the city as a kind of a concession to the messianic expectations of His disciples. How dishonoring to Him are all such foolish speculation. The simple fact is that He is the King and as such He had to come to Jerusalem and fulfill that which had been predicted by Zechariah, the prophet.

"And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, at the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go into the village over against you, and immediately ye will find an ass tied, and a colt with it; loose them and lead them to me. And if anyone say anything to you, ye shall say, The Lord has need of them, and straightway he will send them. But all this came to pass, that that might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, Say to the daughters of Zion, Behold thy King cometh to Thee, meek and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Verses 1-5)

"Bethphage" means "house of unripe figs," surely significant if we consider the typical meaning of the fig tree, and the cursing of the fig tree, which is recorded in the chapter. From this place He sends forth His two disciples to bring the colt and the ass to Him. This act of the Lord flashes forth once more His Glory and that the King-Messiah is Jehovah. He knew that yonder was an ass tied with a colt as He knew the fish and the piece of silver in the sea, and as He commanded the fish with the stater to go to Peter's hook so here He demands the use of the ass and colt; He has a right to them for He is the Creator and He can say as He has said: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine" (Ps. 50:10, 11). In Mark's Gospel we read, "And they found the colt bound to the door without at the crossway and they loose him. And some of those standing there said to them, What are you doing loosing the colt? And they said to them as Jesus had commanded them. And they let them do it" (Mark 11:4-7). No doubt the majestic "The Lord has need of them" made such a deep impression upon the hearts of these men who either owned the colt or had charge of it, that they were ready at once to let them go. It was His Word which demanded obedience and which was obeyed.

But the whole scene had been predicted in the Old Testament and here in the Gospel of the King this prophecy is put into the foreground. The quotation refers us to Zechariah 9. We shall quote the whole prophecy:

"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion, Shout aloud daughter of Jerusalem, Behold thy King cometh to thee, Just and having salvation, Meek and riding upon an ass, Even upon a colt, the she-ass's foal."

This prophecy stands in contrast to the Grecian conqueror, mentioned in the first part of the ninth chapter of Zechariah. The Jews acknowledged that the words are a messianic prophecy. One of the leading Jewish commentators (Solomon Ben Jarchi commonly known as Rashi.) says, "It is impossible to interpret it of any other than King Messiah."

The Jews have also an interesting legend, though foolish, which claims that the ass upon which King Messiah rides is the same which Abraham saddled when he went on the way to offer up Isaac and that is the same animal which Moses used. This shows how firmly the Jews believe in Zechariah (9:9-10) as a messianic prediction. But we noticed that only part of the original prophecy is quoted in Matthew. The Holy Spirit leaves out "Just and having salvation." In these omissions the critics as well as other unbelievers in the inspiration of the Bible scent discrepancies and errors. But recently a professor made the statement that the writers of the New Testament had a limited and imperfect knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures and he tried to prove his assertion by the quotations found in the New Testament. But Matthew, Mark, John, Peter or Paul did not write themselves, but it is the Holy Spirit who used them as an instrument. It is not Matthew or Paul quoting the Old Testament, but the same Spirit of God who gave the Old Testament Scriptures through the prophets,

quotes in the New His own utterances. And while these critics see nothing but imperfection in these quotations the true believer sees nothing but perfection in them and finds here a strong argument for verbal inspiration. It is so in the passage before us. Man would have quoted every word from Zechariah's prophecy, but the Spirit of God leaves out "just and having salvation" because this was not to come to Jerusalem then, for Jerusalem would not have the King. The King is coming again to Jerusalem and then when He comes riding the white horse (Rev. 19) all that which is not yet fulfilled in Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled. Then it shall be as we read in the context:

"And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."

The Talmudists have labored to overcome the difficulty which they have concerning the coming of the Messiah, when they consider (Daniel 7:13) that He comes in the clouds of Heaven, and in Zechariah that He comes riding upon an ass. "If the Israelites are good then He shall come in the clouds of heaven, but if not good, then riding upon an ass." (Sanhedrin Tract) We return to the account before us.

"But the disciples having gone and done as Jesus had ordered them, brought the ass and the colt and put their garments upon them and He sat on them. But a very great multitude strewed their own garments on the way, and others kept cutting down branches from the trees and strewing them on the way. And the multitudes who went before Him, and who followed cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed be He, who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest. And so He entered into Jerusalem, the whole city was moved saying, Who is this? And the multitudes said, This is the Prophet, who is from Nazareth of Galilee."

What a sight this must have been to behold! How eager the disciples were to act their parts. No doubt enthusiastic Peter was here in the lead, only too ready to put His Lord into the place of authority. The multitude was very great. Large numbers had followed Him from Jericho, while equally large numbers came forth from the City. Large numbers of pilgrims had come to Jerusalem for the feast, among them many, no doubt, who had seen Jesus and had witnessed His mighty miracles in Galilee. The news of the resurrection of Lazarus, which is not reported in our Gospel, because it belongs properly only in the fourth Gospel record, had spread throughout Jerusalem and when the news reached there that He was coming near the city, ready to hold his entry, thousands went forth to meet Him. The garments were spread in the way; it was an Oriental custom to put before the feet of kings costly rugs and the multitudes followed this custom by putting their garments down. What a sight it must have been -- the thousands coming to meet Him with Palm branches in their hands, waving them over their heads, while the multitudes which followed did the same. And then they broke out in the glad shouts, quoting partly from the 118th Psalm "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest." Hosanna means "save now." The phrase "Hosanna" is used by the Jews at the feast of tabernacles and the waving of the palms reminds one also of that feast, which has such a prophetic significance. It will be kept throughout the Millennium and the nations will go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord of hosts. According to Jewish tradition the 118th Psalm was also chanted when the people came forth from Jerusalem to meet the pilgrims. And this foreshadows also His second coming. But how different the scene will be then. He comes forth out of the opened heavens, riding upon a white horse; Jerusalem will be besieged and in great distress; a great multitude will accompany Him from above, His many sons, the Saints as well as angels; the remnant of Israel will cry out "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

When that wonderful entry took place, the King riding upon the colt, and the whole city was moved as by a mighty earthquake, His enemies declared amongst themselves, "Behold, the world is gone after Him" (John 12:10). What a triumph it was! The King entering Jerusalem. And in all He is undisturbed. Others might have been swept away by this enthusiasm; but He is calm in all His kingly majesty. Luke's gospel tells us that He wept. "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it." And what kind of weeping was this? He wept at the grave of Lazarus and that was a still, a silent weeping. But before Jerusalem He broke out in loud and deep lamentations. This is clearly proven by the different words used in the original.

The King knew what was soon to be, and on yonder hill He saw looming up the cross. True, they were crying, "Son of David, save now!" But the question, "Who is this?" is answered in the terms of rejection. Instead of "the King, Jehovah-Jesus, the Messiah," the multitude answers "Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

The first errand of the King in His city is the temple. "And Jesus entered into the temple of God, and cast out all that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those that sold the doves. And He says to them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers" (verses 12-13). This is the second time that the Lord acted in cleansing the temple. The first is recorded in the Gospel of John 2:13, 17, and it took place at the beginning of His ministry. There it is the zeal for God's house, but here He acts in all His Kingly authority. How great and awful must have been the defilement of God's temple in those days. Money changers were undoubtedly in the foreground, for money played then in the days of the Jewish apostasy as important a role as it does in the apostasy we witness about us. "We can picture to ourselves the scene around the table of an eastern money changer -- the weighing of the coins, deductions for loss of weight, arguing, disputing, bargaining, and we realize the terrible truthfulness of our Lord's charge that they had made the Father's house a mart and a place of traffic." (Edersheim: Life of Christ, Vol. I., 369.) And besides the money changers were those who bought and sold. All that which was required for the meat and drink offering was for sale by the Temple authorities. With the sale much speculation was connected; covetousness, as Jewish talmudical writings prove, was the ruling passion in this blasphemous traffic. And the most awful fact was that the priesthood, especially the High-priestly family earned riches from it. The Bazaars and the Temple markets were controlled and owned by the sons of Annas.

Into this scene of desecration He enters. No whip of cords is in His hands; the King does not need it. The tables are turned over in wild confusion; the coins roll over the pavement, while the sacrificial animals and birds are driven out, perhaps in a wild stampede, followed by their owners and the officials of the temple. And what He uses is His own Word. "It is written my house shall be called an house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of robbers." It was His house, as well as His Father's. Of old in the first house His own Glory appeared and dwelt there. The words "mine house shall be called an house of prayer" are found in Isaiah 56:7. "For all people" which is in Isaiah, the Lord does not quote. That temple was not meant to be a house "for all people;" the temple in Is. 56:7 is the millennial temple, and that future temple will be the house to which the nations of the earth will come during the coming age, to worship the Lord of Hosts. And so the Lord came suddenly to His temple to cleanse it (Mal. 3:1-3). But this again is only a shadow of another coming and the final fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the third chapter of Malachi. Another temple will stand in Jerusalem during the great tribulation and there will be even greater defilement. In that temple one will sit who is clearly pictured in the Word. "That man of sin, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing Himself that He is God" (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). Him the Lord will destroy with the brightness of His coming.

But a more refreshing scene follows. The temple is cleansed. The noise and confusion is at an end. Nothing is said of the return of these evil occupants. But instead of them, there came the blind and the lame to Him in the temple and He healed them. The vacancy was filled by the crowd of poor, stricken, suffering ones, who were delivered of their pains and diseases. Blessed and glorious foreshadowing of what will be when He comes again and when by His life-giving, healing touch, He will cure "all diseases" and make perfectly whole. And still another thing happens. "And when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonders which He wrought, and the children crying in the temple and saying 'Hosanna to the Son of David' they were indignant, and said to Him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus says to them, Yes; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Verses 15, 16.) The children sang their Hosanna to Him, the Son of David, and our Lord refers the murmuring, accusing chief priests and scribes to the eighth Psalm. The meaning of that Psalm is clearly established by the second chapter of Hebrews. It is Jesus, the Son of Man, who is here seen in His dominion over the earth. When at last He has all things under His feet, there will be a silencing of the enemy by perfect praise. The praise of the children foreshadows the praise He will receive when He comes again.

Beautifully Edersheim in his excellent work describes this scene. "It was truly spring time in that temple, and the boys had gathered about their fathers and looked from their faces of wrapt wonderment and enthusiasm to the Godlike face of the Christ, and then on those healed sufferers, took up the echoes of the welcome at His entrance into Jerusalem -- in their simplicity and understanding applying them better, as they burst into, Hosanna to the Son of David! It rang through the courts and porches of the temple, this children's Hosanna. They heard it, whom the wonders He had spoken and done, had only filled with indignation. Once more in their impotent anger, they sought, as the Pharisees had done, by a hypocritical appeal to His reverence for God, not only to mislead, and so to use His very love of the truth against the truth, but to betray Him into silencing those children's voices."

No answer comes from the lips of those hypocrites to the Word of God, the Sword, He used once more. The very next act

of His is one of deep solemnity. "And leaving them He went forth out of the City to Bethany, and there He passed the night" (verse 17). There they stood in the darkening porches of the temple, the pictures of hate and despair. The night came on rapidly for them. They knew Him and had rejected Him and now He leaves them.

"But early in the morning, as He came back into the City, He hungered. And seeing a fig tree in the way, He came to it and found on it nothing but leaves only. And He says to it, Let there be never more fruit of thee forever. And the fig tree was immediately dried up" (verses 18, 19). Early in the morning the blessed One is up to return to the City. What a story the two words tell us "He hungered." The King was hungry. He who was rich, had indeed become poor. There by the wayside is a fig tree bearing many leaves; there He looked for some of the old fruit, or perhaps some of the unripe figs. He finds nothing and a curse follows, which withers the tree. It is well known that the fig tree is the type of Israel. The cursing of the fig tree stands for the national rejection of the people. Israel yielded no fruit, therefore the barren tree was cut off and cast into the fire, while the root remains (Luke 13).

"And when the disciples saw it, they wondered, saying, How immediately is the fig tree dried up! And Jesus answering said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith and do not doubt not only shall ye do what is done to the fig tree, but even, if ye should say to this mountain, Be thou taken away and be cast into the sea, it shall come to pass. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (verses 20-22).

They wondered at the power which made the fig tree wither, and He calls their attention that the power of God is ready to answer their faith. The connection is obvious. Israel had no faith in God, hence their bareness. If they have faith, it shall be far different; the power of God is then at their disposal. The mountain is the type of an obstacle. Every obstacle can be and will be removed out of the way in answer to prayer. That there is a reference to Israel in these words is no doubt true. The nation was a mountain and by its disobedience and rejection of the Lord, the nation was an obstacle in the path of the Gospel. But on account of faith this mountain was indeed cast into the sea, the type of the nations. Precious to faith has ever been and ever will be the Word, the author and finisher of the faith speaks here. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Let us not limit them, nor say as some have said, it is not for us. They are for the children of God and there is no limit to them. All things -- whatsoever; surely there is no limit here; and then the three steps -- asking in prayer, believing and receiving. He, the King, who has all power spake these words; and what a meaning they should have for us! May we cast ourselves upon them in childlike faith.

Again we see our Lord in the temple. He is teaching the people. Perhaps it was a great multitude which had gathered. Soon the enemies came also to oppose Him. These men, the rulers of the people, are now gathering force and getting ready for the great final rejection of the King. But ere this comes He silences all their objections and accusations and shows them in their evil and hateful character.

"And when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, saying, By what authority doest Thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" (Verse 23) What troubled them most was no doubt the scene of the preceding day, the cleansing of the temple. He is face to face with the mighty ecclesiastical rulers of the people, those who constitute the Sanhedrin. How will He deal with them? How will He answer their question? Divine wisdom is manifested in the way He deals with them. It is so in the chapters which follow, in these conflicts with the men who were so soon to be His accusers, to deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles. "And Jesus answering said to them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I also will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John, whence was it? of heaven? or of men?" (Verses 24, 25) Here was the question for them to answer. And in this way He not only silenced them but He also answered the question. John the Baptist to whom He appealed had borne witness of Him. John himself, the forerunner of the Christ to whom He so faithfully pointed, was believed to have been a prophet. If they said, Yes, the Baptism of John was of heaven, as they should have said, they would have both endorsed John's statement concerning Jesus and this would have condemned them, their unbelief and satanic hatred. They dared not to say that John's Baptism was not of heaven. What could they do? There they stand with their dark faces, talking over this serious matter. "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, If we should say, Of heaven, He will say to us, Why then have ye not believed him? But if we should say, Of men, we fear the people, for all hold John for a prophet. And answering Jesus they said, We do not know" (verses 25, 26). Miserable, self-condemned, dishonest men they were! Alas! how much of the same spirit and worse is found today among the self-appointed ecclesiastical rulers of the people, who reject the Christ of God. The Lord refuses to discuss with them this question. "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things." The question they had asked was answered. He is the King, the

Christ, the Son of God and as such He was about His Father's business and that was His authority for cleansing the temple, His Father's house and His own.

And now a parable. "A man had two children, and coming to the first he said, Child, go today, work in my vineyard. And He answering said, I will not; but afterwards repenting Himself He went. And coming to the second he said likewise; and he answering said, I go, sir, and went not. Which of the two did the will of the father? They say to Him, the first. Jesus says to them, Verily I say unto you that the tax gatherers and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the tax gatherers and harlots believed Him; but ye when ye saw it repented not yourselves afterwards to believe him" (verses 28-32).

The parable needs but little comment. They despised the tax gatherers and harlots, but the Lord proves that these polished, cultured, educated, religious priests and elders were far worse, far more obnoxious. The tax gatherers and harlots are meant by the son who said he would not go and repented and went. The second who said, I go, and does not go, nor does he repent, is the proud religious Pharisee, the high priests and elders. Thus the righteous Judge lays them bare with His mighty sword. Self-righteous they repented not. Convicted and condemned the Sanhedrin stands in the presence of the King.

The chief priests and elders have no answer to the parable the Lord had spoken, and now after, perhaps, a brief silence He gives them a second parable. This one is a parable which reviews the history of their nation and predicts the soon coming calamity. Again He makes His enemies to bear witness themselves, and we shall learn later that these men understood of what the King spake.

"Hear another parable. There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and put a hedge round it, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went abroad. But when the time of the fruit came nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did to them likewise. And afterwards he sent to them his son, saying, They will respect my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and lay hold of his inheritance. And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. When, therefore, the Lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to these husbandmen?" (Verses 33-40.) When the Lord spoke of the vineyard, with the hedge and the winepress, the tower and the husbandmen, as well as of the fruit the vineyard was to yield, they must have recognized at once that this referred to Israel. He meant by it the nation to whom He had come to offer the Kingdom. Israel, a vineyard, is an Old Testament picture. The King, no doubt, had Isaiah's prophecy in mind, when He uttered this parable. It is founded upon Isaiah, chapter 5:1-7. Jeremiah 2:21; Psalm 80:8, and other passages speak of the same fact. The Lord through His Spirit had spoken all these words by the Prophets and now He Himself had come to flash the truth of God's mercy to Israel, their shameful past and the still greater, impending sin before the hearts of these national leaders. The vineyard so well kept and provided for had not yielded fruit. The servants who came to the vineyard are the prophets whom God sent, and they had rejected and maltreated them. At last the Son came, sent by the Father. This is the full dealing of God with Israel. Prophet after prophet came and spake in Jehovah's name and then God sent forth His Son. What a moment it must have been when the Lord Jesus Christ uttered these words. The Son the Father had sent stood in their midst and they could not but realize that He is the Son. What will they do with the Son? Will they receive His message? Will they bow to His authority? No. He saith that they took the heir, "cast him out of the vineyard and slew him." Awful prediction of the coming events. And He knew all what it meant for Himself to be taken outside and be slain there. The climax of sin is here revealed. But let us not pass by the significant word, "let us kill him and lay hold of his inheritance." Even so by the death of the Son of God we receive, believing on Him, His inheritance.

The question had been asked by the King, "what will the Lord do to those husbandmen?" It is for them to answer and their answer must be their own verdict. Will they dare and give Him an answer? So blinded were they that they did indeed. "They said unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who will render to him the fruits in their season." Well said! And what they had spoken to their own condemnation came upon these wicked husbandmen.

And now the Lord continues quoting from the Book of Psalms: "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing and it is

marvellous in our eyes" (verse 42). The quotation is from Psalm 118. This psalm is much used in the ritual of Judaism. The rejected stone is the Messiah, and in His rejection He becomes the head of the corner. The same truth is witnessed to by the Holy Spirit in Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20, and 1 Pet. 2:7. The leaders of the people are the builders. What foreshadowings of events to come!

But the Lord now pronounces His verdict upon them. He had heard the words spoken by His enemies in their self-condemnation; He speaks next and tells them that their judgment was right. "Wherefore I say unto you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (verse 43).

They had refused not alone that kingdom but the King; the Son they would soon cast out and therefore the Kingdom was to be taken from them. These men who stood there, the generation which had share and part in the rejection of the Kingdom and the King, will never see the Kingdom. It is a sad blindness when men can teach in these days a restitutionism which includes these scribes, elders and chief priests, that they are to be raised from the dead at the time of the coming of the Lord and receive a share in the Kingdom. The Word of the Lord is emphatic and absolute; there is no hope for them. The nation to whom the Lord promises the Kingdom is not the Church. The Church is called the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the Habitation of God by the Spirit, the Lamb's Wife, but never a nation. The nation is Israel still, but that believing remnant of the nation, living when the Lord comes. He adds another word in connection with speaking of Himself as the Stone, that Old Testament type of King Messiah. "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (verse 44). This is a very significant utterance. The Lord in these few words predicts the coming judgment of the Jews and the Gentiles. The one sentence has been carried out and the other is still to be executed. The Jews have fallen on this stone and they have been broken. How it has become true! The stone is yet to fall and strike the world-powers, the Gentiles, and grind them to powder. Our space does not permit to follow this thought, but we advise our readers to turn in their Bibles to Daniel 2 and read Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the divinely given interpretation. The stone cut out without hands, falling out of heaven, smiting the great image at its feet, is the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Coming. The Lord refers to this here. As truly as He broke the Jews who fell on Him, so will He pulverize Gentile world power and dominion, when He is revealed from heaven. The nations are ripe for their judgment.

"And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they held Him for a prophet."

Thus ends this remarkable chapter. They knew Him; they knew what He meant. They wanted to take Him then, so great was their hatred, yet they were cowards fearing men, not God. The people held Him for a prophet only and not for the Messiah.

CHAPTER XXII

A third parable follows immediately. They would have laid their hands upon Him, after that searching second parable had been uttered by the Lord, but His hour was not yet. Once more He flashes forth His truth and reveals events to come.

"And Jesus answering spoke to them again in parables, and said, The Kingdom of the heavens has become like a king, who made a wedding feast for his son, and sent his bondmen to call the persons invited to the wedding feast, and they would not come. Again he sent other bondmen, saying, Say to the persons invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatted beasts are killed, and all things are ready; come to the wedding feast. But they made light of it, and went, one to his own land, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laying hold of his bondmen, ill-treated and slew them. And when the King heard of it he was wroth, and having sent his forces, destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he says to his bondmen, The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy; go therefore into the thoroughfares of the highways, and as many as ye shall find invite to the wedding feast. And those bondmen went out into the highways and brought together all as many as they found, both evil and good; and the wedding feast was furnished with guests. And the King having gone in to see the guests, beheld there a man not clothed with a wedding garment. And he says to him, Friend, how camest thou in here not having a wedding garment? But he was speechless. Then said the King to the servants, Bind him feet and hands and take him away, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called ones, but few chosen ones" (verses 1-14).

The dispensational character of this parable is very marked. It is ushered in with the familiar words found alone in this Gospel. "The Kingdom of the heavens is like," or as it ought to be, "has become like." No doubt it is the same parable as in Luke, chapter 14:16-24; only here the Holy Spirit makes prominent the dispensational features, which are not mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, because they do not belong there. The marriage feast which the King makes for his son and to which he invites guests typifies the gracious offer of God to give joy, comfort and blessings to those whom he wishes to partake of it. It is for the Son, in honor of the Son, that the feast is made. Of the Bride, who of course belongs also to the marriage feast, nothing is said. This parable foreshadows a great deal more than the other two parables in the previous chapter. It goes beyond the cross, for the offer is made not only to Israel but also to the Gentiles. The Kingdom was offered to the nation; had the Jews repented, there would have been a marriage feast for them, a feast of fat things, as promised by the prophets. God's mercy would have been manifested upon them. The invitation contained in the third verse was given in the preaching of the Kingdom before the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Between the third and fourth verses these great events, as well as the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be placed. The preaching of the Kingdom with its gracious blessings stopped, as we learned in the study of this Gospel, with the twelfth chapter. In the thirteenth chapter the Lord teaches the mysteries of the Kingdom, that which takes place during this present dispensation. Now, in the fourth verse we read of a second invitation. When was this second invitation given to the invited guests, that is to Israel? Not before the Cross, but immediately after, with the Holy Spirit come down from Heaven. These servants were to tell them which were bidden, that all things are ready. The work of redemption accomplished, God in His infinite mercy gives another call and now He can say that indeed all is ready, even for the people who had rejected the Son of His love and had crucified Him. The opening chapters of the Book of Acts give us the history of this invitation. There we find the record of the second call to Israel.

The preaching of the Kingdom is resumed for a brief period and with this preaching is the promise of forgiveness of sins and the times of refreshing and restitution. The invitation, which went forth after the Lord had taken His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is clearly stated by Peter in the third chapter of Acts. "Repent, therefore, and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive till the times of restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began" (Acts 3:19-21).

No Gentile heard this message, nor was it meant for a Gentile; it was exclusively addressed to Jerusalem. It is a mistake to teach otherwise. The times of restoration or restitution of all things, refer us to that which is promised to Israel when converted, with the Kingdom restored. To use this passage, as it is done so often, as an argument for that wicked doctrine, the restitution of all things, including the unsaved, is fundamentally wrong. Most of the soul-destroying errors taught in these last days spring from a wrong division of the Word of Truth. If this new invitation had been accepted by the Jews, then the Lord would have returned and the restoration of all things, spoken by the prophets and promised to His earthly people, would have come to pass. But the call was not heeded; the restoration of all things, promised to Israel, has been postponed.

Of this refusal to accept this gracious invitation to come to the marriage feast we read in this parable in the fifth and sixth verses. They made light of it, they ignored the offer and occupied themselves with earthly things, such as merchandise. They did the same, what Judah had done after he had with his brethren sold Joseph, he turned a merchant (Gen. 38). But simple rejection of the gracious offer is not all, "the rest (the leaders of the people) laying hold of his bondmen, ill-treated and slew them." The Book of Acts show how literally these words of the Lord were fulfilled. The climax was the stoning of Stephen.

And after this rejected second offer to the bidden guests, the Jews, comes the punishment sent upon them by God. Their city is destroyed, burned by fire, and these evil men, who are now called murderers, suffer the judgment as well. The Roman army came against Jerusalem, the city is burned; that awful judgment the Lord had predicted when He beheld the city, fell upon Jerusalem and the nation was dispersed. Again we say, what a literal fulfilment! This ends God's dealing with Israel as a nation for the present age. He will deal with them again ere long; but nationally they are set aside during this age, which, however, does not mean that the individual Jew could not hear and accept the offer of Grace.

Now follows something new. It corresponds to that of which we read in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, "the sower went out to sow." It is now outside of Israel nationally that the Grace of God is offered and the invitation to the wedding feast is given. The servants go out into the highways and give the invitation and bring together all as many as

they found, both evil and good, so that the wedding feast was furnished.

It is clear that this going forth of the servants stands for the Gospel call going out to the Gentiles. "By their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles" as the Holy Spirit later testifies through Paul, is taught by the Lord Himself in this parable.

Something follows, which is often misapplied. All the confusion about the wedding garment springs from the wrong conception of the parable, in giving it a church application and putting the scene into Heaven. However, the church is here not at all in view. It is, as in Matthew 13, the Kingdom of the heavens, the professing sphere of Christendom. The Lord shows that this sphere where His Name is professed and His gracious Gospel invitation is heard, is in a mixed condition. It is composed of professors and possessors. The call goes forth, many hear and follow the call, but not all believe with the heart unto salvation. The man without the wedding garment is the representative of this class and a large class it is. This is evident from the words with which our Lord closes the parable, "For many are called, but few chosen." The many which are called are all those who heard the call and made an outward profession, without having accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. The wedding garment is the same as the "best robe" which by the Father was put upon the prodigal. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the wedding garment and all who are mere professors of Christ, without having put on the Lord Jesus Christ, will share the fate of this man in the parable. They will be cast into the outer darkness. Awful fate for every one who has not Christ to cover him in the presence of a holy and righteous God. However man may cover himself, however moral and cultured he may be, or religious and philanthropic, if he has not put on Christ he is naked and his place will be where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth forever. We only wish to add that the scene of viewing the guests must not be put in heaven. None but those who are Christ's, saved and in possession of eternal life, will be in heaven, and none of those can nor ever will be cast out. It refers to the same time as Matthew 13:40-43. Nor does the Lord teach the last things here, how judgment is to take place, where and in what order. In a general way He teaches this as a warning that though His invitation goes forth and many hear, yet not all will be chosen and that simply because they refuse to accept the gift of God -- the wedding garment, which alone fits us to be in the presence of the King.

The wonderful parable had been uttered; the fearful doom of Jerusalem and its evil leaders predicted; once more the Pharisees are silent in the presence of the King. Their hearts and moral condition had been uncovered, but determined to refuse the light which shone upon them, their darkness became greater than before. We see them withdrawing from His presence. They had nothing to say to Him; no answer to give; no confession to make. Led by their evil hearts, under the control of Satan they turned their backs upon the Lord. Light refused becomes darkness. "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." This is a solemn word, especially in our day. Light received, truth revealed and not acted upon and followed, results in darkness in our days.

We see now the Pharisees in desperate council against the Lord. "Then went the Pharisees and held council how they might ensnare Him in speaking" (verse 15). This was their only weapon now. They tried to find a way to ensnare Him, and having defeated Him, they intended to publish their victory abroad and find cause to accuse Him and reject Him. The second half of this chapter is occupied with the record of these attempts. The three great factions, Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees combine in this. Ritualists, Worldlings and Rationalists make common cause to defeat the Lord. Though so essentially different, they unite in this one thing, the rejection of the Lord. It is not better in our day. First came the Pharisees and sent their disciples with the Herodians to Him. After He had answered their very subtle question the Sadducees appeared; they also have to return completely silenced. Then comes a great lawyer of the Pharisees and he tempts and once more the Lord wins the victory. Three times the Devil tempted the Lord and three times the Lord is tempted by the leaders of the people. No doubt the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees were but the instruments of that evil being. Then the Lord turns questioner. He only needs to put one question. They cannot answer Him. Not a word could they say nor did any one dare from that day to ask Him another question. After this the King takes the place of the Judge and pronounces judgment upon the corrupt ecclesiastical leaders.

But let us look briefly at the account of the temptings. "And they sent out to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one, for Thou regardest not men's persons; tell us therefore what Thou thinkest: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said, Why tempt ye me, hypocrites? Show me the money of the tribute. And they presented unto Him a denarius. And He says to them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say to Him, Caesar's. Then He says to them: Pay then what is Caesar's to Caesar and what is God's to God. And when they heard Him they wondered and left Him and went away" (verses 16-22).

With what cunning and flattery they had approached Him. For once they spoke the truth when they had declared, "Thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth." But He knew them, He read their thoughts and sinister purpose.

The temptation was a very subtle one. The Pharisees had no doubt planned it all amongst themselves and had brought the Herodians along as witnesses to take down His answer. The Herodians were mean, low Jews, who favored the political rule and Roman authority and that, no doubt, for selfish reasons. Had the Lord answered the question in the negative and had He forbidden to give tribute to Caesar, these Herodians with the Pharisees (whom the Herodians must have hated) would certainly have accused the Lord as being a conspirator against the Roman government. Had the Lord answered the question in the affirmative and demanded that Caesar should receive tribute, the Pharisees would have claimed that He could not be the Messiah of Israel, inasmuch as He taught subjection under a Gentile King. "There was a strong party in the land, with which, not only politically but religiously, many of the noblest spirits would sympathize, which maintained, that to pay the tribute money to Caesar was virtually to own his royal authority, and so to disown that of Jehovah, who alone was Israel's King. They argued that all the miseries of the land and the people were due to this national unfaithfulness." (Edersheim.)

To the Pharisees it must have seemed as if for the Lord there could be no escape. Their astonishment when He answered the question, in His heavenly wisdom, shows that they had not anticipated any defeat at all.

They had to show Him the tribute money and on it appeared the image and superscription of Caesar. They had to make the declaration whose image it was. And in His answer He tells them plainly that not only should that be given to Caesar which is Caesar's, but unto God that which is God's. How was it that the people had to give at all tribute to Caesar? Did God mean that His people should be under Gentile rule and power? What had put them there? If they had given to God that which is God's they would never have had to pay tribute to Caesar. Now that they had put themselves by their sin and apostasy in that condition they were to render that to Caesar which belongs to him and to God what is His. This surely was a divine answer such as only the Lord Himself could give. They could give no answer. They wondered and went away.

The Sadducees appear next upon the scene. These deniers of the resurrection come with a temptation of their own. "On the same day there came unto Him Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, and they asked Him saying, Teacher, Moses said, if a man die, not having children, that his brother should marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers, and the first having married died, and not having seed left his wife to his brother. In like manner also the second and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection therefore of which of the seven shall she be wife, for all had her?"

This attempt is as blunt as the other was subtle. The Sadducees denied both the resurrection and the existence of angels; it was not at all believed by them what they had asked. There was also a sneer at the Pharisees in their words. The question is based on the divine law as given through Moses in the book of Deuteronomy (chapter 25:5, etc.). However, the law in this respect was far from being practiced in those days, and the interpreters of this law had put all kinds of limitations upon it. There may, of course, be a case possible like the one recited by the Sadducees, but it is unlikely that it was a real case they laid before Him; it was no doubt gotten up for the occasion. Ignorance, unbelief and sarcasm prompted this question. And what did He answer? He lays bare both their ignorance of the Scripture and the power of God. "And Jesus answering said to them, Ye err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (verse 29). They did not believe in the Scriptures as the God breathed Word; they were the "Higher Critics" of their day. But the Lord does not try to prove to them the validity of the Scriptures, but tells them that they are ignorant. Then He continues, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven." In a few words the Lord affirms the truth of resurrection, the existence of angels, which they denied, and shows that their carnal imaginations were but the result of their carnal hearts. The body of humiliation will not be continued in resurrection and earthly relations such as marrying and giving in marriage will cease there. The Lord of course does not teach about resurrection itself in this passage. His purpose is to answer the Sadducees with their foolish question. What He had stated about the state of resurrection was generally believed by the Jews living at that time. The rabbis declared, as learned from talmudical literature, "that in the world to come there would be neither eating nor drinking, fruitfulness nor increase, business nor envy, hatred nor strife, but that the righteous would sit with crowns on their heads and feast on the splendor of the Shekinah."

He has still an additional word to say about resurrection, which is convincing proof that there will be a resurrection. "But

concerning the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard it they were astonished at His doctrine" (verses 30-32). God calls Himself by the name of these three men (Exodus 3), and as He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, therefore a resurrection must take place. There was nothing left for the Sadducees then but to withdraw.

Once more the Pharisees appear. "But the Pharisees, having heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, were gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, demanded, tempting Him, and saying, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law, And He said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law and the prophets hang" (verses 34-40). There were various disputations among the Jewish scribes, the lawyers, about the greatest commandment, but the Lord does not enter into these at all. Once more His answer manifests perfect wisdom and according to the record given in the Gospel of Mark the lawyer was greatly moved by this answer. The Lord told him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God " (Mark 12:34). However, the questioner did not realize that He who stood before him in that hour was Jehovah Himself, the giver of the law.

After this the hopelessness of their case is apparent. They gathered together in a group, but none can suggest a new question, another temptation. All their attempts had proven futile. The Lord now approaches them. He has a question for them. The question of the Messiah, His personality, was never touched upon by the Pharisees and it was after all the most important. The Lord has a question for them about Himself, and, unlike the Pharisees, he uses the Scripture, quoting from His own Word. "And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus demanded of them, saying, What think ye concerning the Christ? Whose Son is He? They say to Him, David's. He says to them, How, then, does David in Spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand until I put thine enemies under thy feet? If, therefore, David call Him Lord, How is He His son? And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did any one dare from that day to question Him any more" (verses 41-46).

It is from the 110th Psalm the Lord draws His question. This Psalm is one of the great messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. It is very prominent in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is quoted a number of times as being fulfilled in Him, who is now the man of glory, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. This will be done when He comes again. In sending Him, the First begotten, into the world, God will put down all his enemies. It is almost impossible to believe that, with the evidences from Scripture, such as the word of our Lord and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews, certain men who call themselves "scholars" and assume the place of "critics" can deny the 110th Psalm was composed by David and that the Psalm has any messianic reference at all. This surely is wicked unbelief, as pronounced, perhaps more so, than the unbelief of the Pharisees.

Well, the Pharisees here answer that Messiah is to be the Son of David. They were professed teachers of Israel and still they did not understand the Scriptures. The question the Lord now puts to them, David calling Him who is to be a son of his, Lord, that is Jehovah, they could not, perhaps would not, answer. The passage teaches clearly who Messiah is. He is Jehovah incarnate, the Son of David and David's Lord. And the interrogator is He. His Davidic descent could not be denied; that He has a legal title to the throne of David is clearly proven by the genealogy. In His ministry throughout these years, He had manifested Himself in His mighty works as Jehovah. They could give Him no answer. Solemn moment it was. No answer! No repentance! They are silenced, and when they open their lips again it is to cry "Crucify Him!" The end is now coming on rapidly. In the next chapter He speaks as Judge pronouncing His judgment upon the leaders of the nation.

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CHAPTER XXIII

For the last time we have seen the Pharisees in the presence of the Lord in the previous chapter. What an important part these ecclesiastical leaders of the professing people of God play in this Gospel. They rejected Him; hated Him without a cause, and after they found they could not ensnare Him they resorted to that which Satan had put into their wicked hearts "that they might kill Him." That which the Lord had foretold in His parable of the vineyard is now soon to take place. They made their plans and are ready to take their King and deliver Him into the hands of the Gentiles to be crucified. He is

now soon to be taken, delivered into man's hand, going to the cross, where He, who knew no sin, was to be made sin for us. How solemn His words when He stood before Pilate and declared, "Thou hadst no authority whatever against me if it were not given to thee from above. On this account he that has delivered me up to thee has greater sin." But before we reach the story of the passion of the King, so wonderfully told in this Gospel, we find the King first of all passing judgment upon these evil leaders of the people. In the next place we have recorded, as nowhere else in the Gospel records, the great Olivet discourse, in which the King reveals the future. Here we find prophecy concerning the Jews and Jerusalem, the church and the Gentiles.

The chapter which is before us contains the "Woes" of the King upon the Pharisees. It is one of the most solemn ones in Matthew. Pharisaism is still in the earth; Ritualism, Traditionalism and with it the rejection of the authority of the Lord and His written Word, is Pharisaism, that evil leaven against which the Lord warns. This Christian Pharisaism is far worse than the old Jewish system. And where in Christendom is a little of that leaven lacking? Only the Grace of God, an unbroken fellowship with the Father and His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, can keep the individual believer from manifesting a Pharisaical spirit.

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitude and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees have set themselves down in Moses' seat; all things therefore, whatever they may tell you, do keep. But do not after their works, for they say and do not, but bind burdens heavy and hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of men, but will not move them with their finger. And all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the chief place in feasts, and the first seats in the synagogue, and salutations in the market places, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But ye, be ye not called Rabbi; for one is your instructor, and all ye are brethren. And call not any one your father upon earth; for one is your Father, He who is in the heavens. Neither be called leaders, for one is your leader, the Christ. But the greatest of you shall be your servant. And whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted" (verses 1-12). These are indeed cutting words. Out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword. Well may these words be placed in connection with the church message to Pergamos, in which the glorified Christ saith, "These things says He that has the sharp two-edged sword." Pergamos shows prophetically that period of the church when Ritualism, Nicolaitanism (Clericalism) came in like a flood and a certain class of men assumed the place of authority in the church, as leaders, priests, and began to dictate and teach the traditions of men. And ever since that time and through that into which Pergamos developed, Thyatira (Roman Catholicism), the leaven of the Pharisees, has worked on in Christendom and is still working. The Lord speaks first of all of the place which the scribes and Pharisees had chosen. They had placed themselves in Moses' seat. This no doubt He spoke in reference to legislation and not in regard to doctrine.

They had occupied the legislative seat, and when their sect started it was with a zeal for the law, which God had given through Moses. Soon, however, they became corrupt. In that part of the Talmud which is called the Mishnah* it is stated that they were to be regarded as if put into that place by Moses himself, taking their places in his seat, and were to be obeyed, so far as outward observations were concerned. (The Talmud is composed of two parts, the Gemara and the Mishna. Mishna means "repetition," and was a repetition of the written law.)

As far as the God given law was concerned and its observances, they were to do and to keep what the Pharisees said. What a wise exhortation this is! He, the King, fully recognized the position they had taken; if He had spoken otherwise, they might have accused Him of inciting the multitudes to riot against their authority. Romans 13:1-7 contains a similar wise exhortation by the Spirit of God for this present age. Against which the Lord warns is their works. There were two great schools among these Pharisees as we stated before; the school of Hillel and the school of Shammai. These were occupied with interpretations of the law. What strange interpretations were given, what tedious burdens were bound upon the people, which God never meant, could easily be illustrated and demonstrated by quotations from that tremendous literary work, the Talmud. "The burdens became intolerable. The blame rested equally on both the great rabbinic schools. For although the school of Hillel was supposed in general to make the yoke lighter, and that of Shammai heavier, yet not only did they agree on many points, but the school of Hillel was not unfrequently even more strict than that of his rival. In truth their differences seem too often only prompted by a spirit of opposition, so that the serious business of religion became in their hands one of rival authority and mere wrangling" (Edersheim). But while they put these burdens upon the people and domineered over them they neither kept them nor did they move a finger to remove them. In connection with this external show of religion, for which the Pharisees stood, the Phylacteries are mentioned. The general Christian reader has little information about the meaning of this word. The word "phylacteries" means "observatories" to keep the remembrance of

the Law alive. In different parts of the Pentateuch we read these words, "And thou shalt bind these words for a sign on thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates" (Exod. 13:9-16; Deut. 6:9, etc.). The last named injunction, "Write them upon the posts of thy house," is literally practised by orthodox Jews, by writing these words upon a piece of parchment, inclosing them in a tin box, and this box is nailed on the door posts. From the same words the phylacteries, or tephillin, were instituted. These are two strips of leather to each of which is attached a small box; in these boxes there are likewise pieces of parchment upon which the Hebrew text of Deut. 6:4-8 is written. The one leather strip with this box is wound around the forehead, the box resting in the middle of the forehead, while the second strip is wound around the arm, the left arm, which is nearest to the heart. The ends of this one is made to form the Hebrew letter "shin," which stands for Shaddai, the Almighty. Strange and curious laws are connected with the preparation of the phylacteries, the wearing of them; the rabbinical writings contain much on the phylacteries which is superstitious. Thus the talmudical tract Berachoth declares, "It is necessary to wear the phylacteries nights in the home as they drive away the demons." Orthodox Jews use them as their fathers did, and there is no doubt that the wearing of phylacteries in the twentieth century by strictly orthodox Jews and their belief in them is the same as in the days when our Lord spake these words. It is seen that the phylacteries sprung from a literal interpretation of the above passages in the Pentateuch, an outward religious observance for which there was no foundation whatever in the law. The Lord, however, does not attack this, we believe, ancient custom, but He attacks the habits of the Pharisees to wear the phylacteries and the enlarged borders of their garments (Num. 15:38), so as to be seen of men. They did it all for show; selfishness controlled them and they had no heart for the things of God. They loved the first places, the honor and praise of men; flatterers, they enjoyed and loved to receive honoring salutations from the side of men in market places. "Rabbi, Rabbi," which means teacher or instructor, they loved to be addressed as well as "Abba," which is "father." All these titles simply sprang from their self-seeking. The Lord now gives teaching, telling his hearers that which concerns of course disciples alone, that they are brethren and that they have but one teacher, the Christ Himself; that they should not call man father, but one is their Father, God Himself. The greatest of His own is the One, who is a servant of all. This reaches over into the new dispensation. The instructor, the guide, is the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Alas! how the enemy has succeeded in producing and fostering this distinctive mark of Pharisaism in Christendom, with its man-made institutions, titles, honors, offices and leaderships. It was not so in the beginning, but corruption has entered in and we find at the end of the age a Pharisaism far worse than that which the Lord here condemns. And there is a judgment coming upon that boasting, proud, Pharisaical, ritualistic Christendom. The judgment broke over the heads of the Pharisees, their religious system, and so will it break over Christendom. Then those who exalted themselves will be humbled and those who humbled themselves will be exalted. What an encouragement for every true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ to follow strictly these words of our Lord, to go on under Him as Lord and under the guidance of His Spirit, to have no name among men, but to be known of God. In this there is rest and joy and the power of God rests upon the testimony of such who serve in this spirit.

And there is a deeper meaning still to verses 8-10. We quote from one who has expressed it in simple as well as beautiful language. "It is a declaration of the essential relations of man to God. Three things constitute a Christian: What He is, what he believes, what he does; doctrine, experience, practice. Man needs for his spiritual being three things: Life, instruction, guidance; just what our Lord declares in the ten words of the Gospel, 'I am the way, and the truth and the life.' The Roman Catholic 'church'... has caught these three things with its usual insight and avows its ability to supply them. The office of the Roman Catholic 'church' is claimed to be threefold: the priestly office imparting and sustaining life by means of the sacraments; the teaching office endowed with infallibility; the guiding office by spiritual confessors. These three things are just what our Lord forbids in the passage under consideration. Acknowledge no man as Father; for no man can impart or sustain spiritual life; install no man as an infallible teacher; allow no one to assume the office of spiritual director; your relation to God and to Christ is as close as that of any other person." (Western: The Genesis of the New Testament)

And now the Lord takes up His "Woes." It is a fearful uncovering of the hearts of the Pharisees and their corruption. And thus He lays bare the hidden things. He will do so again. There are eight woes given in this chapter, though it seems the fourteenth verse does not belong to this chapter. It is, however, found in both the Gospels of Mark and Luke, so that it is evident the Lord also uttered these words. In different respects there is a correspondency between the first discourse of our Lord in this Gospel, the sermon on the mountain and the last one addressed to the multitudes and to His disciples. The Olivet discourse is addressed exclusively to the disciples, who have asked Him. The Sermon on the Mount, as generally the great discourse in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of this Gospel is called, was addressed to the multitudes and the disciples. What this great discourse stands for, the proclamation of the King, we learned in our exposition. He sat there as the great One greater than Moses, expounding and expanding the Law. Here He is upon the seat of judgment; the King is the Judge. In the sermon on the Mount He utters His Blessings, Beatitudes, but here as judge He pronounces His Woes.

We shall not follow these woes in a detailed exposition, but mention the leading thoughts in them.

"But woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of the heavens before men; for ye do not enter, nor do ye suffer those that are entering to go in" (verse 13). The Kingdom has been preached unto them, but they shut willfully their eyes and turned away from the light, which had burst upon them. They did not enter in and kept others away from it. And this is an awful "woe" which falls likewise upon the modern Pharisees, though in a different sense. How many of the man-made "priests" and "teachers," following the traditions of men, usurping the place of the Lord Jesus Christ, are themselves unsaved and keep others from knowing the truth.

Omitting that which is given as the next verse, we read the second Woe. "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass the sea and the dry land to make one proselyte, and when he is become such, ye make him twofold more the son of hell than yourselves" (verse 15). Coming from such lips, what a condemnation they contain! They were sectarians, and sectarianism is the fruit of the flesh, as clearly taught in the Epistles. They did everything to make proselytes, and that too for selfish motives. Proselytism was condemned by the rabbinical schools. One of the talmudical sayings is, "Proselytes are as a scab to Israel." It was for selfish reasons they made proselytes to their sect. Is it any different in the proselyting Christendom, down to the smallest party? And after they had attracted some to themselves they made them worse than they were. An awful indictment indeed.

Woe unto you, blind guides, who say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple he is a debtor. Fools and blind, for which is greater, the gold, or the temple which sanctifieth the gold? And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it is a debtor. Fools and blind ones, for which is greater, the gift, or the altar which sanctifieth the gift? He therefore that sweareth by the altar swears by it and by all things that are upon it. And he that sweareth by the temple swears by it and by Him that dwells in it" (verses 16-22.) Without following this woe in every word, it is evident that these leaders loved the gold of the temple more than the temple and the gift which was upon the altar more than the altar. Fools and blind guides they were.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and ye have left aside the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith; these ye ought to have done and not have left those aside. Blind guides who strain out the gnat, but drink down the camel" (verses 23-24).

Their self-righteousness and piety consisted in being very scrupulous about minor things, while the important matters were completely ignored by them. They strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. It is not different today. The little unessential things in religious practices are unduly magnified, while the important matters are ignored. "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within they are full of rapine and intemperance. Blind Pharisees, make clean first the inside of the cup and of the dish, that their outside also may become clean. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like whited sepulchres which appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Thus also ye, outwardly ye appear righteous to men, but within are full of hypocrisies and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets and adorn the tombs of the just, and ye say, If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. So that you bear witness of yourselves that ye are sons of those who slew the prophets; and ye, fill up the measure of your fathers. Serpents, offspring of vipers, how should ye escape the judgment of hell?" (verses 25-33).

These are the concluding woes. They need not much comment. Pharisaiism keeps the outside clean, while inside there is corruption and death. There is a self-righteous, religious boasting of being more advanced than the fathers, and more tolerant than they were. But the omniscient One, reads their hearts and declares that they fill up the measure of the fathers. They were unsaved men, not the offspring of God, but of vipers; their father, the devil; and they were facing judgment of Gehenna.

Other words were uttered by the King. These are found in the three verses which follow. He would send them prophets and wise men and scribes, and they were to kill them, crucify them, persecute them, and all the righteous blood shed upon the earth should come upon them. This was to come upon that generation. What they hear from His lips another witness filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen, tells them; with the stoning of Stephen the measure was filled up and judgment came.

And now the sublime, mournful ending. The last word of the King to Jerusalem. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those that are sent to her, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be He that comes in the name of the Lord."

What a loving, sublime lamentation this is! The King is a King of Love and His heart yearns over His city Jerusalem. How He did long for them! The illustration He uses is one they fully understood, not alone by its simplicity, a hen gathering her chickens, but also because their elders had mentioned this very fact. The Rabbis spoke of Messiah under the name of the Shekinah and declared that Israel would be gathered under the wings of the Shekinah, where they would find rest and blessing. And now the Shekinah was with them. The promised One has come and they would not have Him. They turned away from Jehovah, their King. Their house -- no longer "the Father's house" -- is to be left desolate. They would see Him in no wise henceforth. That this has a national significance, the rejection of them is evident. And no sooner were the words spoken than He left the temple and went away.

But the discourse which has nothing but Woes ends with a "Blessed," and here comes in the bright ray of hope for Israel. "Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be He that comes in the name of the Lord." This is the promise of His second Coming, and when He comes He will find a believing remnant of that very people, welcoming Him with the messianic greeting of the 118th Psalm. Then the Shekinah-Glory will spread over Jerusalem and Israel's land, and He that scattered Israel will gather them from the four corners of the earth. It is a strange and evil doctrine which maintains that inasmuch as the woes were spoken upon these Pharisees, that they are also to see Him again. It is claimed that these wicked Pharisees, the offspring of vipers, who could not escape the judgment of hell, are all to be raised from the dead when Christ comes again and have "a second chance" to see Him, and that then they will receive Him. Such Jewish universalism has no Scripture foundation whatever. It is a remnant which will behold the King coming out of the opened heavens in the day of His manifestation. _164

CHAPTER XXIV

In the two chapters, which follow, we have the great Olivet discourse of our Lord.

Next to the thirteenth of Matthew, the seven parables, these two chapters are the most misunderstood. We shall have occasion to point out the erroneous interpretations which spring mostly from a false conception of the characteristics of the age in which we live.

First of all we shall look at the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters in a general way. We mention them together for they should never be separated. The Olivet discourse, was spoken in answer to the questions the disciples had asked of the Lord Jesus. In Mark and Luke the Spirit of God has recorded parts of this discourse, but only in the first Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew, do we find a full report. This is in fullest harmony with the scope of the Gospel.

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee." Thus God had spoken to Moses (Deut. 18:18). We know from the Book of Acts that this was a prophecy to be fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22 and 7:37). But the Lord is greater than Moses (Hebrews 3:5-6). In the first great discourse in this Gospel, the sermon on the mount, He expounded the law and spoke with greater authority than Moses ever could speak; "I say unto you." He fulfilled the law. But Moses was also a prophet. Before he left his people, he uttered a great prophecy. This is found in Deuteronomy 32. It is in the form of a song, a wonderful inspired unfolding of the history of Israel. God's dealings with them in the past is reviewed and then follows a forecast of their future to the very end, which up to the present time has not yet been reached. This is followed by the Blessing of Moses, likewise a prophecy.

And now He, who is greater than Moses, the prophet like unto Moses utters a great prophecy, more complete and far-reaching than that of Moses. He, Jehovah, had come in the midst of His people. As king He had offered the promised kingdom; He and the offer of the kingdom had been rejected by His own, and now before He goes to the cross to fulfil all that was written concerning His sufferings in the law and the prophets, He predicts events connected with the end of the age and His future glorious manifestation, which will usher in that new age of blessing and glory, of which His own Spirit testified in all the prophets.

The Olivet discourse is a great prophecy, the King's last, great utterance. It was spoken, as we shall see later, in answer to the question of the disciples. He had just predicted the destruction of the magnificent temple buildings, and while He sat upon the Mount of Olives, where in the future His glorious feet shall stand in the hour of His manifestation, they asked Him: "Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the Age?" We shall find later that here in Matthew, the Spirit of God in giving us the discourse does not give us the words which relate to the destruction of the temple, which was then standing. He omits here certain words, which, however, are given in the Gospel of Luke. All this and much else our exposition will bring out.

The discourse itself is divided into three great parts clearly marked. The answer of the Lord to the question asked begins with the fourth verse. Up to the forty-fourth verse we have the first part of His predictions. Beginning with the forty-fifth verse, He changes His mode of speaking. No longer direct predictions, but He speaks again in parables. These are three: 1. The parable of the faithful and evil servant. 2. The parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins. 3. The parable of the man traveling into a far country and delivering unto his servants his goods. In one of these parables we find again the phrase so peculiar to the Gospel of Matthew "the kingdom of the heavens." These parables end with the thirtieth verse. In the verses which follow the Lord no longer speaks in parables. It is true Matthew 25:31 to 46 is often called a parable, but it is not. It is a revelation the King gives concerning His own glorious appearing and the judgment He will execute in that day. We have therefore a three-fold division of the Olivet discourse.

First division: Chapter 24:4-44. Second division: Chapter 24:45 to chapter 25:30. Third division: Chapter 25:31-46.

We shall look at these divisions first of all to find out to what season or time they refer and after we have cleared away some of the false interpretations and misconceptions, we hope to study each division in detail.

In reading over the first part of the discourse of our Lord we find that it relates to disciples, which of necessity must be Jewish. In this part the Lord speaks of the ending of the age, the time of distress which is to come, the great tribulation and a climax is reached in this division, when the Lord speaks of His coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This is to take place immediately after the days of that tribulation.

The most widespread interpretation of this part of the discourse is that it all was fulfilled in the past. The great tribulation is a thing of the past and the Lord Jesus Christ came again in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is the foolish, spiritualizing method, which does such violence to the Word of God. These interpreters are given to the wildest and most fanciful imaginations to prove their assertions. Quite often they make use of the writings of Josephus instead of God's Word. According to them the year 70 was the year in which "the Son of Man came in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory." In a recent volume published in defense of this theory, which is unknown in primitive Christianity, the writer tries to get over the difficulties by saying the following: "But who can say what other sights appeared at the final moment of the catastrophe? (The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.) The 'Coming' was like a lightning flash, not abiding for days like the glory on Sinai. The sight of the Glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mountains to the eyes of the sons of Israel; and that glory was a real presence, a veritable parousia, for Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai. And yet in that Sinaitic parousia the Israelites saw no form or shape of the divine person. Whether those who saw the sign of the Son of Man which appeared in heaven immediately after the tribulation of those days saw the person and form of the Son of Man Himself, or only some symbol of His presence, must remain a mystery." This interpretation, which looks upon verses 4-44 fulfilled in the past at the time when Titus besieged Jerusalem, has its origin in a deplorable ignorance of God's dispensational dealings with the Jews and the Gentiles. It leaves nothing for the Jewish nation in the future. It would take us too long to show the impossibility that the Lord meant by these predictions the events which transpired between the time of His resurrection and the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. But had the Lord nothing to say in this discourse about the great judgment, which befell Jerusalem. He certainly gave a revelation concerning it as well as warnings. But the record of this prediction of the fall of Jerusalem under Titus is not at all given in Matthew twenty-four, but we find that the Spirit of God has put that in the Gospel of Luke, In Luke 21:20-23 we have the words which predict the siege and fall of Jerusalem in the year 70. The prediction is, that after that catastrophe has taken place and they have fallen by the edge of the sword and are led away captives, that Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This happened after the destruction of the City and Jerusalem is still trodden down, because the times of the Gentiles have not yet run out. But now turning to the words in Matthew we find an entirely different result from the manifestation of the Son of Man in Glory and in the clouds of heaven (that which postmillennialism claims to be identical

with the destruction of Jerusalem). There is not a word mentioned of their being scattered among the nations, but the very opposite is said "they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other." The predictions in Matthew 24:4-44 have nothing whatever to do with the 40 years which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, nor with that event in the year 70. That they refer to Judea and Jerusalem, that the predictions concern Jewish disciples and that they describe scenes of distress and tribulation to be enacted in the land of Israel is quite true.

Another mode of explaining these first predictions of the Olivet discourse is, to apply them to this Christian age in which we live. This is generally done by those who have the correct Scriptural belief in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They reject the spiritualizing teaching of postmillennialism and hold that there will be a future great tribulation, which will close with the visible and glorious manifestation of the Son of Man out of heaven. They tell us that the Lord describes this entire Christian age and especially the closing of it, the end. Then they maintain that the church is to remain on the earth in this end of the age and to pass through the great tribulation, and therefore the exhortations contained in this chapter are meant for Christian believers living in the end of the age. This wrong interpretation has confused not a few of God's people. Let one get clear on two important teachings of the word and deliverance from this false interpretation of this part of our Lord's discourse will speedily follow. We mean the teaching of the Scriptures of what the church is, her calling and her destiny. And in the second place the teaching of the prophetic word, that the Lord will call a believing Jewish remnant, which will suffer and witness at the end of the age. If a person, be he a teacher or not, is ignorant of either one of these, he must be confused in his conception of the first part of Matthew 24.

Furthermore it is to be said that the disciples knew absolutely nothing of a Christian age. Such an age could not even begin, when they asked the question about the end of the age. They did not mean a Christian age, but their Jewish age. All through these forty verses everything is of Jewish character. The warning is against false Christs and false prophets; the warning given to church is against false spirits. The condition of salvation that one must endure to the end is nowhere given to the Christian believer, who is saved and safe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It has an entirely different meaning here. Again the prayer that the flight should not take place on the Sabbath day is Jewish, for the Christian believer has no Sabbath day, but the Lord's day. The reference to Daniel and the great tribulation, which never concerns the church, but Israel, shows us that we are not on Christian, but Jewish ground. The preaching which is mentioned is that of the Gospel of the Kingdom, but that Gospel is not now preached, for we preach the Gospel of Grace. When we turn to the different verses we shall go carefully over this theory again and disprove it by what is written.

There remains the third way of interpreting these words of our Lord, it is to look upon these predictions about the end of the Jewish age as being still future. This is the right and only key to understand these verses. The first part of the Olivet discourse of our Lord is a prediction of how the Jewish age will end. The disciples only knew of a Jewish age. This Jewish age has not yet ended; it has been interrupted. A careful study of the great prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 reveals the fact that one year-week, the seventieth, has not yet been fulfilled. The Christian age, in which God visits the Gentiles and takes out a people for His name, the church, is the great parenthesis, which has come in between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week of Daniel. [See also "The Great Parenthesis" by H.A. Ironside.] As soon as the purpose of God is fulfilled, the church complete, the Lord will resume His dealing with Israel and the seventieth week (seven years) will end the Jewish age. Before that end, the seventieth week can come, the church must be complete and be removed from these earthly scenes, according to the divinely revealed destiny of the church. The church complete and taken up, the end of the age will follow and that will be Jewish and as far as the so-called "christian world" is concerned one of complete apostasy. Then the 144,000 of whom we read in Rev. 7 will be sealed and bear their witness. This is the Jewish remnant and the exhortations here concern them. No doubt when the time comes they will find great comfort here in the words of our Lord. They will preach the Gospel of the kingdom and the unfinished testimony, of which we read in Matthew 10, will be finished by them. Thus the disciples the Lord addressed were typical of similar Jewish disciples living after the church has ceased her testimony. A striking fact is that this interpretation can be verified by many Scripture passages from the Old Testament. The teaching of a future remnant of Jewish believers, suffering and witnessing for God during the great tribulation, is very pronounced in the Old Testament We shall have occasion to turn to some of these Scripture references when we come to the different verses. The Old Testament predicts a siege of Jerusalem which has not yet been. The reader in turning to Zechariah 14 will find a full description of what awaits Jerusalem and a faithful remnant in the end time. Though Jerusalem has had so many sieges in the past there is not one which could be said to be a fulfilment of Zechariah 14. The Lord Himself appears for the deliverance of His people, His feet standing on the Mount of Olives. Matthew 24:4-44 refers to this, and His coming and all His saints with Him in Zechariah corresponds to "the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

In the second part of this discourse, chapter 24:45-25:30, we find that the Lord speaks in an entirely different way. He mentions no longer the tribulation, nor the Sabbath or Judea. He speaks again in parables. These parables, each one having for its central thought, His coming again, relate not to the Christian church as some have expressed it, but rather to the Christian profession. We notice the true and the false throughout. A faithful servant and an evil servant; wise virgins and foolish virgins; servants who use their talents and one who does not. Here, then, we have the revelation of the judgement between the true and the false.

The third part, chapter 25:31-46, is not a revelation concerning the universal judgment; no such judgment is ever mentioned in the Bible. The Lord describes the judgment of nations which takes place when he sits upon the throne of His glory.

The first part of the Olivet Discourse, verses 4-44, is now before us. At the close of the previous chapter we learn that the King after His loving outburst over Jerusalem had made the declaration, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." This prophecy is fulfilled throughout this present age. In the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter we read that the Lord left the temple. "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to show Him the buildings of the temple." There is a strongly marked correspondency between the end of the twelfth chapter and the beginning of the thirteenth and the close of the twenty-third and the beginning of the twenty-fourth. At the close of the twelfth chapter the Lord by His symbolical action in refusing to see His mother and brethren, declared His relationship with His own to whom He had come, and who received Him not, broken; at the close of the twenty-third there is a fuller break with the nation, the nation for whom He came to die. In Matthew 13 it is recorded that on the same day Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the seaside, giving there His parables concerning the kingdom of the heavens. In the twenty-fourth He also goes out and departs, to give soon after the great Olivet discourse. While His parables, the mysteries of the kingdom, relate to this present age and the end of the age, in a general way, in the first part of the Olivet discourse, He makes known the details of that ending of the age, of which He spoke repeatedly in the thirteenth of Matthew.

In leaving the temple and going towards the Mount of Olives, the Lord had to cross over the brook Cedron, and in ascending the mountain, they must have had a magnificent view of the temple buildings. These buildings were of the most massive construction, some of them still in process of erection. An enormous wall encircled the whole temple area; some of the stones used in that wall were 23 and 24 feet in length. It must have been a wonderful sight for human eyes to behold. Not a word had come from the disciples' lips during the events recorded in the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters. They had heard His answers to the tempting Pharisees, and the pronouncement upon them. They listened to His loving outburst over Jerusalem and heard His prediction of the desolation of their house. But now they call His attention to the buildings of the temple, to the great sight before them. "And Jesus said unto them, see ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." What a solemn prediction this was! How it must have impressed these Jewish men, His disciples, whose hearts clung to the temple and its wonderful buildings. These mighty stones, so solidly put together, were to be rent asunder, not one remaining upon the other. Only the Lord could make such a prediction. Here then is a prediction which refers to the destruction of the temple in the great catastrophe which came upon Jerusalem in the year 70. It is, as stated before, fully given by our Lord in Luke 21:20-24: What should happen to the rebellious city, to the murderers, the Lord had revealed in the parable of the marriage feast, when He said: "But when the king heard it he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city."

"And as He was sitting upon the Mount of Olives the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be, and what is the sign of Thy coming and the completion of the age?"

The question asked by the disciples is threefold. When shall these things be? The sign of Thy Coming? The completion or consummation of the age? It is of great importance to see that the record of the discourse, as given by the Holy Spirit, passes over the answer to the first question, "When shall these things be?" This is evident by the fact that the Lord says not a word in the discourse of Jerusalem or the destruction of the temple, and as stated in our introduction to this chapter, while in Luke we hear that Jerusalem is to be besieged by armies, and the inhabitants are seen falling by the edge of the sword and led away captive into all the nations and Jerusalem trodden down by the Gentiles; in Matthew 24 we do not find a word of all this at all. Indeed we read of great distress, which is to be in Judea, but nothing whatever of them being led away captive, or Jerusalem to be trodden down by the Gentiles. Instead of a scattering of the elect people at the close of the great tribulation, we have a gathering of the elect. The word in the passage (24:31), that is the word "elect" refers to the

literal Israel.

Turning to the next two questions, "What is the sign of Thy coming and the completion of the age?" it is to be said that undoubtedly in the minds of the disciples this question was one. He had repeatedly spoken about His return. As true Jews they expected, and that with perfect right, the establishment of the messianic kingdom by the Messiah. They had seen how He, in whom they had believed, and the kingdom He offered, had been rejected. All, of necessity, must have been very misty before their view; but they take heart and ask Him about the sign of His coming, the coming He had mentioned before. It is evident that the coming is His coming in power and glory for the establishment of the kingdom promised to Israel in the Old Testament. This coming is His visible and glorious return to the earth "in like manner as He went up into heaven"; it takes place in the land and His feet will stand on the mount of Olives. The synoptic Gospels know of no other coming of the Lord than His visible return to Jerusalem; connected with this return we find always besides blessings, judgment. Entirely different is His coming for His Saints who compose the Church. This coming is revealed through the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians, the fourth chapter. There we read that the Lord will descend into the air, not to the earth. The dead in Christ will be raised and the living saints be caught up, together with them, in clouds to meet the Lord in the air and to be forever with the Lord. In John 14 the Lord gives a little word which may be taken to indicate that coming for His own, though the manner is not made known. It is that word of comfort to His own. "I will come again and receive you unto myself." It is strange that believers in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ can fail to see the strongly marked difference between His visible and glorious return, His coming in power and great Glory, taking place in the land of Israel and His coming for His Church, as revealed exclusively through the great Apostle. It is not strange that where this distinction is given up confusion and error result.

Then they asked about the completion or consummation of the age. The authorized version simply has it "the end of the world." That is a translation which is responsible for much wrong teaching. The end of the world as generally understood in Christendom is not at all in view here. It is the consummation, the winding up of the age, the *aion*. As we have shown this age could not be the "Christian age," but it is the ending of the Jewish age, which is still future. Such an age ending predicts the entire Old Testament prophetic World.

There we find numerous predictions of a great coming day, the day of the Lord, in which Jehovah is visibly seen in His Glory and majesty, coming forth to deliver His persecuted and downtrodden earthly people, who wait for Him and to judge the nations likewise. According to Old Testament prophecy this day of the Lord's visible and glorious manifestation is preceded by a time of great trouble and distress. The center of the tribulation is Jerusalem, and when the height of the tribulation is reached, the heavens and the earth are shaken and Jehovah appears. Furthermore it is seen that there is a believing and suffering remnant of Jews passing through that time of trouble, who are faithful in the midst of universal apostasy, wickedness and worship of the false king, who is likewise described in the Prophets. Their prayers and calls upon God are prophetically recorded by the Spirit of God as well as their deliverance by the manifestation of Jehovah. Now all this has never been fulfilled. That great day so often spoken of by the Prophets, the day of the Lord, has not yet come; it is still future. So is the time of distress, which is called "the time of Jacob's trouble," and therefore the suffering of a Jewish remnant, which is not identified with the church is likewise future. When the Lord speaks in Matthew 24 about the consummation of the age and the signs of His coming, He gives altogether that which is revealed in the Old Testament and which has not been fulfilled up to the present time. The purpose of God in this present Christian age is to take out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name. This taken out people is the Church. As long as this calling out through the preaching of the Gospel continues and new members are added to the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ (the church), the predicted end of the age does not come. Besides having a description of the end of the age, of which our Lord speaks here, in the Old Testament we have also one in the Book of Revelation. From the sixth chapter on to the nineteenth we find another record of the future age-ending. In studying the account our Lord gives here in Matthew we must compare Old Testament prophecy and the visions of the Book of Revelation, with what the Lord saith in His discourse. If our interpretation is the right one there must be perfect harmony between these three: Old Testament Prophecy: Matthew 24:4-44, and Revelation 6-19.

And now we turn to the text and give the first section of the discourse. "And Jesus answering said to them, See that no one mislead you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they shall mislead many. But ye will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that ye be not disturbed; for all these things must take place, but it is not yet the end. For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. But all these are the beginning of the throes. Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and

shall kill you and ye will be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then will many be offended, and will deliver one another up, and hate one another; and many false prophets shall arise and shall mislead many; and because lawlessness shall prevail, the love of the most shall grow cold; but he that endureth to the end, he shall be saved. And these glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come" (verses 4-14).

These are the opening words of the Lord, which describe the age ending. In a secondary and general way they likewise describe, no doubt, the characteristics of the times during which the Lord is not on the earth. Looked upon in this light what an argument they form against the modern optimistic dreams of the professing church! Neither the Lord, nor the Spirit in giving the Epistles of the New Testament have a single word to say that this present age and the world is to be getting better and that the end will be righteousness and peace. The testimony of the Scriptures is wholly on the other side. Wars there have been all along as well as rumors of wars. Famines, pestilences and earthquakes have again and again swept over this globe, as well as the persecution of such who are the Lord's. All this is true in a general way. But the Lord describes not the age as such, but shows what will be in the end. The words we have before us refer us to the beginning of that end, while in the last verse quoted, the fourteenth, the Lord saith "then shall come the end." What follows the fourteenth verse then refers directly to the end. The last week of Daniel, the seventieth, is marked off in two halves, each having three and a half years. The words here before us up to the fourteenth verse refer to the first half of the last week, while the fifteenth verse and the verses which follow bring us to the middle of that week.

Verses 4-14 then contain the prophecy of our Lord relating to the beginning of the end of the Jewish age, while with the 15th verse the end itself in its fearful great tribulation and "the abomination of desolation" is described. The whole period is the last week of Daniel's great prophecy, a prophetic week, consisting of seven years, which cannot begin as long as the church is on the earth. The first part of it is now before us. The Lord saith in His answer to the question concerning the sign of His coming and the end of the age, that these things He mentions first are "the beginning of throes" (verse 8).

And now let us look at the predictions. We find them in the following order:

1. Many coming, saying, I am the Christ and succeeding in misleading many.
2. Wars, rumors of wars. Nation lifting up sword against nation. Kingdom against kingdom.
3. Famines and pestilences and earthquakes.
4. Many witnesses to be killed and hated by all nations. False prophets and lawlessness prevailing.
5. The preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom before the end is reached.

These are the startling prophecies of our Lord, soon to be followed by other predictions of what shall be before He returns in the clouds of heaven, immediately after the tribulation of those days. The disciples, all Jews, no doubt well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures, must have had considerable knowledge of such awful events as described by the Lord, for Old Testament prophecy predicts precisely such troubles preceding the visible manifestation of Jehovah out of the opened heavens, the beginning of the restoration of His earthly people and the blessings of the coming age. The following passages are but a few of those which might be quoted: Joel 2:1-17; Hosea 5:14; Jer. 30:4-9; Ezekiel 21:27; Daniel 12:1; Micah 7:1-7; Hab. 3:16. It is also true that Jewish tradition maintained in fullest harmony with these teachings that the days preceding the glorious coming of the Messiah are to be days of woe and sorrow. One of these ancient traditions is so striking that we quote it.

Rabbi Jochunan says: "Seven years of trouble come before Messiah comes. The first year before the Son of David comes the prophecy of Amos (chap, 4:7) will be fulfilled. In the second year of tribulation there will be six months of famine. In the third year there will be great famine. Many men, women and children will die and the pious will be few. The law and the prophets will be forgotten by Israel. The last years will bring signs in heaven and wars and at the end of the seventh year the Son of David will come." Similar statements could be easily quoted from the Talmudical writings.

All that which the above Old Testament passages predict, a time of trouble, before an age of blessing begins and nations learn war no more, is still a matter of the future, and so are the predictions our Lord makes here. The disciples to whom He gives these words and warnings are typical representatives of disciples, who will live when that end comes; they will be Jewish disciples. When on the Mount of Olives, before His ascension, they asked Him their last question: "Lord, is it at this time that Thou restorest the Kingdom to Israel?" He answered: "It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father has placed in His own authority" (Acts 1:6-7). The kingdom will be restored with the coming of the King. It was not revealed when it was to be; all was to be postponed. They passed off the scene. When the end at last will come other Jewish disciples, waiting for the kingdom to be restored to Israel, will witness and suffer, and they will turn to these words of our Lord and find comfort and instruction in them.

And now there is something still more significant. Not alone does Old Testament prophecy predict distress for the ending of the Jewish age, but we have an additional description of these great coming events in the last book of the Bible, the only book of prophecy in the New Testament, that glorious book, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

The book is divinely divided into three parts (chapter 1:9): I. The things seen; Christ walking in the midst of the candlesticks (chapter 1). II. The things which are. The present church age; a wonderful prophecy concerning the history of the church (chapters 2 and 3) III. The things which shall be after these (chapter 4 to 22). Here follows all which will take place after the church has completed her history. The removal of the true church from earth to heaven is promised in the third chapter of Revelation and is indicated in the opening verses of the fourth chapter. In the fourth and fifth chapters the church is seen symbolically in the twenty-four elders, seated, clothed and crowned in the presence of the throne. Then the Lamb takes the book to break its seals. That which is revealed, beginning with the sixth chapter, the breaking of the seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets and the outpouring of the seven vials together with the great events described from that chapter to the nineteenth, is nothing else but a more detailed history of the last week of Daniel. It is here in the last book of the Bible fully revealed what judgment will be executed upon the earth during that period of distress and what great tribulation will be for those who dwell upon the earth, Jews and Gentiles (never the true church). It is an intensely interesting fact that this part of Revelation (chapters 6-19) ever points us back to Old Testament prophecy. Hundreds of passages from all the prophets can easily be put alongside of the visions of judgment, tribulation and wrath in the Apocalypse.

The point which we wish to make is the following: If this is the correct interpretation, if Matthew 24:4-14 refers to the beginning of that coming end of the age and if Revelation 6 refers to the same beginning of the end and that which follows the sixth chapter leads us on into the great tribulation, then there must be a perfect harmony between that part of the Olivet discourse contained in Matthew 24 and the part of Revelation beginning with the sixth chapter. And such is indeed the case.

We turn briefly to the sixth chapter of Revelation. The Lamb opens one of the seals, after that great worship scene in heaven had taken place. Then we read: "And I saw; and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon it having a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering and that he might conquer." It is strange that so many expositors have expounded this to be the Lord Himself. The Lord indeed is described in this book as coming riding a white horse; but this description is found at the close of the Revelation in the nineteenth chapter. The rider upon the white horse under the first seal is a counterfeit. He is a false Christ, who goes forth to conquer. His conquest is a bloodless one, as he has only a bow. He will bring about a false peace among the nations, which for a time may have been alarmed by the supernatural removal of the church. The second rider "takes peace from the earth," from which we would conclude that the first rider upon the white horse (white the emblem of peace) had established peace.

And as we turn to Matthew 24 we find that the first thing our Lord saith, is about the deceivers who will come with the beginning of the age ending saying: "I am Christ," and succeeding to lead away many. It is true throughout this age impostors came among the Jews claiming to be the Messiah. It is true even now men rise up saying they are some great one, Elijah, prophets or even Christ.

All these are but faint shadows of what will take place in that soon coming end. Indeed the increasing delusions and the claims of, as we believe, demon-possessed men and women, are strong indications that the end is very near. Then deceivers, led by Satan, possessed by his demons, will arise and among them there will be a mighty leader going forth to conquer, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

The rider upon the red horse, as already stated, takes peace from the earth. The second seal shows him coming forth with a great sword, "that they should slay one and another."

And the very next thing which the Lord saith in Matthew 24 is, "But ye will hear of wars and rumors of wars... Nation shall lift up sword against nation and kingdom against kingdom" (verse 7). Wars there have been in the past; this earth is saturated with blood. But there will be a time, and it is soon coming, when literally nation will lift up sword against nation and kingdom against kingdom, when they will slay each other. Any one who follows present-day history will see how everything is ripening for just such a universal warfare. And yet secure, sleeping Christendom is dreaming of peace, world wide peace and times of prosperity!

The third the Lord mentions is "there shall be famines." And the third seal reveals a rider upon a black horse and he has a balance in his hand and what he saith indicates clearly that he brings famines (Rev. 6:5-6). The fourth rider of the fourth seal is upon a pale horse. His name is "Death." He takes the fourth part of the earth away. This corresponds to the Lord's announcement that there will be "pestilences and earthquakes in divers places." Fearful have been the famines, pestilences and earthquakes of the last twenty-five years. (Especially great has been the loss of life and property from earthquakes and volcanic disturbances since 1900. The last, the destruction of San Francisco, has been one of the most terrible of the recent catastrophes. A harbinger indeed of the nearness of the far greater earthquakes to come.) But these are insignificant in comparison with those to which our Lord refers here, the mighty events which tell all the earth that the day of wrath is rapidly approaching. Blessed be His name, who delivereth us from that wrath to come that "His Beloved," "His Dove," "His Bride," the church, will be safe within when these awful things come to pass.

And now under the fifth seal we do not behold another rider, but instead of it we hear the souls underneath the altar, that had been slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they gave, crying out with a loud voice, saying, How long? (Rev. 6:9,-11) Who are these? Not saints of the church. These are all raised up when the Lord comes into the air (1 Thess. 4:17) and are caught up with the living saints. They are such of the remnant of Jews who began to give their witness for the Word of God after the church had departed and they suffered martyrdom in consequence of their faithful testimony. It is exactly that of which our Lord speaks next in His discourse. "Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation and shall kill you; ye will be hated of all the nations for my name's sake." As we shall show later this faithful Jewish remnant will go throughout the world proclaiming the coming of the kingdom and calling to repentance.

We see then how striking the agreement is between the beginning of Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation, the seal judgments. The interpretation we have undertaken to give is therefore proven to be correct.

We point out but a few more of the facts mentioned by our Lord. False prophets shall arise misleading many. The Jewish age has false prophets; the Christian age has false teachers. "But there were false prophets also among the people, as there shall be also among you false teachers, who shall bring in by the bye destructive heresies, etc." (2 Pet. 2:1). These false prophets who come in the end of the Jewish age will be possessed by evil spirits. Such was the case during the great apostasy of Israel under the reign of Ahab. The Lord permitted then a lying spirit to take possession of the false prophets as revealed by the prophet Micaiah (2 Chronicles 18:18-22).

"Lawlessness shall prevail;" that is, complete anarchy will hold sway. This too is clearly seen in the breaking of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17). The earthquake, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, the falling stars, the rolled up heavens and the removal of mountains and islands are all great symbols of startling political events, which will take place in the first three and one-half years. Government and authority is swept away; civil and ecclesiastical powers are shaken; mountains (the type of kingdoms) are moved out of their places and as a consequence of this awful upheaval, the reign of terror and anarchy, worse than that of the French revolution and the Russian revolution of today, all classes of men, the kings, the wealthy, the rich and the poor, the bondman and the free, will be seized with terror. Well has a recent writer said: "The scene here described is an awful and sublime one. The symbols employed to set it forth are the powers of nature convulsed. The whole fabric of civil and governmental power on earth breaks up. Disorder reigns supreme. It is not simply the collapse of this or that government, but the total subversion of all governing authority -- both supreme and dependent. The general idea which the metaphors present is a universal overthrow of all existing authority; a revolutionary crisis of such magnitude and character that kings and slaves are in equal terror. The coming crash will involve in one general catastrophe everything on earth deemed secure and strong. A vast civil and political chaos will be created. What an awful

scene to contemplate! a world without a magistrate! without even the semblance of power! without government! without the authority of repression!"

This is the sixth seal, and it is precisely what the Lord saith: "Lawlessness shall prevail." And later the lawless One will take the lead. He comes into full display in the middle of the week. How near, how very near all these events are, even at our doors, is seen by the increasing unrest of all nations, the manifestation of the spirit of anarchy among all people. Yet there is One who hindereth (2 Thess. 2). The Holy Spirit is the One who keeps it back and He has His abode in the body of Christ, the church. Only after the church is taken into glory can that lawless One be revealed. But even in those awful days the mercy of God lingers and one more great testimony goes forth; the Gospel of the kingdom will yet be preached in a very short time to all the nations, then the end comes.

"And these glad tidings of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all nations, and then shall come the end" (verse 14). This verse relates exclusively to the end of the age, that is the Jewish age. And here we have to speak of all of the wrong application of this word of our Lord.

It is generally looked upon as a condition to be fulfilled before the Lord can come. Post-millennialism, believing as it does, without any authority from the Word of God, in the conversion of the world before the coming of the Lord, makes use of this verse to uphold its unscriptural theory. Then there are others who believe in the premillennial coming of Christ who misapply this statement of our Lord. They ever speak of preaching the Gospel to all the nations as a necessary condition before the Lord can come for the church. It is often pressed in this way in missionary meetings, conventions as an incentive to giving, that unless the Gospel is preached to all nations, the Lord cannot come. Now such an application of this verse is certainly wrong.

It is true that the Gospel is to be preached in the regions beyond and that by this preaching a people is called out from the Gentiles, a people for His name, the church; but it would be incorrect to say that in order that the Lord may come for His Church, all the individuals of all the nations must hear the Gospel. Believers in the blessed Hope of the Coming of the Lord have a deep interest in foreign missions, unless they are given to extreme, fanciful or unscriptural notions. This is clearly established by a number of foreign missionary enterprises of the last twenty-five years, which have been inaugurated by men who believe in the premillennial Coming of the Lord and also by the large number of missionaries in all lands, who are out and out premillennialists. The accusation that believing in the imminent Coming of the Lord paralyzes missionary efforts is unjust and unfair. It stimulates missionary activity. The believer in the Coming of the Lord desires the Gospel to be preached in the great, wide field of the nations, that the church may be completed as to numbers. How soon this may be none can tell.

If the verse before us contained a necessary condition before the Lord can come to receive His fellow heirs, the church, in Glory, then the end must be indefinitely postponed. Other difficulties arise if this were the case.

But let us look at this preaching of this Gospel as in the future and all will become clear. In the first place must we remind ourselves that it is at the end of the age that the glad tidings of the Kingdom are to be heralded through the earth. The end of which the Lord speaks, the termination of that Jewish age, as we shall see later in this chapter, will be the visible manifestation of the Son of Man in power and in glory out of the opened heavens. The glorified church, the Lamb's wife, comes forth with Him in that visible manifestation.

Let us then have this fixed first of all, the preaching of which the Lord speaks is a future witness to all the nations, and that witness must be given before His visible manifestation will take place.

In the next place we have to ascertain what witness will be given. It will be the proclamation of the glad tidings, or Gospel, of the Kingdom. What does this mean? Superficial readers of the Word of God make no difference between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace. Many speak of the preaching of John the Baptist and the Lord and His disciples in the first part of Matthew, when they announced "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," as if it were the same thing as the Gospel of Grace, which is so freely offered after the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a difference between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace.

What then is the Gospel of the Kingdom? As we learn in the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of the

Kingdom is the good news that the promised Kingdom* of the Old Testament was about to be established with the manifestation of the King. (Our lecture on the Kingdom in the Old Testament, published in tract form, will give more complete information about the Kingdom.) But the nation rejected Him and rejected the offered Kingdom. Some time after the day of Pentecost this Gospel of the Kingdom was preached to the nation. It was to Jews that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom when Peter declared unto them after the healing of the lame man, he being a type of the nation (Acts 3:1), "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached to you; whom the heavens must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-20). This was the good news of the Kingdom. If the nation had then repented and accepted the renewed offer, the Lord would have come again and with His coming the restitution of all things as foretold by all the prophets. This restitution, of course, does not consist in the resurrection and restoration of the wicked dead, as an unscriptural restitutionism claims, but in the glorious things of the earthly Kingdom and the promised blessings to Israel. Soon the nation rejected the last offer in the stoning of Stephen. The measure was full. In the Old Testament Jehovah had offered Himself to them as their King and they had rejected Him. Then He came manifested in the flesh and they rejected Him, God the Son. Then the Holy Spirit in Stephen's testimony was likewise rejected.

With that event the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom ceased. Another Gospel was preached. The Lord gave it to the great Apostle, whom He called Himself, Paul. And Paul calls this Gospel "my Gospel." It is the Gospel of God's free Grace to all who believe, the Gospel of the Glory of God, the Gospel of a risen and glorified Lord. The mystery of the church is made known to Paul, and it is part of that blessed Gospel that every believing sinner, Jew or Gentile, is baptized by the one Spirit into the one body. This Baptism took place on the day of Pentecost. The Gospel of Grace declares that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are quickened together with Him, raised up and seated with Him in the Heavenly, that they are Sons of God and Heirs of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. This then is the Gospel of Grace. This wonderful offer goes out now to the nations of the earth that the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ may be gathered. It had a definite beginning, it will have a definite end. When that body, the church, is complete, the church will be removed from the earth in the manner as revealed in 1 Thess. 4:16-17, and with this the preaching of the Gospel of Grace will come to an end, because the purpose for which God had this Gospel proclaimed is accomplished.

Now during the time that the Kingdom was preached to be at hand the Gospel of Grace was not heard, and during the time the Gospel of Grace is preached the Gospel of the Kingdom is not preached. But as soon as the Gospel of Grace has fulfilled its mission and is no longer heard, the glad tidings of the kingdom will be preached again.

As soon then as the church leaves this earthly scene and the end of the age begins, the Gospel of Grace will no more be heard, but in place of it, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be sounded forth once more to all the nations, before the heavens, silent for so many, many centuries, will be opened again to reveal the King, who comes to execute judgment and to rule the earth in righteousness, Under the solemn signs of the ending Jewish age it will be proclaimed world wide, "Fear God and give Glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come and worship Him that made heaven and the earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." The Kingdom is at hand; repent!

And who will be the preachers of this last witness, the missionaries who reach all nations with this final message before the King appears in judgment? They are a believing Israelitish remnant. God in His wonderful grace will begin a work among His earthly people Israel. The Holy Spirit, who has His abode, as long as the church is forming, in the church, will have accomplished His mission in the completed body and will no longer be present on the earth as He is now; but He will still be working and that in the same way as He did in the Old Testament, He will come upon a remnant of believers from the long blinded nation Israel. These will take up the work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations, and no doubt special power will rest upon them for that service. How well this people is fitted to do this, needs little comment. They are now scattered among all the nations. They understand the languages of the nations, they are at home in every climate. When the church is no longer here, God in His mercy will turn to His own people again and the blindness of a company of them will be removed and the Spirit of God will come upon them. We believe this remnant will most likely consist of such Hebrews who are at this time still holding to the Messianic hope of a coming deliverer, who hold fast the law and the testimony, who firmly believe in the prophecies of their own Scriptures. Alas! hundreds of thousands have broken with the faith in God's Word and God's promises.

Such a remnant according to the election of Grace (Romans 11) will be called, and this remnant will be used as the great

herald to announce to all the nations the great coming events. What preachers they will be!

And now before we look at the purpose of this preaching and to whom they will go and what their success will be, we have to follow the argument laid down in the beginning of the exposition of this chapter. We remind the reader that we claimed that inasmuch as these predictions of our Lord refer to the end of the Jewish age, that we must be able to find all what is spoken of here both in the Old Testament and in that part of the book of Revelation, which treats of the things to come, after the history of the church is finished on earth (chapters 6-19). We have found already the remarkable correspondency which exists between the predictions of the Old Testament concerning the time of distress of the end of the age, the predictions of our Lord and the seal judgments of Revelation. Is there a similar agreement about a witnessing remnant of God's earthly people? Has the Old Testament anything to say about this? Do we find anything mentioned about such a remnant in the book of Revelation? Both Old Testament prophecy and the book of Revelation give us most interesting light on this remnant, the testimony they will bear, the suffering and the persecution they will have to stand, and their final deliverance.

The Old Testament is full of predictions and descriptions of this remnant. Indeed it is next to impossible to understand prophecy relating to the things to come if one does not reckon with that remnant, which is so prominent in the pre-written history of the end of the age. Especially rich is the book of Psalms. The great prayers, cries to God for deliverance, calls to God to destroy the enemies, are all prophetic descriptions of how a faithful remnant of God's earthly people will go through that time of great trouble and be delivered out of it. In these great prayers and calls upon God for interference, the ungodly part of the nation as well as the Gentiles are mentioned. Showing how they are in the midst of them giving their faithful testimony. It would be impossible to show all the passages which speak of this future remnant in the Old Testament. Almost throughout every one of the prophets do we find this remnant and the words which God speaks to encourage and comfort them.

Turning to the book of Revelation we find a very striking confirmation of this fact. We found that under the sixth seal a great upheaval took place. Anarchy is let loose and all the mighty governments of the earth are shaken, rebellion spreads worldwide. Before the seventh seal is broken by the Lord we read of something else. The seventh chapter of Revelation is a parenthesis. The first part of it tells us that then in the beginning of these fearful events, a company of 144,000 will be sealed. Who is this company? It is a most fanciful, worse than that, evil interpretation, which makes of the 144,000 a company of Christian believers. The theory of a "first-fruit" rapture has no scriptural foundation whatever and it aims in a most subtle way at God's Grace, giving man a share, by his attainments, experience, suffering and other things, to become worthy to enter into the presence of the Lord. We have listened to such teaching repeatedly that the 144,000 of Revelation 7 are a company of "sanctified" Christians (as if there were sanctified and unsanctified believers). Companies of people all over this country claim to be part of "the elect Bride," a part of the 144,000, and not a few of these hold extremely fanatical views. The Word of God makes it so clear that it is almost impossible to believe that any intelligent person could fail to see who these 144,000 are. The Spirit of God tells us that they are "of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Christian believers do not belong to the twelve tribes of the children of Israel; furthermore, if these 144,000 were parts of the church, a first-fruit, the previous part of Revelation, especially chapters 2-5, would be most difficult to explain, and the divinely given division of the book would be wiped out. The 144,000 then are literal Israelites and these constitute the remnant of God's earthly people, the preachers of the Kingdom Gospel during the great tribulation.

In the second part of Revelation 7 we read of a countless multitude out of all nations, who have come out of the great tribulation and who stand before the throne of God. This multitude is not the church, because the church does not come "out of the great tribulation," nor do the church saints stand before the throne, but they are seated upon thrones in the presence of the throne of God (Rev. 4). This great multitude are those who heard God's last witness during the end of the age, the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel and who believed the message and were yet saved and we see these in the presence of the throne of God, their millennial position and blessing in the earth. The multitude is the blessed result of the preaching of the remnant of Israel.

It is, however, to be stated that those who had the Gospel of Grace presented unto them and who rejected God's gracious offer, who went on in apostasy will not have another chance to accept "the Gospel of the Kingdom." Second Thess. 2:10-12 reveals the fate of all the Christ and Gospel rejecting professing "Christian" masses. But the nations in Africa, China, India, the isles of the sea will hear and accept the Gospel of the Kingdom and gladly receive these messengers whom later the Lord calls "these my brethren" (Matthew 25:31, etc). Thus during the very end, God's Grace will still be manifested ere

that great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

The next verse brings us into the middle of the week, the great tribulation, and we shall have to turn to the prophet Daniel and the thirteenth chapter of Revelation to establish still clearer the fact that our Lord has in these predictions exclusive reference to the end of the Jewish age.

We have learned then that the events predicted by our Lord up to the fourteenth verse fall into the beginning of the ending of the Jewish age, the seven prophetic years; with the fifteenth verse we reach the middle of this period, three years and a half are passed and the second half with its mighty events culminating in the personal and visible manifestation of the Son of Man out of heaven is now described. With the second half of these seven years, the last 1,260 days, the great tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, is fully developed. We shall find as we advance that not alone the interpretation we have laid down for this chapter is the right one, but that no other one is possible; all expositions, which claim a fulfilment of these words of our Lord in the past, or which apply these events to the church period, must be rejected as incorrect. Let us read the words of our Lord beginning at the fifteenth verse.

"When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which is spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in what is a holy place (he that reads let him understand); then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let not him that is on the house come down to take the things out of his house; and let not him that is in the field turn back to take his garment. But woe to those that are with child, and those that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight may not be in winter time nor on Sabbath; for then shall there be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now nor ever shall be; and if those days had not been cut short no flesh had been saved; but on account of the elect those days shall be cut short" (verses 15-22).

Our Lord gives us a most important hint on what He means by these words, by mentioning the Prophet Daniel. Then furthermore, the Holy Spirit adds through Matthew a word of exhortation, which calls special attention to the Lord's reference to Daniel, the prophet. The Holy Spirit saith, "He that reads let him understand"; or, as it might be put, "Consider so as to understand." It will, therefore, not do for us to hurry over this word of our Lord, to which the Holy Spirit calls our special attention, which He the great interpreter of the Word of God wants us to consider and to understand fully.

We must, therefore, turn first of all to the Prophet Daniel. Does he mention anything in his great prophecies about a future abomination and where do we find these passages? He does in three places.

"And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and because of the protection of the abominations there shall be a desolator, even until that the consumption and what is determined shall be poured out upon the desolate" (Daniel 9:27).

"And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, the fortress, and shall take away the continual sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate" (11:31).

"And from the time that the continual sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (12:11).

There can be no doubt that the Lord refers to these three passages in Daniel, and it is of that abomination mentioned in these passages of which He speaks. These three verses in Daniel refer all to the same period of time; this period is three years and a half. The same space of time is mentioned in Daniel 7:25. "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hands, until a time and times and the dividing of time" (which makes three and a half). Then in Daniel 10:7 we have it mentioned again.... "It shall be for a time, times and a half, and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." When later in the course of this exposition we come to the book of Revelation we shall discover the same period of time there.

It is not our purpose to enter fully into Daniel's great prophecies. To do this would lead us too far and prolong our exposition. The most important passage of the three we have quoted, is the one from the ninth chapter; as the others treat of the same period, we shall not consider these (Dan. 11:31 and 12:11) at all. The ninth chapter in that prophetic book

contains the prayer of Daniel and the wonderful answer he received. He was meditating on the Word of the Lord as it came to Jeremiah the prophet, when he turned to the Lord in prayer. This seems to us is the true and perfect way of turning to God in prayer. First communion with God through the written Word, His revelation, and then to seek His face. He was occupied in his prayer with the years of captivity. The man Gabriel appears, he came flying swiftly to assure him that he was greatly beloved and to give him the answer to his prayer. The answer is a revelation relating to seventy-year weeks, that is seven times seventy; a period of time which was to come.

We take it for granted that our readers are delivered from the old, superficial and erroneous interpretation, which looks upon Daniel 9:24-27 as having been completely fulfilled with the death of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. It is strange that the clear division of these seventy weeks has been so much ignored. (To our readers who are unsettled on the interpretation of this most important prophecy, or who desire a real good work on Daniel 9, we recommend Sir R. Anderson's most excellent work, "The Coming Prince." It is most helpful, clearly written and sound. See also "The Great Parenthesis" by Ironside.)

The 24th verse in Daniel 9 is the prophecy stated in a general way. "Seventy weeks are apportioned out upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to close the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make expiation for iniquity, and to bring in the righteousness of ages, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Holy of Holies." Seventy sevens, as it is in the Hebrew, make 490. This space of time is, so Gabriel declared, apportioned out, for the people of Israel and Jerusalem, and at the close of it the full blessing of Israel will come to pass; the righteousness of ages, undoubtedly refers to the kingdom age, the millennium. So in a general way the whole prophecy of seventy-year weeks is given and what shall be accomplished in them and at the close of them for the people Israel and for Jerusalem. But now as we read on we find a division of these seventy weeks. First: Seven weeks; secondly: Sixty-two weeks; thirdly: One week. What does this division mean? We are not left to speculation, for the Word makes it plain. "Know, therefore, and understand: From the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince, are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street and the moat shall be built again, even in troublesome times. And after sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with an overflow, and unto the end war, the desolation determined (verses 25-26)." The first seven weeks, that is 49 years, is the period of time which elapsed from the giving of the command to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls till this was accomplished. The commission to restore and build Jerusalem was given to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes in his twentieth year. The sixty-two weeks is the period of time from the complete restoration of the city and the walls till Messiah is cut off, that is the death of Christ, and there is nothing for Him. His own people reject Him and then in consequence of that rejection, the city and the sanctuary is to be destroyed by the people of the prince, that shall come. Wars and desolations, persecutions and troubles, bloodshed and sufferings, was to be the lot of the Jewish people after the rejection of the Messiah, a prophecy stated not only here but throughout the prophetic Word and so solemnly come true for well nigh two thousand years. The people who destroyed the city and the sanctuary were Romans. But now we have one week left. Of this last week we read in the last verse of Daniel 9, the verse in which the abomination is mentioned, to which our Lord and the Holy Spirit calls attention. This week, or seven years, is the end. It is a week, a period of time still future. With the 69th week Messiah was cut off, He had nothing; His people had rejected Him and the offered kingdom; an indefinite period follows, during which the Jews are outcasts, scattered into the corners of the earth, Jerusalem trodden down by the Gentiles. It is the present age in which we live, in which God's gracious offer of free and full salvation for the gathering out of a people for His Name (the church) is preached. How soon this may end no one knows. It will end at some time and then Jewish history from a prophetic standpoint will be resumed, the Jewish age will close to be followed by the kingdom or millennial age, when the righteousness of the ages will come in.

And what then is to take place in that last week, in the coming seven years, that very time which was indicated in the question of the disciples when they asked about "the end of the age" and which the Lord describes in this part of His discourse? We say again it seems strange that so many learned men should be so superficial in expounding the Word of God. How true it is, many of these things are hid from the wise and the prudent; and they are revealed unto babes. Thus many have not alone made no distinction of the division of the weeks as given in the text, but they have not distinguished between the two princes mentioned in these verses. The one Prince is Messiah, the other prince is a counterfeit, the false prince. It is claimed by this incorrect interpretation that the prince who confirms the covenant with the many for one week is Christ. But the one of whom the 27th verse speaks is not Messiah the Prince, but "the prince who shall come." It is that wicked head of the Roman empire in its last revived form of whom we read in different parts in prophecy. The Roman power had come upon the land and destroyed Jerusalem and burned the temple. This was prophetically stated in verse 26;

but it does not say that "the prince shall come to destroy the city," but the people of the prince "that shall come," in other words, the Roman power destroyed the city and from that power a prince is to emanate in the future. Up to now this prince has not yet appeared; when he comes he will be the leader of the confederacy of the nations, who inhabit the territory of the Roman empire, a mighty man who is under the control and inspiration of Satan. Perhaps Napoleon I is the nearest photograph the world has seen of that prince who shall come. It would be most interesting to follow all this in detail, but we are not writing on Daniel or the false king and the antichrist, but on Matthew 24, and so we can only give the most simple facts so as to make the chapter as clear as possible. Now when this prince, the head of the revived Roman empire, appears, he will make a covenant with the Jews. His covenant will be for one week, that is for seven years. It is interesting to notice that the covenant will be made with "the many," not with all, for the believing Jewish remnant will know the true personality of the wicked prince and refuse to enter into that covenant. What this covenant will be we do not follow now. Suffice it to say that it will be undoubtedly of a political nature and connected with the resettlement of the Jews in Palestine, the rebuilding of the temple and the institution of their worship by sacrifices. Zionism, the great restoration movement of the Jews in unbelief, sheds a flood of light on these coming events. If Zionists were ready to herald the Sultan as their deliverer, should he allow them the practical carrying out of their program, how much more will they be willing to accept an agreement with that mighty prince, who is to come. This covenant will be effected in the beginning of the week (seven years) and all will run smoothly for a while. But in the middle of the week he will unmask himself and in conjunction with that other wicked one, the man of sin, the son of perdition, the personal antichrist, he will break the covenant and cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. In its place he will set up the abomination (Dan. 11:31). What then is this abomination? It will be idolatrous worship. The 13th chapter in the book of Revelation gives us more light on this abomination of the last three years and a half of the Jewish age ending. We shall turn to this chapter at once. However, before we do so we wish to say that to our mind the argument is complete. The seventy weeks have to do exclusively with the Jewish people. The first seven weeks, the sixty-two weeks and the last, the seventieth. It is impossible to find a place for the church in this prophecy. Her place is in the unreckoned period between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. She does not belong, nor a part of the church, into the last week.

And now we shall briefly examine the book of Revelation on this subject. We have laid this down in the beginning of our exposition, if the words of our Lord refer to the future events of the definitely marked end of the age then these three, Old Testament prophecy on this theme, the Words of the Lord, and the book of Revelation must be a complete harmony. We have seen how perfectly this has been the case up to the fifteenth verse and now we have still more striking proof.

The thirteenth chapter of Revelation corresponds in part to the middle of the week; the last half of the seven years and the events transpiring on Jewish ground, in Jerusalem, are described here. Here we find the 1,260 days, the 3-1/2 years. In the twelfth chapter Satan is seen cast out of heaven, cast down upon the earth and the heavens pronounce a woe upon the inhabitants of the earth, for he is come down and has great wrath, for he has but little time. When the church is received into glory, the casting out of Satan will take place. He comes down and finds the church gone from this earthly scene and then in his great wrath he begins his awful work.

The thirteenth chapter of Revelation is the perfect counterpart of Daniel's prophecies; even a beginner in the study of prophecy can see that. Two beasts are seen in this chapter. The first rises out of the sea typifying the nations. The second comes out of the earth and has two horns like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon. The first is "the prince that shall come," the wicked leader of the revived Roman empire; the second one is the false Messiah, the antichrist, who mimics the true Christ. What will then take place is clearly stated in Rev. 13:12-18. There we read of an image. "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." This, no doubt, will be the abomination, an image worshipped; as well as the second beast, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God (not in Rome, but in Jerusalem), showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). This then is the abomination which falls in the last half of the seventieth week. The result of this abomination, the revelation of Satan's power upon the earth, will be the great tribulation. This is fully borne out by the thirteenth chapter in Revelation. Of this our Lord speaks, when he said, "for then shall there be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world, until now, nor ever shall be." And in Daniel we likewise read of this tribulation. "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (12:1). The context shows that it will be at this very time of which the Lord speaks, immediately before His personal, visible and glorious Coming.

The words which the Lord utters concerning those who will be then on the earth show clearly that they are not church

saints. They are in Judea and are asked to flee to the mountains; a foreshadowing of this was seen at the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. They are asked to pray that their flight should not take place on the Sabbath; they are called the "elect," a term which in this chapter as well as throughout the Gospels always means His earthly people; in the Epistles the word "elect" always means the church.

The next words of the Lord in His discourse contain warnings. "Then if any one say to you, Behold here is the Christ, or here, believe is not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold I have told you beforehand. If, therefore, they say to you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold he is in the inner chambers, do not believe it. For as the lightning goes forth from the east and shines to the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man" (verses 23-27). Deceivers have appeared from time to time throughout this age, claiming, like Simon Magus, "to be some great one." No question that many of these evil, fanatical leaders were and are energized by Satan. Not a few of such deluded persons we see today; the evil power likewise manifests its signs and lying wonders to a certain degree, while another system claims that the Lord Jesus Christ came in a secret manner in 1874 (Millennial Dawnism). But all this is not a fulfilment of the words spoken by the Lord. The fulfilment comes in the great tribulation. Of the second beast, who imitates the lamb, but speaks as a dragon, it is written, "He doeth great wonders so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of these miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast" (Rev. 13:13-14). This corresponds with that passage in 2 Thess. 2 from which we quoted above; the false Christ will deceive by his signs and lying wonders and the strong delusion, all those who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Not alone will the apostate part of the Jewish people be deceived by these lying wonders, but also the apostate part of Christendom, left behind after the rapture of the church has taken place, will be deceived and swept away in the great judgments of that coming day. These warnings will be of great importance and value to the Jewish believing remnant, living in those days. The Lord tells them that His coming will not be in a secret way but openly, seen by all like the flash of lightning. It will be a sudden, a startling coming; as the lightning flashes over the dark sky and strikes down upon the earth, so will He the Son of Man make his appearance. It is not necessary to say that this lightning-like Coming is wholly distinct from His coming for His own. Then the Lord adds a significant word, "For wherever the carcass is, there will be gathered the eagles" (verse 28). The interpretation which makes the eagles the church, or a certain class of "advanced believers" is so weak and fanciful that we do not think it necessary to speak of it here. The carcass is the type of corruption and it represents here the unbelieving part of the Jewish people, that part which followed the beast. The eagles stand for the judgments. In the next verses the Coming of the Son of Man in Power and Glory is revealed by Himself, the coming One. Once more we shall have to turn back to the Old Testament and to the book of Revelation to find another perfect harmony.

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds from the one extremity of the heavens to the other extremity of them" (verses 29-31).

It is unnecessary to call attention to the misinterpretation of this passage, which by the spiritualizing method claims a fulfillment of these words at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. What we have learned in the exposition of this part of the Olivet discourse makes such an application and interpretation an impossibility. It is ridiculous to say that the Lord spoke these words about His visible manifestation, but did not really mean a literal return; but what He meant is the destruction of Jerusalem. The context proves that the event could not have taken place at the time of the destruction of the city.

What is before us in these words of the Lord is the great climax of the end, the visible appearing of the Son of Man. It is to be immediately after the days of tribulation; that tribulation we have seen is still future and has for its center Jerusalem, though all the earth will share in it. And now we have to turn once more to the Old Testament Word of Prophecy. Do we find there anything promised, which corresponds to this predicted visible and glorious coming of the Son of Man? And if we find in the Old Testament prophecies which correspond to these words, in what connection do we find them?

We find indeed in the Old Testament numerous predictions of just such an event of which the Lord speaks here and a

Careful investigation will show that these predictions of the Old Testament and the prediction of our Lord here fully harmonize.

The first passage we desire to mention is a prophecy in the last chapter of Joel. "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel 3:15). Joel is one of the earliest prophets. While he announces and speaks of a great locust judgment which came upon the people Israel and upon the land, his prophecy points to the great future fulfillment in the "Yom Jehovah," the Day of the Lord. The third chapter contains one of the great prophecies of that future day and the events connected with that day. The verse we quoted gives the physical signs and the verses which follow show that the Lord will be manifested in His Glory in the midst of these wonders in the heavens. The prophecies which prophesy after Joel have nearly all visions of that day.

We give a few other Scriptures to show this. "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright light will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 32:7-8). Here it is the proclamation of the day as it is to come upon Egypt and the nations. Another prophecy of the day of the Lord's manifestation is found in Isaiah 13:9-10. "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the Stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." We do not need to quote other prophecies from the prophetic books and the Psalms. The day of the Lord is announced in many passages. It is always seen in connection with great troubles on the earth, tribulation for His earthly people, culminating in these startling physical signs, darkened heavens, shaking earth and the manifestation of the Glory of the Lord. And this is the event of which our Lord speaks in Matthew 24:29.

But there will be not only physical signs, but something else will occur. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heaven. This will be followed by the mourning of the tribes and then the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

What is the sign of the Son of Man? We believe it will be the Shekinah cloud. It was a cloud which enshrouded His form when He tarried with Israel of old. A cloud it was which received Him out of the sight of His disciples; a cloud must bring Him back. At the bitter end of the great tribulation, when His faithful remnant is hard pressed on all sides, when they cry to God for the heavens to open and to come down, there will be seen, we believe, in the heavens a bright and shining cloud, a cloud from which fire shines out. Well may the believing Jewish remnant then cry out, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, this is the Lord, He will save us." His elect earthly people, those which have not been swept away during the great tribulation, the "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 will know what that cloud means. Jehovah is coming to be manifested. What their prophets saw and predicted is at last to come true. The Day of Jehovah is about to dawn, the Lord their King is coming.

The consequence will be a national mourning. It is not to be thought for a moment that all the tribes must be in the land. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens and will be seen from all continents. "All the tribes of the land" simply means that the persons who mourn belong to all the tribes of Israel. This again is predicted in the Old Testament. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born" (Zech. 12:10). But that sign of the Son of Man will not tarry long in the heavens. He Himself comes on the clouds of heaven in great power and glory. The promise given by the two men at the time of the Lord's ascension is now to be fulfilled. "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye see Him go into heaven." He ascended upon high; He predicted this event in uttering these words in the Olivet discourse.

And this too is found in the Old Testament prophetic Word. "I saw in the night visions and behold, one, like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven..." (Daniel 7:14). This takes place after the ten-horned beast with the little horn, with the eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things, had come forth. All this refers to the end of the Jewish age. The little horn is the same evil person seen elsewhere in prophecy. It is then and not before, when the little horn is in existence, that Daniel sees the Ancient of Days and the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven to receive the Kingdom. What a wonderful and divine unity the Scriptures are!

If we turn briefly to the Book of Revelation, we shall find once more a minute confirmation of these revealed events. It is the Book which in its greater part is taken up with the description of the tribulation, judgments and other events of the last week of Daniel; the seven years with which the age closes. Therefore in the very beginning of the Book do we find a solemn announcement which fully harmonizes with the words before us here. "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen" (Rev. 1:7). It needs no further comment to show how fully these words confirm both the Old Testament predictions and the predictions of our Lord. This striking harmony should not appear to us as so very wonderful, for He who speaks the words on the Mount of Olives is the same who spoke through the prophets and the last Book is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him."

For a fuller description of His Coming the reader will turn to Rev. 19:11-16.

Let us now turn to the next words. "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the one extremity of the heavens to the other extremity of them." Angels appear now once more upon the scene. Throughout this present dispensation angels as the ministering spirits are not seen; that they do minister is certainly a fact. But as soon as He comes again, He who was made a little lower than the angels, and who is above the angels in Glory, they will be sent forth again. When he was born in Bethlehem they appeared with their heavenly song of praise; when He comes again the holy angels will accompany the Christ and His church and the angels will worship Him (Heb. 1:6). It is also written "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7-8). In Matthew 13 we likewise find that angels are mentioned in connection with the end of the age, the same end as here. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and He shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity" (13:41). "So shall it be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just" (13:49). In our passage the angels sound a trumpet and they go out to gather His elect from the four winds. We say once more that this has nothing to do with the church. The removal of the church takes place before the last week of Daniel's prophecy begins and when the Lord comes immediately after the days of tribulation, the church is with Him and in His Glory the church is manifested. He comes and brings His saints with Him. The revelation concerning His coming for the church is recorded in 1 Thess. 4:15-18. To make the elect in Matthew 24:30 the church, as it is done so often, is bewildering and a wrong interpretation. This part of the Olivet discourse, as we have shown, has nothing whatever to do with the church. The "Elect" in this chapter always means His elect earthly people, as stated before.

The angels will gather them back to the land and bring them in, for the people in greater part are still scattered in the corners of the earth, when the Son of Man, the King of Israel, returns. Of this the Old Testament bears witness. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem" (Isaiah 27:13). "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros and from Cush, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:11, 12). "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. But the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither He had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall find them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks" (Jer. 16:14-16). This regathering of the remnant of Israel, the people left after the great tribulation, takes place after the Lord has been manifested out of the heavens. Then the "lost tribes" will be discovered, and during the age of the Kingdom, God will fulfil in His regathered people, the nation Israel, all the precious promises His prophets spoke and which a false theory called "Anglo-Israelism" attempts to have realized in this present Christian age.

What follows now are exhortations and solemn warnings given by the Lord, and these form a sublime conclusion of this first part of the Olivet discourse, referring, as we have learned, to the end of the Jewish Age. We shall look briefly at each verse.

"But learn the parable from the fig tree: When already its branch becomes tender and produces leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh. Thus also ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors" (verses 32, 33). The fig tree is the picture of Israel. The parable of the fig tree in Luke 13 is well known, and its application is Israel, to whom the Lord came, looking for fruit, and did not find it. Luke 21, the record there of this discourse, mentions likewise the fig tree and all the trees; these are the Gentiles, the nations. In Matthew 21, we see in the withered fig tree a type of Israel's spiritual and national death. But that withered tree is to be vitalized. The fig tree will bud again. However, the characteristic of the fig tree is that fruit and leaves are there together. As soon as the branch becomes tender the fruit is found. It is a rapid development. This is the lesson here. Israel's blessing, new life, fruit and glory will quickly be realized in those end days. When in these last seven years, and especially the last 1,260 days, all these things come to pass, they will know that all which is promised to Israel will be at hand. The other application, that now we behold Israel like a budding fig tree, signs of new national life and in this a sign of the times, is certainly not wrong. It tells us of the nearness of the end.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place. The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but my Words shall in no wise pass away" (verses 34, 35).

The wrong interpretation of the word "generation" is responsible for the erroneous conception so prevalent in our days. It is said that "this generation" must mean the very generation, the people who lived then upon the earth, when the Lord spoke these words. It is easily seen how, if this is the meaning of "this generation," the events predicted by our Lord must have been fulfilled within the life-time of the people living then. What other event could be meant than the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70? Thus the wrong interpretation of these two words, "this generation," has led the large numbers of Bible teachers and readers of this discourse astray. But let us get the right meaning of "generation" and all will be clear. The word *genea* means not necessarily the same persons living, but it has also the meaning of race. The English word "generation" has this meaning of "family or a race of a certain class of people." And so has the Greek. It is used in that sense in Luke 16:8. "This generation" is the race sprung from Abraham, God's chosen earthly people. Well have they been called "the everlasting nation;" better still we could call them "the nation of destiny." God has kept this race, and is keeping them for the fulfilment of His own great, revealed purpose. The verse, however, has also the meaning that the people living, when the end of the Jewish age sets in, will behold its termination; it will all be accomplished in a small space of time. Yea heaven and earth may pass away but His Words will not pass away. How solemn this is! Here we read still the same great and mighty Words, which were hated by thousands of God's enemies in the past; words which have been attacked and denied. And still the old enemy of the written Word is at it, and through his chosen instruments (alas! many of them in the midst of the professing church) attacks and belittles these Words. They stand! They are as eternal and divine, as infallible and true, as He, the eternal Son of God, is from whose lips they came.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, but my Father alone" (verse 36).

This makes the matter still more solemn. That day and hour, which will usher in these mighty events, of which the Lord speaks in His discourse, culminating in His own personal and glorious manifestation, is unknown. In the Gospel of Mark the Holy Spirit adds, "nor the Son." This addition is made in Mark because there our Lord is viewed as God's servant, and a servant "does not know what his master doeth." The Father knows the day and the hour, when all this is to come to pass. The beginning of it is liable to occur at any time. How foolish, then, to speculate on the possible time of our Lord's return -- and the setting of years and days. It dishonors the Word and brings reproach upon Prophecy.

"But as the days of Noe, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. For as they were in the days which were before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day on which Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came and took all away; thus shall be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two shall be in the field, one is taken and one is left; two women grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left. Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour your Lord comes" (verses 37-42).

The introduction here of Noah and the flood is in fullest accord with the entire chapter. Noah lived at the close of an age, and was saved with his house through a great judgment, and then became the beginning of a new age. That this is typical of the remnant of Israel living at the close of the Jewish age is well known. As Noah's age closed with the deluge, so will the Jewish age close with judgment. The judgment came suddenly upon the ungodly generation of Noah's day; thus will it be when the Son of Man cometh. Two classes were living in Noah's day. The one who were unbelieving and these were swept away by the divine judgment. The other class was Noah and his house, and he and his own were left and not

destroyed by the judgment. It will be so again in the coming of the Son of Man. The unbelievers will be taken away in the day of judgment and wrath; the others will be left on the earth to receive and enjoy the blessings of the coming age and enter into the kingdom, which will then be established. It is the opposite meaning of "taken" and "left" when the Lord comes as the "Bridegroom" for His church. Then, too, some will be taken and others left. The true believers will be taken into glory, caught up in clouds to meet Him in the air; the unbelievers and mere professors will be left. Some deny that the word "taken" in our passage means a judicial taking away. The context, however, shows (the reference to Noah and the flood) that this must be the meaning. Surely those who were taken by the flood were not "received into glory."

And now once more His warning voice is heard.

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be dug through. Wherefore ye also, be ye ready, for in that hour ye think not the Son of Man comes" (verses 43, 44). With these words of warning and exhortation to watch, our Lord closes the predictions relating to the end of the Jewish age. This warning will be understood and heeded by the Jewish remnant, to which it is addressed. They are to watch for the Son of Man; the church is to wait for her Lord.

With the next verse, the beginning of the first of three parables relating to His coming, a new part of the Olivet discourse begins. We will find this very clearly marked and shall prove next that this part, from chapter 24:45 to chapter 25:30 refers no longer to the events which transpire on the earth during the end of the Jewish age, but to something altogether different. [For an excellent interpretation of this passage, 24:45-25:30, cf. "studies in the Gospel of Matthew" by E. Schuyler English, pp. 180-188.]

The second part of the Olivet discourse begins with the 45th verse of this great chapter and extends to chapter 25:30. The contents of this division are entirely different from the preceding one. Up to the forty-fourth verse we learned that the Lord gives predictions relating to the end of the Jewish age, an end still to come. We traced all these predictions in the Old Testament and in the great book of prophecy in the New Testament, the Revelation. We found the closest correspondency between Matthew 24:3-44, certain parts of the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation, because all three deal with the same period of time. But now another series of predictions are before us which have no connection with Old Testament prophecy nor with Revelation 6-19.

In the first part of this discourse we hear of wars, pestilence, famine, great tribulation, false Christs, the abomination of desolation, Judea, the Sabbath day and the visible and glorious coming of the Son of Man. The exhortations were to flee to the mountains, to pray that the flight take not place on the Sabbath day, to endure unto the end for salvation, etc. Of all this we do not read a word in the second section of our Lord's utterances. Here again he speaks in parables as He did in His second discourse in this Gospel, contained in chapter 13. The three parables which make up this part of the Olivet discourse picture the condition of things during the absence of the King and how in the professing church, in Christendom, there will be the true and the false, possessors and professors, saved and unsaved, such who have life and such who have a name to live but are dead. These three parables then may be justly put alongside of the seven parables in chapter 13 dealing with the kingdom of heaven; the phrase the Lord uses again in giving the second parable. The great parables in the thirteenth chapter give the beginning, the external and internal development of Christendom, in a general way; the three parables in the Olivet discourse give the moral aspect of those who are in the professing church, and each is linked with the fact of His coming again. His coming discerns the true and the false and brings the separation of the good from the bad.

Let us, however, understand clearly that we have in these parables not the full revelation of what is the blessed Hope for the Church. The Church is, as we have seen from our exposition, mentioned in this first Gospel and spoken of as being an institution of the future.

Not in the Gospels do we find full revelation about the church, her relationships, her calling, her heavenly hope and glorious destiny. All this is made known elsewhere in the New Testament. The parables concern the Christian profession in a general way. If we hold this fast in our minds we shall find no difficulties at all. This Christian age is a mixed age and will be so to the end and the Coming One will find the faithful and prudent servants and the evil servant; the wise virgins and the foolish; the faithful servants using their talents and the wicked and slothful servant. The Coming One will mete out the judgment. The faithful servant is called "Blessed," the evil servant is cut in two and cast out. The wise virgins go in with the bridegroom and the foolish face a shut door. The servants who used the talents are set over many things and the

slothful servant is cast out into the outer darkness. That the Lord will first descend into the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18) and that the true believers, resurrected saints and living saints will be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air to appear then before the judgment seat of Christ; that the unsaved, nominal Christians will go into apostasy and after the great tribulation receive judgment when the Lord comes out of heaven and all His saints with Him -- all this is not revealed in these parables.

And now we turn to the first parable.

"Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord has set over his household, to give them food in season? Blessed is that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus. Verily, I say unto you, that he will set him over all his substance. But if that evil bondman should say in his heart, My lord delays to come, and begin to beat his fellow bondmen, and eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he does not expect it and in an hour he knows not of, and shall cut him in two and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verses 45-51).

The Lord still speaks to His disciples, but let us understand now while they are viewed in the first part as Jewish disciples and typical of the remnant of Israel in the end of the Jewish age, here the Lord looks upon them as soon to be in connection with something new, that is, Christianity. The parable itself is the simplest of all three; yet it has very significant and far-reaching lessons. The thought in this parable is service over the household; the household are those who are Christ's. This household is to receive food in season and the bondman or servant, faithful and prudent, is to supply the household with that food. He does it faithfully and at the coming of the Lord, this faithful and prudent bondman is set over all the substance of his lord. This is an extremely beautiful and blessed parable. It takes us at once upon an entirely new ground. Judaism knows nothing of that kind of ministry which is spoken of here; it is essentially Christian. The Lord, the great shepherd of His sheep, for whom He died, whom He loves so much, appointed His own as bondmen of Himself, to feed His flock, to give them to eat. This is what pleases the Lord, and it is only another proof of how dear and beloved His own people are to Him. Faithfulness to Him and to His own, His household, is the teaching of these words. The true servant (and every true believer has a service) is faithful and prudent and attends to that, to which his Lord has called him. And what keeps in such service? What is it that makes it ever fresh and refreshing, sweet and precious? It is the Hope of His Coming, yea, His imminent coming. The next paragraph, the description of the evil servant with his evil watchword, will bring this more prominently to our view. The reward of the faithful and prudent servant is a higher service, a service over all the substance of His Lord. Service does not terminate with this earthly life; there is a service up yonder, for "His servants shall serve Him." Faithful service here fits for that higher service in His presence. According to our faithfulness in service here we shall find service there to the praise and glory of His Name.

But now the other side comes up. The Lord pictures an evil servant and he saith in his heart, "My lord delays his coming." He acts outrageously, smites his fellow servants and eats and drinks with the drunken; suddenly his lord comes and gives him his portion with the hypocrites.

The interpretation is easily made. Here is the spurious, that which has taken the name of Christ and claims to be a servant likewise. The person described is a hypocrite; he professes outwardly to be a servant under his lord, but in his heart he saith, "My lord delays his coming." Then he usurps the place of authority, instead of serving in meekness, feeding Christ's own, he domineers over fellow servants and associates with the drunken.

The faithful and prudent servant is a picture of how it ought to be in the house, the church, and the evil servant in his hypocrisy and evil work is a picture of Christendom in corruption. The starting point of this corruption, this domineering over fellow servants and association with the drunken, the world, began with saying "my Lord delayeth his coming." It began in the heart. He gave up first in his heart that Hope, which was so pronounced in the early church. The belief given up that the Lord would come back, the departure from the doctrine of the imminency of the coming of the Lord, soon brought out the evils which the parable pictures. If the return of the Lord at any time had been the heart faith of the professing church, all the abominations of which the parable speaks would have been well nigh an impossibility. Gradually the belief in the coming of the Lord was given up; and as it was abandoned in the professing church, "the domineers of the people," the Nicolaitans sprung up; an earthly priesthood was inaugurated, fashioned after a priesthood, which was the shadow of the better things, fulfilled in Christ. This false priesthood took the place of authority and domineers over the others, the servants of Christ. The separation was likewise given up and the church became identified with the world. It is

another glimpse of the mustard seed in chapter 13 becoming a great tree with the birds flocking into its branches. The evil servant and his deeds are more fully pictured in the church message to Pergamos in the book of Revelation. But let us pass lightly over the fact that the evil servant began by saying in his heart, "my lord delayeth his coming." He may not have been that evil servant all at once; but as soon as he said in his heart that the lord delays he had taken the first step towards becoming corrupt in doctrine and in practice. The enemy had put that foolish thought into his heart and then led him on into the wickedness he practiced.

And has this no meaning for us? Indeed it Has. God's own Spirit through the Word has but a few years ago led back to the blessed Hope and the midnight cry has been heard, "Behold the bridegroom; go ye forth to meet Him." There has been a most powerful revival of the study of prophecy and the imminency of the coming of the Lord has been taught and believed with apostolic simplicity. It has led out and on into true service for Christ. One who believes in the imminent coming of the Lord cannot help himself from looking to that Lord of being responsible to Him for service and wait on Him for service. This has been the case. Of the large numbers of servants who have been used in preaching the Gospel and shepherding the flock of Christ, the great majority have been and are such "who wait for His Son from heaven." There is a remnant of faithful ones who expect Him to come, who wait for Him; this expectation leads to faithful and happy service. One can be very happy indeed in serving the Lord with the childlike but scriptural Hope "He may come today."

The enemy, however, is not satisfied with having God's people waiting for the Lord. He is the author of that evil cry, "my Lord delayeth his coming." And he has succeeded in producing it in these days of revival of the study of Prophecy. We know some who taught and believed the imminency of the coming of the Lord. All at once their voices were silent as to the blessed Hope. Why? In some way they became ensnared in teachings which put off the glorious event till after the great tribulation, the manifestation of the antichrist, etc., and this unscriptural view silenced their testimony completely. It is sad to see this, and we fear, if our Lord tarries, some of these men (as it has been already the case) will act the part of the evil servant in a still more pronounced way.

Let us beware of any teaching which has even the faintest insinuation in it of the Lord delaying his coming. It is not of God. Let us rather begin each day with the blessed expectation that He may come today and then go forth to serve and be faithful to Him. But be assured the enemy will not rest, but find some new and subtle way to take away the blessed Hope and the blessed expectation, and to try and bring us into conformity with the world. Only the power of God can keep us in these evil days in this simple path and that will rest upon us as we cling to Him, the Lord who comes.

We take the following from a recent volume by W. Kelly:

"Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapors that constantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish in their souls the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millennium first, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it must act as a veil, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope; yet one cannot but look for His coming in an imperfect manner. If you bring in a great tribulation first, this also lowers the outlook and enfeebles the hope greatly; it occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and its shade of desolation. They are mistakes of theorists. The one puts a wrong expectation between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that the church must go through so dreadful a crisis.

"Be assured, my brethren, that the Scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God's word is as true as our hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious kingdom; but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming. Without doubt the great tribulation shall come, but not for the Christian. When it is a question about the Jew, you can understand it well; for why does the greatest tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry; yea, of the Beast and the Antichrist worshipped. It is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing directly to do. The predicted trouble falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those that ought to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the abomination to be put into the sanctuary of God."

The second parable is the parable of the ten virgins. It is one which is interpreted by students of the prophetic Word in different ways; we are therefore obliged to give it our closest attention.

"Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be likened to ten virgins that, having taken their lamps, went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were prudent and five foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and did not take oil with them; but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now the bridegroom tarrying, they all grew heavy and slept. But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the prudent answered, saying: We cannot, lest it might not suffice for us and for you. Go rather to those that sell and buy for yourselves. But as they went away to buy the bridegroom came, and the ones that were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the rest of the virgins, saying Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answering, said, Verily I say unto you, I do not know you. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." (Verses 1-13.)

We have already shown that these parables have nothing more to do with the Jewish age and the remnant of His earthly people, which stands out so prominently in the first part of this discourse. However, as there is an increasing tendency among teachers of Prophecy to apply this parable of the virgins in a Jewish way, putting its fulfillment in the time of the great tribulation, we will be obliged to look at this view first and show that it is incorrect. After we have done this we shall be able to better grasp the meaning of this great parable and its teaching. The theory advanced is the following:

The Lord begins His parable with the word "then". This word proves that the parable refers to the time of the end of the Jewish age for that is described in the preceding chapter. Then -- when? -- when there is a time of trouble and the Lord is about to come. The parable is therefore applied by some teachers as referring to the condition of things on the earth at the close of the great tribulation. "Then" at that time when He returns after the great tribulation, shall the kingdom of the heavens be like ten virgins. It is furthermore claimed that the ten virgins do not represent the church, as the Bride of Christ. That the Bride is already with the Bridegroom and as the virgins are not the Bride, but go forth to meet the Bridegroom who comes with the Bride to the wedding feast, the parable could not be applied to present conditions; the Bride, the church, must be first with the Bridegroom, before the virgins can go out to meet Him.

Another fact is used to strengthen this exposition. Some of the oldest versions have additional three words in the first verse, so that it reads: "Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like ten virgins that having their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride." The words are found in the Syriac version and also in the Vulgate. This is generally taken to be the conclusive evidence that the parable falls in its fulfillment in the close of the great tribulation and that the five prudent virgins are the Jewish remnant.

And now we challenge this exposition as being incorrect and contrary to Scripture. Let us look at the arguments against it.

The use of the word "then" proves the very opposite from what it is made to prove. "Then," this little word, has always a great significance in Prophecy. Now if the parable of the ten virgins would come in at the close of the forty-fourth verse in chapter 24, the parable could mean absolutely nothing else but an event which is connected with the end of the great tribulation. We learned that the forty-fourth verse in the preceding chapter marked the close of the part of the discourse in which the Lord speaks of the signs of His coming and the end of the age. If we were to read in the forty-fifth verse, "Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be likened to ten virgins, etc.," there would be no other way but to connect the parable with the mighty events which the Lord had just described. It would have the same application as the "then" in verse forty. "Then two shall be in the field, one is taken and one is left." But will the reader notice as we have shown before, that with the forty-fifth verse the Lord introduces an entirely different theme; it is no longer the Jewish end of the age, the Jewish remnant, their suffering and deliverance, no longer His visible manifestation out of the heavens, but it is teaching in parables concerning this present Christian age, the Christian profession. One parable He had spoken, the parable of the faithful and the evil servant. How perfectly it applies to Christian conditions in this age, the true and the false, we have seen in our exposition. The "then" with which the second parable begins is to be brought in connection with the first parable; it refers to the same period of time when in the professing sphere of Christendom there is a faithful servant and an evil servant, and not to the end of the Jewish age.

A brief word on the question of the virgins representing the Jewish remnant and the apostate part of the nation (in the foolish virgins) is in order. We read in the parable of the ten virgins going to sleep because the bridegroom tarried. It is generally conceded that the going to sleep happened on account of the long delay of the bridegroom and that the virgins watched no longer for his coming. It is impossible to apply this to the condition of things during the great tribulation. It is all out of the question to think of the remnant, if that remnant is represented by the wise virgins, as going to sleep, when that remnant, as we learned from Chapter 24 will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and herald the coming of the King. This one argument is sufficient to completely answer this mode of interpretation. Furthermore the remnant is not called out to go forth to meet the bridegroom. The virgins are such who are called out to go forth. The remnant is the opposite. The prudent virgins have the oil, which is a type of the Holy Spirit; they have the supply of the Holy Spirit, which could hardly be applied to the Jews before the visible return of the Lord.

And what about the reading of some of the old versions? There is not sufficient evidence that it is genuine. The evidences against it are two-fold. The teaching that the church is the bride of Christ is a subsequent revelation. We cannot look for it here, and in the second place it is opposed to the meaning of the parable itself. This parable relates to the coming of the Bridegroom and that is why there is no need of mentioning the Bride. With this we dismiss this theory that the parable is one which refers to the Jews during the tribulation.

Before we turn to the exposition of the parable itself we want to mention another wrong interpretation which likewise is gaining ground in these days. It is taught that the five prudent virgins with the oil are such who have received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, who, have attained to a high standard of holiness, who are fully surrendered and are virgins indeed, separated from the world in the highest sense. The foolish virgins are Christians too, but lack the "higher life," a phrase as unscriptural as "the second blessing." Such teaching is not alone confusing but it aims finally at the Grace of God and the blessed work of our Lord. (Quite often Psalm 45 is used in teaching the difference of the Bride and the virgins. However, that Psalm refers to Israel and the nations.) We do well to beware of anything which magnifies the attainments of man and thereby obscures Grace. No, the wise virgins do not represent the select company called by some "the First Fruits," who are filled with the Spirit and are taken to be with the Lord while the foolish are "only justified believers" who have to go through the tribulation. The foolish virgins could not represent real Christians for the Lord tells them "I know you not."

And now before we look at the parable, which is simple indeed, we wish to remind the reader again, that it is not necessary that everything in a parable be applied in some way. A parable is an allegorical representation illustrating some great principle. This parable shows under the picture of the ten virgins the Christian profession, the true and the false again and yet in profession alike in having gone out to meet the Bridegroom.

It must be looked upon as referring first of all to the beginning of this Christian age. The Christian church started out so to speak with this two-fold attitude, separation from the world and in expectation of the Coming of the Bridegroom.

The teaching of Christianity is that such who accept the name of Christian are to go out and separate from the old and go forth with the purpose to meet the Bridegroom. It was so in the beginning. The Jews had to go forth from the camp and the Gentiles had to turn to God from their idols; all waited for His Son from heaven that blessed Hope, which was so lively in the very start of Christianity. The name "virgin" conveys the same thought of separation. The lamps which they had tell us of another Christian characteristic; he is called to give light. The first verse of the parable gives us in a few words that which is characteristic of the Christian calling and which was so marked in the beginning. Going forth, that is separation from the world, going forth with lamps, to give light and shine and going forth to meet the Bridegroom, who promised to come again. Separation, manifestation and expectation is that in which Christianity consists.

In the next place we read that half of the virgins representing the Christian profession were foolish. Their foolishness consisted in taking their lamps, but they took no oil. However, their condition is fully discovered and demonstrated after the midnight cry. The other five were wise and they took oil in their vessels with their lamps. What these lamps and vessels were is best explained by Edersheim. He says: "The lamps consisted of round receptacles for pitch or oil for the wick. This was placed in a hollow cup or deep saucer, which was fastened by a pointed end into a long wooden pole, in which it was borne aloft."

That we have in the division of the ten virgins, into five foolish and five wise, the false and the true is obvious enough. The five foolish virgins are representing such who are only professing Christians, while the five wise are possessing Christians,

true believers. But it may be said, did not the foolish virgins go forth to meet the Bridegroom? In their profession they certainly did, but that does not make them really saved persons. Everything later shows that they were unsaved and all their profession was simply empty. They are the representatives of such who have the form of godliness (the lamps) but who deny the power thereof, who lack the power to give out light (the oil). And here again is an objection. Did they not later say "give us of your oil for our lamps are going out?" Then they must have had some oil else how could they say that the lamps were going out? There is no proof at all in this that they possessed oil. In the first place, it says in the beginning, "they took no oil"; this in itself should settle this question. In their alarm, however, when the cry of the coming of the Bridegroom was heard they made an effort to have shining lamps. Who does not know that a wick may be set burning without oil to give forth a puff of smoke and then to go out? This was the case with the foolish virgins. They never had oil as the great masses of professing Christians in these days have lamps, the form outwardly, but they have never accepted Christ in the heart, and therefore the oil, the Holy Spirit and His power, is lacking. A fearful condition it is! Alas! the innumerable thousands and hundreds of thousands who are in this condition today! The wise virgins represent the true believers, who not alone have lamps, but oil in their lamps with their vessels. The Holy Spirit is present with every true child of God, though he be the weakest and the least taught.

And now we read of the tarrying of the bridegroom and that both, the foolish and the wise, grew heavy and slept. This has been interpreted in different ways, but only one interpretation can be made. The bridegroom tarrying long they did no longer expect him and were overcome by sleep. In the beginning of the Christian church they all expected the coming of the Lord, but as years went on they gave up the blessed Hope and ceased looking for the Lord. The sleeping of the virgins stands for this fact that the expectancy of the coming of the Lord was given up. Occasionally during the centuries when the professing church had gone into corruption, there was an alarm of the coming judgment day. It was so in the beginning of the seventh century and about the year 1000. But it was not a going forth again to meet the bridegroom with joy, but rather the opposite, an expectation of judgment and the end of the world. The priests then made use of the opportunity and the poor frightened people expecting the end of the world handed over their treasures to the "church." Aside from these alarms of the end of the world the sleep continued, and instead of waiting for the Bridegroom, going forth to meet Him, the professing church, the foolish and the wise, became occupied with earthly things, earthly power and government and the conversion of the world. Here in this verse we note a second period in the history of Christendom, the period in which the return of the Lord is not expected; they all slept.

But now comes a third period. "But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold the Bridegroom, go ye forth to meet Him." The question is, has this period been reached or are we to wait for a startling cry of this nature, awaking the foolish and the wise, the professors and the possessors? Some teach that this midnight cry refers to the shout of the Lord when He comes into the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Dear readers, we are living in the very time of the fulfillment of this verse and are facing the soon coming of the Bridegroom. The midnight cry has been heard toward the middle of the last century, when the Holy Spirit through mighty instruments, though humble, gave a revival of the blessed Hope and all that which is connected with it. And this cry is still heard, "Behold the Bridegroom! go ye forth to meet Him." The enemy would silence this blessed word, but he cannot do it. But notice it is not alone the announcement of the fact of the coming of the Bridegroom, but it is more than that. The right reading is to leave out the word "cometh" in the authorized version and read simply, "Behold the Bridegroom!" The blessed Hope of His coming does not so much put the coming before our hearts as it does Himself. And as we behold the Bridegroom and know He is soon coming, how can we help ourselves but to go forth to meet Him. That means then a return to the true Christian calling, which is separation from the world, separation from all which is false and unscriptural, which dishonors Him. His person, His Work or His Word. And this has been exactly the case. The midnight cry has awakened the true believers to a return to the true position and led on to a separation from that which is evil. It is so still. There is of course a preaching and teaching of Prophecy which does not touch the conscience, which is only for the head. Men teach correctly all about the 70 year weeks in Daniel, the restoration of the Jews and the millennium, and they go on in their evil ways. This is an evil thing. May the Lord keep us from it. The midnight cry is given that we may go forth to meet Him and be truly separated unto Him, who is soon coming. And if we have heard that cry by the power of the Spirit of God and are gone forth to meet the Bridegroom, we have a responsibility to take it up and sound it forth. And now what happens next? "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out. But the prudent answered saying, We cannot lest it might not suffice for us and for you. Go rather to those that sell and buy for yourselves. But as they went away the Bridegroom came, and the ones that were ready went in with Him to the wedding feast and the door was shut."

The midnight cry discovers the true condition of the foolish and the wise. The foolish without oil running hither and

thither, the prudent calm, arising, trimming their lamps, ready for the Bridegroom. It is a most significant fact that the blessed Hope of the coming of the Bridegroom, the midnight cry, is causing a separation between the true and the false. Those who are the Lord's and have the oil seem to be attracted to Himself and love His appearing, while the others, the mere professors, are behaving as foolishly as the foolish virgins in the parable. We can do no better than quote from the writings of one of the earnest and devoted men, who were used under God, to have a part in giving the midnight cry. "Awestricken come the foolish virgins to the wise saying, 'Give us of your oil,' but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them, 'Go buy oil for yourselves.' There is one who sells, but freely, without money and without price, to buy even from an apostle is fatal. The cry was given to revive the hope, as it had the effect also of recalling the original and only right attitude of the saints toward Christ. It was enough to sever the wise as alone ready to act accordingly. It was too late for the foolish; who but one could give what they wanted. What is the meaning of all the recent agitation? People zealous for religious forms, who know not really of Christianity. The foolish virgins are in quest of the oil, leaving no stone unturned to get what they have not, the one thing needful -- taking every way except the right. The decking of ecclesiastical buildings, the fantastical costumes of clergymen, the modern taste for church music, simply show that the foolish virgins are at work. They are not in fit state to meet the Lord and fear it themselves. They are troubled with the rumor of they know not what. The consequence then of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, and are wise by His Grace to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly are none the less powerfully, but in their own way affected by the cry and its effects, which rise not above nature and the earth." Utterly ignorant of the Grace of God, they are trying to make up by what is called "earnestness." They know not that they are far from God, yea, dead in trespasses and sins. So they think or hope, that being "earnest they may somehow or other get right at last. What delusion can be more hopeless?"

And what else might be added to this? Religious activities, societies, endeavors and other things are constantly multiplying and one can see readily in much of this the running about of the foolish virgins. None could take from the parable however that when the midnight cry is heard that an individual who discovers that he has no oil, that he is not the Lord's, could not come to Him, who is ready to sell without money and without price. Blessed be His Name, He stands ready to the very last moment to give the oil, fulfilling to the last moment while He tarrieth His own gracious word, "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The trouble however with the foolish virgins is they do not want to come to HIM to buy of Him, but rather go on in their own natural, foolish way.

And now comes the last stage of this parable. The Bridegroom comes. The prudent enter in, the foolish are shut out. The door was shut. Oh, solemn, solemn word! The door was shut! How soon all this may be a reality. The midnight brought the cry; now we are facing the dawn of the morning. We are in the fourth watch. Soon He will come and all who are saved by Grace, though they may be ignorant of His premillennial coming, or sadly lacking in other respects, will go in to the wedding feast. All others, who are not saved, will be shut out. It is a final judgment. They can never enter in. "I know you not," is all they hear. "Watch therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour." Reader! Are you ready?

And now we come to the third parable. This parable concludes the second part of the Olivet discourse.

"For it is as if a man going away out of a country called his bondsmen and delivered to them his substance. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his particular ability, and immediately went away out of the country. And he that had received the five talents went and trafficked with them, and made five other talents. In like manner also he that had received the two, he also gained two others. But he that had received the one went and dug in the earth and hid the money of his lord. After a long time the lord of those bondmen comes and reckons with them. And he that had received the five talents came to him and brought five other talents, saying, My lord, thou deliveredst me five talents; behold I have gained five other talents besides them. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman; thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the two talents came to him and said, My lord, thou deliveredst me two talents; behold I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent coming to him said, My lord, I know thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering from where thou hadst not scattered, and being afraid I went away and hid thy talent in the earth; behold thou hast that which is thine. And his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I had not sowed, and gathered from where I had not scattered; thou oughtest then to have put my money to the money changers, and when I came I should have got what is mine with interest. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that has the ten

talents; for to every one that has shall be given, and he shall be in abundance; but from him that has not, that even which he has shall be taken from him. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (verses 14-30).

This parable is not identical with the one which is recorded in the Gospel of Luke (chapter 19:12-27). The one in Luke, the parable of the ten pounds, was uttered before the last visit to Jerusalem ; the one here in Matthew when His visit was almost ended. The parable in Luke has more to do with the rewards in the Kingdom and has its special application into which we do not enter here. The parable here, following that of the ten virgins, shows us the same period of time, when the Lord is not present. We see in it again the responsibility which man has, in possession of the gifts which the absent Lord has bestowed and how the gifts may either be used or not used and that when He comes again the good and faithful servant will have an abundant entrance into the joy of His Lord, while the unprofitable servant is cast out.

The difficulty in this parable seems to have always been the servant who received the one talent. The teaching which is often, or rather generally given from his case, is one which is positively unscriptural. It is taught that he, as a believer and servant of Christ, did not make use of his talent and that all Christian believers who act in the same way, must share his fate. Upon this conception, believers are exhorted to faithfulness, to be diligent and use that which the Lord has given to them, in case they do not, they will surely be cast out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. According to this teaching final salvation depends not upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, but upon the faithfulness of the believer and upon the use of what he has received. How this thought can be enlarged is easily seen. Some say, indeed, that every human being has some talent, even if it is a very small one, some light, something good, and if it is used, improved, that little good developed, it will result in salvation. That all such teaching is wicked and strikes at the very fundamentals of the blessed Gospel, is seen at the first glance. How can we reconcile the teaching of the Gospel of Grace with the case of the unprofitable servant in this parable? There is no need of attempting to reconcile it, for the one who had received the one talent and who hid it does not represent a true believer at all. To verify this we only need to hear what he has to say, what excuse he gives for having put away the talent. His words discover his true condition. He was far from being a true servant with a heart full of confidence and love. He is the very opposite. He did not trust the Lord at all, and with his words he accuses the Lord of being a hard master. Surely a true believer could never say such words about his gracious Lord. That he did not use the talent at all and then upon his idleness accuses the Lord unjustly is proof enough that the man represents a mere professing servant. What the Lord had put at his disposal he had refused by not using it.

The whole parable, aside from the case of the unprofitable servant, is not difficult to understand. We must, however, be careful to avoid the thought that the talents, the five talents and the two talents, are things like earthly possessions, mental faculties, such as a good memory, a keen, logical mind, or a robust body. That all these are blessings and gifts of God none would doubt. The talents are His goods and delivered into the hands of the servants when He went away. However natural endowments are considered in the distribution of the gifts. To each is given "according to his particular ability." His own divine wisdom manifests itself in the bestowal of these talents. There is no true servant of Christ who is left without a gift. The absent Lord has given to each according to their ability.

Another great principle which this parable teaches is that the gift can be enlarged and increased. The two trafficked with the talents and doubled them. Exercise of any gift, no matter how small it is, will increase that gift and there will be gain, which of necessity is gain first of all for the Lord Himself. It will be for Him, as these servants laid before Him what they had received and what they had gained.

However, the distinction between the parable of the prudent servant and the evil servant at the close of chapter 24 must also be maintained. The sphere of the prudent servant was narrower. He had to give meat in season to the household. The talents here are to be used in a wider sphere. Just as the merchant who trafficks and wishes to gain goes outside, the servant of Christ is to use that the Lord has given to him according to his natural ability and as he uses it, whether it is the preaching of the Gospel or labor among God's people, it will increase.

And then the Coming of the Lord and how He dealt with the good and faithful servants brings out another principle. Each receives a reward. To each the Lord saith, "Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He does not speak a higher and better word of approval to the one who had the five talents and brought him five other talents. Both hear the same word of approval. It is therefore not the question of how much we have received of the Lord, but how we use that which He has given to us. Faithful service, even

in the smallest matter, though there be but one talent, will bring approval.

To fully understand "the setting over many things," and what it is "to enter into the joy of the Lord" we shall have to wait until we stand in His own glorious presence and see Him face to face.

May this parable, like the preceding ones, urge us on as true believers to be faithful to the Lord. Soon He will come. Soon we shall appear before His judgment seat to give an account. May we all use what He has given and use it with confidence in Him and with Love for Him.

In the closing verses of this chapter (vv. 31-46), we find the third part of the great prophetic discourse of our Lord. It relates to the Gentiles. Quite often this part is spoken of by expositors as a parable, just as some call the description of the future state of Dives and Lazarus in Luke 16, a parable. But neither is a parable. Both are solemn descriptions of events and conditions which are real.

The King here gives us the picture of a great judgment, which He Himself conducts while He occupies the throne of His glory.

"But when the Son of man comes, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon His throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before Him; and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left" (vv. 31-33).

It is evident that these words must be connected with chapter 24:30, 31. The scene takes place after His visible and glorious appearing as Son of Man and after His elect (the remnant of His earthly people; that is, the "all Israel ") have been gathered. Leaving out the central portion of the discourse, the three parables, relating to the Christian profession, we have in chapter 24:3-41 and chapter 25:31-46 chronological events relating to the end of the Jewish age and the judgment which follows immediately after the Lord has come.

And will He occupy a literal throne? Some take it as being only a picture. But such a conception is totally wrong and dangerous. The angels will also appear with Him and will be seen by the inhabitants of the earth; what reason could be given that the throne, which He occupies, is a spiritual throne? No, the throne will be a literal throne, and it will be "His throne of Glory." To this same throne He referred when He answered Peter in chapter 19:28, "And Jesus said to them, Verily I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit down upon His throne of Glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The "Regeneration," the "Paligenesia" of the coming age, begins with His second visible coming, and the first great event which takes place after He has sat down upon His own throne will be the judgment, as described by Himself in this part of the discourse.

The church is not seen here in Matthew. He will bring His own with Him and the church will take part in the scene pictured here as well as in the government of the earth and the universe. "Do ye not know that the Saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2). The angels will have their definite work in this judgment scene (Matt. 13:41-42). The question which arises now is who the persons are, who will be judged. What judgment is it, which the Lord here describes? There should be little difficulty in ascertaining this and the person who closely adheres to the text, without consulting the traditional views of the professing church will see at a glance who will be judged. The Lord says "all nations" will be gathered before Him. The persons judged must therefore be the nations, which are living in the day when the Lord appears in His Glory.

This excludes at once the true church. The church is with Him. No such judgment can be for the true church. The judgment seat of Christ (not of the Son of man) before which all true believers have to appear, either for approval or disapproval, is when this judgment of the nations takes place, a thing of the past. The judgment seat of Christ, before which believers have to appear, is not upon the earth, but in the air, in the place to which the church had been caught up.

Generally the great scene our Lord unfolds here of this judgment of the living nations is applied to a universal judgment. Such a judgment in which Jews, Christians, saved and unsaved, every member of the human race, all the heathen will participate is often preached from this passage, and another judgment scene, which is recorded in Rev. 20:11-15 is strangely identified with this one. We say at once there is not a line of Scripture which teaches such a universal judgment and no line of Scripture which teaches a universal resurrection, which is also taught by those who teach a general

judgment. We repeat, a general judgment and a general resurrection is nowhere taught in the Word of God. However, we do not want our readers to think that we deny judgment and resurrection. We fully believe that every person who ever lived will be judged at some time, and every person who lived on this earth and died will be raised from the dead; but there are different judgments and two distinct resurrections.

If we turn to Rev. 20:11-15, the passage which is so often quoted with Matt, 25:31-46, we find it totally different from the judgment scene which our Lord describes here in His Olivet discourse. In Rev. 20 we do not behold a throne of Glory upon which the Son of Man sitteth, but it is a great white throne. Nor does that great white throne stand upon the earth as in Matt. 25, but the earth and heaven fled away and there was no place found for them. The subjects of the great white throne judgment are not living nations, but "the dead." As the context shows the nations, which were rebellious at the end of the thousand years were devoured by the fire from God out of heaven (verse 9). The great white throne judgment is that of the wicked dead and their eternal abiding place will be the lake of fire. This is the second resurrection or the resurrection of the unjust as our Lord calls it in John 5.

There is a first resurrection in which all the saved have a share, which begins when the Lord comes for His Saints, and the dead in Christ rise first and we which are alive are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-17). To this first resurrection belong likewise the martyrs during the great tribulation. All this is made clear by a few verses in the 20th chapter of Revelation. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4, 5). This proves clearly that there are two resurrections, one of the just and the other of the unjust, and they occur not at the same time, but there is a space of a thousand years between them.

Again let us remember that it is said of all such who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ that they have everlasting life and shall not come into judgment. For the true believer there is no judgment, because the Lord Jesus passed on the cross through the judgment as his substitute. The judgment seat of Christ of which we read in 2 Cor. 5 and before which all have to appear who are Christ's, concerns works, service, rewards, etc., and not an eternal destiny.

In our passage here an entirely different judgment is described. Not a word or a hint is given about resurrection; in fact, there is no resurrection at all in connection with the event pictured by the Lord. When He comes in His Glory, His church with Him, attended by the holy angels, He finds upon the earth His own earthly people Israel. The Israel which is left and passed through the fire and great tribulation has received Him as Redeemer and King and He turned ungodliness from Jacob. But He also finds living nations on the earth and these nations will be separated by the Son of Man sitting upon the throne of His glory. They will be parted by Him and the sheep put at His right hand and the goats at His left.

The place of the judgment of these living nations will no doubt be the land of Israel.

Zech. 14:1-5 and Joel 3 throws light upon this judgment scene. Let us then bear this clearly in mind. Matt, 25:31-46 describes a judgment, which takes place immediately after the Lord's second coming in power and in glory. The persons concerned in it are not Jews, nor the church, nor the dead, but the nations which are living in that day. And now after the separation has taken place the King speaks: "Then shall the King say to those at His right hand, Come blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation; for I hungered and you gave me to eat; I thirsted and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was ill and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came to me. Then shall the righteous answer Him saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungering, and nourished Thee; or thirsting and gave Thee to drink? and when saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in; or naked and clothed Thee? and when saw we Thee ill or in prison and came to Thee? And the King answering shall say to them, Verily, I say to you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me. Then shall He also say to those on the left, Go from me cursed into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I hungered, and ye gave me not to eat; thirsted and ye gave me not to drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye did not clothe me; ill and in prison and ye did not visit me. Then shall they also answer saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger or naked, or ill, or in prison, and have not ministered to Thee? Then shall He answer them saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it to one of these least, neither have ye done it to me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into eternal life."

And now in the first place, Who are the nations who are righteous and who figure here as sheep? That they do not represent the church and are not church saints, members of the one body, we have already demonstrated. It can easily be proven from the text itself. The righteous nations are called "the blessed of the Father," believers who constitute the church are more than blessed of the Father, they are in fellowship with the Father and the Son. These nations inherit a kingdom which is prepared from the foundation of the world. The inheritance of the church is higher than that. Our inheritance is with Himself. We are the joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore of the church it is said that God has chosen us in Him "before the foundation of the world." Other proofs that these nations do not represent the church we pass by.

These nations are saved nations and their acts of righteousness are given here. They were merciful to the least of the King's brethren; they fed them, gave them to drink, clothed them and visited them. What they did to the Brethren of the King, they did unto Him.

How great the confusion is among Christians on the meaning of these words! Often the interpretation given strikes at the very fundamentals of the Gospel. Generally charitable acts, such as hospitals and prison work, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked in connection with church work or philanthropic institutions, are thought to be meant by our Lord.

If any one does these things and is faithful in them the King will approve of them in the judgment and many a soul builds upon this foundation of sand. All this is absolutely wrong. The works have an entirely different meaning.

Who are the Brethren of the King whom these righteous nations treated with such kindness and mercy? They are the brethren of the Lord according to the flesh, in other words they are Jews. If this is grasped, the whole judgment, the righteousness of the nations at the King's right hand and the unrighteousness of the others, the goats, will be clear.

Let the reader turn back to the first part of this discourse. There we read, "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." What the Gospel of the Kingdom is, when this Gospel is to be preached (during the great tribulation), who is going to preach this last great witness we have shown at length in our exposition of the preceding chapter. The preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom among all nations takes place during the end of the age. Up to this time this Gospel is not yet preached. The preachers of this Gospel during the ending years of the Jewish age will be the Jewish remnant. These are "Brethren" of our Lord according to the flesh. They will move among the nations of the world and give their startling witness in the proclamation of that Gospel, which will herald the nearness of the coming of the King and the Kingdom. How will they be received among the nations? Will their testimony be universally believed or will it be rejected? The words of our Lord here at the close of the discourse give us the answer.

Some of the nations will receive their testimony. They believe the Gospel of the Kingdom, this last great witness. They manifest the genuineness of their faith by works. The preachers who are going about are prosecuted and hated by others, suffering, hungry, and some cast into prison. These nations who believe their testimony show their faith by giving them to eat, clothing them, visiting them in prison, and by showing love to them. The case of Rahab may be looked upon as a typical foreshadowing. She believed. It was at a time when the judgment was gathering over Jericho (the type of the world). "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." And again it is written of her, "Likewise also was Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" She had faith and manifested it by works. And so these nations believe the messengers and treat them in kindness. Grace thus covers them because they believed.

They enter into the Kingdom and inherit the same; as righteous they go into eternal life. In other words, they remain throughout the kingdom age on the earth and pass on into the eternal state. That they will occupy with saved Israel a special position in the Kingdom we fully believe; nor can they share the revolt which takes place after the thousand years, when Satan is loosed for a little while.

The question may arise who these nations are, who will receive the Gospel of the Kingdom. This can hardly be answered now. One thing seems certain that the nations which heard the Gospel of Grace preached, who had a chance to believe will not have another chance to accept the Gospel of the Kingdom. (We are sorry to find this unscriptural theory of a second chance spreading in our day among many good people. Beware of it!)

And now the other side. There are nations in the presence of that throne of Glory who will be put at the left side of the King. The messengers came to them and they refused to believe their message and because they did not believe they did not treat the messengers in kindness and mercy. These nations continued in wickedness and unbelief; they rejected the last offer, and now their eternal destiny is to be forever settled. The King says unto them, "Go from Me, cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." At the close the Lord says, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment." How solemn are these words! Awful words! Go from Me! And where to? Into eternal fire. He does not say "Cursed of my Father," but simply "Cursed." The Father does not "Curse;" He does not want any one to be in the place of eternal distance and darkness. Nor is the place, the eternal fire, prepared for these nations, but it is prepared for the devil and his angels. By rejecting God's love and mercy, by continuing in unbelief they sided with the devil and his angels and now there is no other remedy for them but to share for all eternity the place prepared for the devil and his angels. At the close of the thousand years the devil is put into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). Previously the beast and the false prophet were cast into that place before the millennium (Rev. 19:20). The order of punishment then is the following: 1. The beast and the false prophet. 2. The unrighteous nations. These go there before the millennial kingdom. 3. The devil with his angels. 4. The wicked dead from the great white throne judgment. This takes place after the thousand years. Oh! the folly which tries to explain away the eternity of punishment of the wicked. Yet this is done in our present day as never before. God is too good, too merciful to do that; and others claim that while there is punishment, it is not eternal, but only age abiding. All these fanciful, philosophical theories, so popular in our day, are completely answered by the solemn words of our Lord, "And these shall go away into ETERNAL punishment, and the righteous into ETERNAL life."

Thus ends the last great discourse of the King in this Gospel and ere long all that which He predicted, sitting upon the Mount of Olives, will be reality. Reader! Let us live in the light of these solemn truths.

CHAPTER XXVI

The great last discourse of the King being ended there remains now nothing else to record than the story of His passion, His suffering, death and resurrection. This is the record of the remaining three chapters of the first Gospel. Two of these are the longest in the whole book. He had foretold in His great prophecy in the Olivet discourse the future of the Jews, the Christian profession and the future of the nations. Now He is to go and fulfill all the predictions concerning His sufferings and death, as written in Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. The twenty-sixth chapter, which we shall follow briefly, is one of contrasts. Here we behold Him in all His wonderful perfection again. With what calmness and dignity He enters upon that great work, which the Father gave Him to do. On the other hand we see wickedness and Satanic powers revealed which now cast themselves in all their fury upon the holy One. What a wonderful story it is which we have followed in this first Gospel. How marvelous the events and how perfect and divine the entire arrangement! Man could never have written such an account.

This chapter tells us of seven events, which we hope to follow in their order. These are the following:

1. -- The last prediction of His suffering and death (verses 1-5).
2. -- His anointing in the house of Simon, the leper, in Bethany (verses 6-13).
3. -- Judas betrays Him for thirty pieces of silver (verses 14-16).
4. -- The account of the passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper (verses 17-35).
5. -- The agony in the garden of Gethsemane (verses 36-46).
6. -- His capture and the accusations and sufferings before Caiaphas, the high priest (verses 47-68).
7. -- The denial of Peter (69-75).

"And it came to pass when Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples, Ye know that after two days the

Passover takes place and the Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified. Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together to the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and took counsel together, in order that they might seize Jesus by subtlety and kill Him; but they said, Not in the feast, that there be not a tumult among the people" (verses 1-5).

We notice first of all the last prediction of His death. This is the fourth time He predicts His death in this Gospel. He not only predicts the manner of His death, but now also the time; He is to be crucified at the time of the Passover. All this manifests His Deity. He knew all beforehand. Let none think that all that which was before Him dawned upon Him gradually; He knew every one of the sufferings and all that which was now to come upon His holy head. But what calmness breathes in these words, in which He predicted His coming crucifixion! There is no anxiety, no concern about anything, but to do the will of Him that sent Him and to give Himself as the true passover Lamb.

No sooner is this announcement made and heard from His lips than the enemy becomes also busy. He would hinder this divine purpose that the great sacrifice should be brought at the predicted time. If he could not keep Him from going to the cross, he would attempt, at least, to mar the fullest meaning of that death. The chief priests and the elders are now together in counsel. The men who have appeared so often upon the scene of this Gospel appear once more, and through them the enemy utters his advice "not in the feast." But this much is decided, the King, the Prince of Life, is to be killed. They must get rid of Him, and so wicked hands are getting ready to crucify and to slay Him, as later the Holy Spirit declared "Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." All the wickedness, hatred of man and the sinfulness of sin, as well as Satanic power, is now to be revealed in the sufferings of Christ. And here He is the perfect One in perfect love and obedience, to do the Father's will, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

And now the second scene. It takes place in the house of Simon, the leper, most likely called by that name because he had been afflicted with leprosy. The beautiful incident, full of precious lessons, is followed by the murmuring of the disciples, especially from the side of Judas, as we learn from the Gospel of John.

"But Jesus being in Bethany, in Simon, the leper's house, a woman having an alabaster flask of very precious ointment, came to Him and poured it out upon His head as he lay at table. But the disciples seeing it became indignant, saying, To what end was this waste? for this might have been sold for much and been given to the poor. But Jesus knowing it said to them, Why do ye trouble the woman? for she has wrought a good work toward me. For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. For in pouring out this ointment on my body, she has done it for my burial. Verily I say to you, Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (verses 6-13).

The woman who did this blessed work for the Lord is not named here. From the Gospel of John we learn that it was none other than Mary, the sister of Martha. To fully understand the scene here the account in the Gospel of John must be taken in consideration (Chapter 12). There we read the details of the feast which was made for Him in the house and that Lazarus was also present. How devoted Mary was to her Lord. We first see her at His feet listening to His words. "One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part," He had said then. She had acknowledged Him in His office as Prophet. In John 11 we see her again at His feet. There she is weeping on account of the death of Lazarus; a little while later He weeps with her. She knew Him as the sympathizing One, as He is now our Priest. And here she anoints Him, and does it for His burying. In faith she realizes the near approach of that death, of which He had spoken. She believed He, the Lamb of God, would soon die; she understood more of that death than all the other disciples. Perhaps when she sat at His feet He had spoken to her about His coming death and burial and resurrection. But some readers of the Bible have a difficulty. Here in our Gospel she anoints His head, but in the Gospel of John she is at His feet and anoints them, wiping His feet with her hair. Critics and infidels who deny the inspiration of the Bible have pointed this out as one of the glaring contradictions, while others have thought of two different occasions when the anointing took place. There is, however, no difficulty here at all. She anointed both His feet and His head. The Holy Spirit reports the anointing of the head of the Lord in Matthew, because this is in harmony with the object of the Gospel. He is the King, and while He is the rejected King, her faith no doubt looked beyond death and burial. In John the Holy Spirit gives the anointing of the feet and leaves out the anointing of the head, because the King is the Son of God; as such he is described in the Gospel of John, and that attitude of Mary before His feet anointing them is in fullest harmony with the fourth Gospel.

It was an alabaster flask she brought full of ointment of spikenard, very costly. These flasks contained about a pound of

this costly ointment; the probable value was 300 denarii, or about \$50. It was a very large sum of money in that time, when we remember that a day laborer received only one dinar wages a day. Three hundred denarii was at that time as much as three hundred dollars to-day. How did she obtain so costly an alabaster flask with spikenard? Most likely it had been stored away from by-gone days. It must have been the most costly she possessed. A heart filled with love and devotion prompted her to bring this costly ointment and pour it over the body of her Lord. To honor Him was her sole object, and that at a time when He was about to be rejected and forsaken by all. And let us not forget that she had learned this devotion and love to Him, manifested in the outpouring of the precious ointment, at His feet. Her heart occupation with the Lord, her anticipation in faith of what was before Him, led her on to do what she did. She had no eyes for what was around her, nor had she ears for the criticism of those who watched her deed. He and He alone was her object.

It should be so with us, and it will be so if we truly abide in Him. We, too, will bring our best to Him. May all we do, yea, the smallest act, be the result of the deepest appreciation of Himself, our wonderful Saviour and Lord.

And much more might be said by way of application of this most blessed incident. For instance from the Gospel of John we learn that the odor of the ointment filled the house. "Thy name is as ointment poured forth," we read in Solomon's song; well may we think of that precious ointment poured forth with its fragrant smell as a type of His death. In the same song we read "while the King sitteth at his table my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." How it must have delighted and refreshed His heart when that ointment enveloped Him with its fragrance.

And now the murmuring. No doubt Judas was the leader of it, as we see in the Gospel of John. Some of the others were influenced by him. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor. This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag and bare what was put therein" (John 12:5-6). Why this waste, What a state of heart these few words reveal! How different from her, who ever must remain the highest type of Christian discipleship -- Mary. She gave him the very best she had. The others thought of it as waste, as if anything devoted to the Christ of God, the One altogether lovely, could be waste. These two classes among disciples are still present; but how few the Mary-type in heart devotion.

The words He spoke in appreciation of her service and her gift have come blessedly true. Her act will never be forgotten. Beautifully has a saint written on this occurrence: we quote a part of it:

"Reader, whoever you are, or however you are engaged, ponder this. See that you keep your eye directly upon the Lord in all you do. Make Jesus the immediate object of every little act of service, no matter what. Seek so to do your every work as that He may be able to say, 'It is a good work upon me.' Do not be occupied with the thoughts of men as to your path or as to your work. Do not mind their indignation or their misunderstanding, but pour your alabaster box of ointment upon the person of your Lord. See that your every act of service is the fruit of your heart's appreciation of Him; and be assured He will appreciate your work and vindicate you before assembled myriads. Thus it was with the woman of whom we have been reading. She took her alabaster box, and made her way to the house of Simon the leper, with one object in her heart, namely, Jesus and what was before Him. She was absorbed in Him. She thought of none beside, but poured her precious ointment on His head. And note the blessed issue. Her act has come down to us, in the gospel record, coupled with His blessed Name. No one can read the gospel without reading also the memorial of her personal devotedness. Empires have risen, flourished, and passed away into the region of silence and oblivion. Monuments have been erected to commemorate human genius, greatness and philanthropy -- and these monuments have crumbled into dust; but the act of this woman still lives, and shall live for ever. The hand of the Master has erected a monument to her, which shall never, no never, perish. May we have grace to imitate her; and, in this day, when there is so much of human effort in the way of philanthropy, may our works, whatever they are, be the fruit of our heart's appreciation of an absent, rejected, crucified Lord!"

Mary's devotion was the cause of the failure of the plans of the enemies that the death of the Lord should not take place in the feast. It stirred up the traitor to action. This no doubt is the reason why the Holy Spirit gives the record of the anointing out of its chronological order. Judas' dark deed we behold next. "Then one of the twelve, he was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What are ye willing to give me, and I will deliver Him up to you? And they appointed to him thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought a good opportunity that he might deliver Him up" (verses 14-16).

Who was Judas? His surname is given here. Iscariot is composed of two words "Ish" and "Kerioth;" translated "the man of Kerith." He was the only Judean disciple among the twelve, the rest were all from Galilee. This is significant and shows

the apostasy of Judah, this man of Kerioth being the heading up of it as ere long there will be another heading up, in the man of sin and the son of perdition, the personal antichrist, who will be a Jew. (We desire to caution our readers against a fanciful teaching, which lacks scriptural support, that Judas will be raised up during the great tribulation and will be that man of sin, the antichrist foretold in 2 Thess. 2. Such teaching coming from otherwise reputable teachers of the Bible does much harm.) In Luke we have the information that Satan entered into him. That mighty enemy, who tempted our Lord and found nothing in Him, who took hold of Peter and used him as mouthpiece when he said, "Be it far from thee, Lord," now takes actual possession of the one, who was indeed his own, for Judas had never believed in Christ. Peter may deny Him and the rest of the disciples forsake their Lord, yet Satan could never enter into them, for they were saved, had life and the power of God kept them. The Lord knew that wicked one among His disciples. "But there are some of you who believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would deliver Him up" (John 6:64). "He knew him that delivered Him up; on account of this He said, Ye are not all clean" (John 13:11). Furthermore, all this had been predicted in the Old Testament. See Zechariah 11:12; Psalms 41:9.; 69:25; 109:8. And the price for which Judas betrayed the King was the price of a servant, a slave, according to Exodus 21:32.

And now the great event, the complete fulfillment of His own predictions concerning His sufferings and His death, draws nearer. He was not taken by surprise in anything. In the calmest dignity He moves on, knowing His Father's will He had come to do and that the mighty work could never fail, but would be accomplished. He is ready to pay the purchase price, to give all, to die for the nation, to obtain the treasure and the field and the one pearl of great price likewise. And now we follow Him and the disciples to the feast.

"Now on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where wilt thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city unto such a one, and say to him, The Teacher says, My time is near, I will keep the passover with my disciples in thy house. And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the passover. And when the evening was come He lay down at table with the twelve. And as they were eating He said, Verily I say to you, that one of you shall deliver Me up. And being exceedingly grieved they began to say to Him, each of them, Is it I, Lord? But He answering said, He that dips his hand with Me in the dish, he it is that shall deliver Me up. The Son of Man goes indeed according as it is written concerning Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is delivered up; it were good for that man if he had not been born. And Judas, who delivered Him up, answering said, Is it I, Rabbi? He says to him, Thou hast said" (verses 17-25).

Is it not the purpose of our exposition to compare the different Gospel records, and so we shall not refer to the different accounts, which certainly are not conflicting. The first day of the feast of the unleavened bread was the day on which the passover was to be killed (Luke 22:7). It is, therefore, clear that He and His disciples commemorated then the Jewish Paschal Supper. He Himself does the ordering and manifests Himself as Lord throughout. Once more He announces the nearness of His passion -- "My time is near." What a moment that was! They had attempted before to take His life. That was impossible. The time is now near, His time, when the King was to lay down His life. Directly we see Him at the table with the twelve, and while they were eating He announces the fact of one of them being the traitor. What follows in that conversation may well be taken for a last warning to Judas. The Lord had seen him turning to the chief priests and knew of his bargaining with them. He read the whole dark story in that heart, which was before Him, the omniscient One, as an opened book. "Verily I say to you, that one of you shall deliver me up." This must have been aimed at the conscience of Judas Iscariot. Did he also show surprise? Did his face turn red or into paleness as he saw the innermost thoughts of his heart revealed? Each of them, with the exception of Judas, asks the question, Is it I, Lord? Judas is silent. Under the power of that awful being, Satan, who held him in his grasp, he hardens his heart. But more than that the Lord speaks. "He that dips his hand with me in the dish, he it is who shall deliver me up." The more detailed account of all this we find in the Gospel of John. While here we have only the fact stated of the betrayer dipping his hand into the dish, in John we read that the Lord gave him a sop. And Judas could take that morsel, a token of the love of the Lord whom he had rejected and was about to betray. It was a silent offer from the side of the Lord to give even to him, but he would not. He rejects that offer. Again we have the record for the second time that Satan entered into him (John 13:27). It was right after he had taken the morsel. The last offer was rejected, and now Satan gains a still firmer hold upon him and possesses him fully. At last these closed lips open. What awful, satanic hypocrisy he utters! "Is it I, Rabbi?" Such hypocrisy in the presence of Him who is the Truth can only be explained by the presence of that being in Judas, who is the father of lies. It is also a significant fact that Judas did not say "Lord" but he used the word "Rabbi" instead. This is evidence that he never had received Him as Lord and believed on Him as the Lord. He had power conferred on him to drive out the demons and to heal the sick -- messianic power, coming from the King, but he was nevertheless an unbeliever. "Rabbi" he said, because Satan had

entered into him, and Satan refuses to call Him Lord. Yet the time will come when all knees, including Judas, must bow at (not in) the names of Jesus and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. For thus it is written: "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and granted Him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory" (Phil. 2:9-11). From the lips of the Lord he hears the "Woe," and, according to the Gospel of John, "he went out immediately and it was night." He went out into a night without a morning, into eternal night, the blackness of darkness forever (Jude 13). And all who reject that Lord, who wilfully close their hearts against Him and refuse His authority, go into that night.

In connection with this solemn scene we find the description of another scene. We have now the record of the institution of that great and blessed memorial, generally called the Lord's supper.

"And as they were eating, Jesus, having taken the bread and blessed, broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And having taken the cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood, that of the new covenant, that is shed for many for remission of sins. But I say to you that I will not at all drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father. And having sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives" (verses 26-30).

What the passover feast of the Jews commemorated is so well known that it does not need further mention here. And now the true passover Lamb is about to be slain and He institutes another feast, a great and blessed memorial of His mighty work, of His sacrificial death upon the cross. "On that night the Jewish dispensation came to an end. The Passover, its great institution, had fulfilled its purpose; the Paschal Lamb it prepared for and prefigured was the next day to be slain. The same night saw the inauguration of a new feast which embodies the fundamental truth of Christianity, as the Passover embodied the fundamental truth of Judaism." (Weston in the Genesis of the New Testament.)

How fearfully the words of our blessed Lord have been misused, what blasphemous doctrines have been built upon the simple language of the Lord and how this blessed memorial has become the occasion for strife, violence and even bloodshed, we do not care to follow in our exposition. It would take hundreds of pages to record all that. The Roman dogma of the transubstantiation is a downright blasphemy. Hundreds of saints have been tortured and killed for stating thus the lie of transubstantiation, and, if Rome could, she would do the same in the present day. This transubstantiation claims that the bread and wine are changed into the real body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then there is the consubstantiation, the doctrine that the body and blood of Christ coexists in and with the bread and wine, although they retain their nature as bread and wine. This is more or less the teaching of the Lutheran church.

But we refrain from following the different teachings concerning the Lord's supper. What can be more evident than that the new feast He instituted is a memorial? The Passover feast was a feast of remembrance, and what He does here on that solemn night was a simple meal to commemorate the giving of His body and the shedding of His blood. The account given here of the institution of the Lord's supper is in harmony with the character of this first Gospel. The Holy Spirit gives the record to show the blood of the new covenant, which the lamb of God shed for many, in contrast to the Jewish Passover, the old covenant which was exclusively only for the Jewish people. If we turn to the Gospel of Luke, which is wider in its scope than the Gospel of Matthew, we read the words, which give to the Lord's supper decidedly the character of a memorial. "Do this in remembrance of Me." It is then simply this to remember Him, not to receive anything, but to remember Him and His love. This is still more enforced by another record which we have of this great memorial. We find a record outside of the Gospels altogether. This record was given by revelation to the Apostle Paul: "For I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was delivered up, took bread, and having given thanks broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the cup after having supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, this do, as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup ye announce the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. 11:23-26). And what better way could there be than the way He has shown in this request to remember Him, in this simple ceremony of breaking the bread and partaking of it and drinking from the cup? No doubt this request was fulfilled by the Saints of earliest date on every Lord's day; Acts 20:7 certainly gives one that impression; yet there is no law about it. The soul that is occupied with Him will ever long to fulfill that request He left in that night ere He was delivered up. "Till He comes" up to the time when we shall see Him face to face in the Father's house. It ever keeps Him, His death for us and His coming again as a bright and blessed reality before the heart.

"See the feast of Love is spread, Drink the wine and break the bread; Sweet memorials -- till the Lord Call us around His heavenly board; Some from earth, from Glory some, Severed only till He come."

But we return to the words of the Lord in this Gospel. Significant is the statement "But I say unto you, that I will not at all drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." These words are characteristic to this Gospel. In Luke and Mark we read that He speaks of Himself as not drinking of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God has come. But here He speaks of that day when not only He will drink it anew but when He will drink it anew with His disciples in the kingdom of His Father. The words are beautifully in order in this Gospel, which, as we have learned, tells us so much of the kingdom. There is a day coming when that Kingdom will come in power and in Glory. It is the day of His return. Then His own will be associated with Him in heavenly Glory. For a deeper knowledge of that drinking anew with Him, the wine, the fullest joy in that mighty coming Manifestation, we have to wait till that day of Glory breaks. Dispensationally we see the King separated from His own people till the hour strikes when His Kingdom comes.

And now they leave the room after they had sung a hymn. This has been and is still the custom of the Jews in connection with the passover feast. Indeed it would be interesting and helpful to mention here the passover customs of the Jews; they are full of significant ceremonies. However this would lead us too far. Suffice it to say that the hymn they sang consisted of Psalms 115, 116, 117 and 118. In the Jewish ritual they are called the great Hallel. With what emotion of soul He must have sung with His disciples! What encouragement it must have been for Him! These Psalms contain such blessed and full messianic predictions. "The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." These words come in at the close of that hymn they sung, and while the disciples sang them as they had done so often before as pious Jews, for Him it meant so much. A little while longer, just a few hours, and the builders would reject Him. A few days more and by resurrection from the dead He would be the head of the corner, the chief stone, and in that shout, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord," He saw in the distant future a welcome from the remnant of His people, at the time of His Second Coming. And so the blessed One even then saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied.

The last notes have died away and He speaks again. "Then said Jesus to them, All ye shall be offended in me during this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad; but after that I shall be risen, I will go before you to Galilee. And Peter answering said to Him, If all shall be offended in Thee, I will never be offended. Jesus said to him, Verily I say to thee, that during this night, before the cock shall crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter saith to Him, If I should need die with Thee, I will in nowise deny Thee. Likewise said all the disciples also" (verses 31-35). He revealed thus what was before them. The Scripture to which He refers is found in Zechariah. They were His sheep and He the shepherd, as He speaks of Himself in the Gospel of John, the good shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep. But the smiting of the shepherd, the smiting of Him who is called in that prophecy of Zechariah the fellow of God (Zech. 13:7), what was that to be? The cry of the forsaken One on the cross gives us the answer. He knew all that was before Him. (The teaching of the so-called critics, so strong today throughout the professing church, a school which claims that the Lord had no full knowledge of what the Scriptures contained, this teaching must be branded as wickedness.) And again we notice His calmness, His dignity through all this, which to a mere man would have been an almost unbearable ordeal. Then He announces His resurrection and that He would go before them to Galilee. Later we shall find the risen One there with His disciples, announcing the fact that He has all power in heaven and on earth. There is no mention made of His ascension. Peter now looms up. Once more poor Peter acts in self confidence in his own strength. The Lord had told Him before, "Where I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after" (John 13:36). What significant words these were. They remind one of the third chapter of Joshua, of the record of the passing over Jordan. There was to be a space of two thousand cubits between the ark of the covenant and the people. The ark of the covenant of the Lord, typifying Christ, was alone by itself and had to make way for the people, and they followed after. So Peter would follow Him and die with Him, but he could not. Afterwards at the Lake of Tiberias the risen Christ tells him that he should indeed follow, revealing the time and the manner of his death, a death which the grace of God, the strength of the Lord made alone possible. Here he acts in the flesh, and in spite of the Lord's warning, he maintains that attitude, the attitude of self-confidence. The Lord announces his soon coming denial, the record of which we find at the close of our chapter.

"Then Jesus comes with them to a place called Gethsemane, and says to the disciples, sit here until I go away and pray yonder. And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and deeply depressed. Then He

says to them, My soul is very sorrowful even unto death; remain here and watch with Me. And going forward a little He fell upon His face, praying and saying, My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me; but not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He comes to the disciples and finds them sleeping, and says to Peter, Thus ye have not been able to watch one hour with Me? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak. Again going away a second time He prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass from Me unless I drink it, Thy will be done. And coming He found them again sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And leaving them He went away again and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then He comes to the disciples and says to them, Sleep on now and take your rest; behold the hour has drawn nigh, and the Son of man is delivered up into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go; behold he that delivers me up has drawn nigh." (Verses 36-46)

What a holy scene it is that is now before us! We are face to face with the most solemn event in the life of the Son of God, save that hour when He hung on the cross, forsaken by God. It is a Scripture which we approach with the greatest caution; the words are ringing in our ears, the words which Moses heard when he stood in divine presence "put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." It is a scene which draws out the heart in worship and adoration for it was for us He passed through this deep agony, for us that He, the mighty Creator fell on His face, into the dust of earth, He had created.

Hark! what sounds of bitter weeping, From yon lonesome garden sweep? 'Tis the Lord His vigil keeping, Whilst His followers sink in sleep. Ah, my soul, He loved thee, Yes, He gave Himself for me. He is speaking to His Father, Tasting deep that bitter cup, Yet He takes it, willing rather For our sakes to drink it up. Oh what love! He loved me! Gave Himself, my soul, for thee.

Even so, He loved me and gave Himself for me. Oh Thou blessed Lord, what agony Thou didst go through for the sake of having us poor, vile, miserable, lost sinners with Thee and share Thy presence and Glory throughout eternity. And how little we appreciate, honor and adore Thee! Much rather would we write in the strain of devotion and worship than to attempt by feeble human words a closer study of Gethsemane. Of an exposition of the events of that night we dare not speak. The suffering of our Lord in the garden is beyond the ken of any saint; no saint of God will ever be able to fathom the deep mystery of the sufferings of the holy One. If we could fully grasp His marvelous personality, how holy, how absolutely holy He was and absolutely perfect in Himself, we might be able to enter deeper into the agony of our Lord. Only the right estimate of His Person can give us, at least in part, a little of the meaning of His deep sorrow unto death.

But alas! just into this holy scene man with his reason and wrong conception has intruded and by attempting to solve the mystery of the suffering of the Lord has put dishonor upon His person. Different interpretations are about, which belittle and dishonor Him. We would rather pass these by, but it is expedient that we do not.

But recently, in a leading Christian magazine, the following appeared from the pen of a well known preacher:

"The second interpretation is, that He prayed literally to be delivered from death, then and there; that the severity of His agony was such that His physical nature was unable to bear it, and, unless sustained miraculously, life would have become extinct in the Garden of Gethsemane; that the conflict with Satan was so intense and prolonged that His human nature would have given way but for the Father's help. In this aspect, this was the gravest crisis of His dependence and need, and the Father did support and sustain, so that, instead of dying in Gethsemane, He was enabled and strengthened to go on to the greater agony and crisis of Calvary. We confess that our own minds turn absolutely and instinctively to the latter of these interpretations as the more rational, scriptural, and satisfactory."

We do not deny, that this interpretation is rational, but it is far from being scriptural. Indeed it has the elements of wicked doctrine in it. If it is true "that the conflict with Satan was so intense and prolonged that His human nature would have given way but for the Father's help" then Satan must have had the power to slay the Prince of Life. The reader will see at once to what such a conception must lead us. This interpretation likewise speaks of the agony His physical nature was unable to bear unless sustained miraculously and the possibility of His life becoming extinct in the garden. He, instead of dying on the cross, dying in Gethsemane. All this dishonors our Lord. We cannot tolerate such a thought for a moment. His life could never become extinct in Gethsemane; there was no such danger of His death. At no time was our blessed Lord in danger of death. His body was not mortal but immortal. Death is the result of sin; where there is no sin death has no claim. Our Lord could never die under the attacks of the enemy. On the cross where He, who knew no sin was made sin

for us, He gave His life; then as our substitute He died. His death could never take place till that solemn moment had come, when He was made sin for us on the cross. Furthermore He said: "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18). Another view has recently been advanced. A brother wrote us about this as follows: "Have you seen anywhere that in Gethsemane, our Lord was delivered from death which he feared, according to Hebrews 5; and was strengthened to go on to the death on the cross, at which He aimed, and for which He came? His willingness to stop short of His finished work, and let all that He had accomplished thus far go if the Father so willed it, is the greatest instance of submission on record." The first statement is not true, as He was not delivered from death and the second statement is inconceivable. How could He be willing to stop short of His finished work, when He entered into the world for that very purpose and all depended on that work? How could He be willing to stop short of it after His own Spirit in the prophets had spoken of His sufferings and the accomplishment of this work of atonement? Such a conception is highly fanciful and full of mysticism. We refrain from pointing out other difficulties connected with this theory of His sufferings in the garden. But did He perhaps shrink from the physical sufferings of the cross, as others have maintained? Assuredly not, for He had announced so often, as we have seen in this Gospel, His rejection, suffering and death. And if it was not all that which is suggested in these different interpretations of His agony, what was it then? What was that cup which He dreaded? What was that sorrow unto death? It was this very fact we stated before, that He the Holy, the Spotless One, the One who is the image of God, was soon to be made sin and to stand in the presence of God, no longer as the Beloved One, but in the sinner's stead. God's face upon which He had ever gazed which had ever smiled upon Him was soon to be hid. That eternal love He enjoyed was to be no longer upon Him, but in its place judgment and wrath of God. And what was it when at last He was made sin for us? That awful cry from the cross gives us the answer, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But oh! what did that cry mean for that Holy One? Shall we ever know its depths and the awful suffering the Holy One, made sin for us, had to pass through, when thus He cried? From this His holy soul shrank. His holiness and perfection even made this shrinking necessary. He could do nothing else but shrink from it, and yet He bows in perfect submission and obedience to the Father's will. Not my will but Thy will be done. This was before Him in the garden in that dark night of agony and sorrow. And here we would rest. But all praise and adoration to Thee our blessed Saviour and Lord for all Thine agony and sorrow and for Thine obedience unto the death of the cross!

Two Scriptures, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New, may be mentioned as giving further light on Gethsemane. The one hundred and second Psalm may be rightly termed "The Gethsemane Psalm." Its superscription is, "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before God." It begins with the deepest distress and ends with the eternal Glory of the One who was in such sorrow. In the first part of this Psalm we find the great sorrow. Well may one think here of that pathetic outburst found elsewhere in the Word, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. 1:12). First we hear His cry, "Hide not Thy face from Me in the day when I am in trouble." Then He speaks of His days being consumed; His bones burned, His heart smitten and withered like grass; He is alone in His weeping and crying. Then again we hear the voice of the sufferer. "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said oh my God, take me not away in the midst of my days..." The words which follow are not addressed by the agonizing sufferer to God, but God addresses them to the sufferer, who is prostrated before Him. No one could have ever had this conception if the Holy Spirit had not given us the key. In the first chapter of Hebrews the closing words of the Psalm are quoted and there they are given as addressed by God Himself to the Son. As in the twenty-second Psalm, the deepest humiliation and then the exaltation of the One who suffered so we find it in the Gethsemane Psalm. The last verses of the one hundred and second Psalm are God's answer to the One who is bowed down in deepest sorrow.

The other passage we have in mind is the familiar one in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him out of death, with strong crying and tears (and having been heard because of His piety); though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:7, 8). There is no doubt but these words refer us back to the Gethsemane scene. The supplications and entreaties with strong crying and tears took place in Gethsemane; yea, even more than that, the sweat as if it were great drops of blood. But it does not say that He was saved "from" death. It is often assumed that He cried to be saved from death and upon this some of these Christ dishonoring conceptions are formed. He cried to Him who was able to save Him out of death. And He was heard. The answer came in His resurrection from the dead. But to return to the scene in the garden.

Where do we find His disciples? Three He had taken with Him and told them to remain there and watch with Him. Soon they were asleep. They were on the holy mountain with Him, eyewitnesses of His Glory. And did they sleep then? Luke

9:32 gives us the answer. "But Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, they saw His Glory, and the two men that stood with Him." This manifests what the flesh is, which is fully exhibited in the disciples. Their Lord in tender love, appearing almost as if He looked for their sympathy, had requested them to watch with Him. Instead they sleep. How could they have looked into His loving face, with the solemn feeling upon them of great events soon to come and then going to sleep! Did that show love for Him? And He had spoken to them about not falling into temptation. They did not realize their need and their danger. And what tenderness and grace He manifests toward His disciples, who had failed! Oh the Glory of Himself even in that dark hour; how it shines forth! After He had prayed the third time He said to them, "Sleep on now and take your rest; behold, the hour is nigh, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners." Marvelous words of grace, calmness and dignity. The Shepherd is ready to give His life for the sheep, that they might have life and rest. The sword is soon to be unsheathed and fall upon the Shepherd, the man called by God "my fellow" (Zech. 13:7). The Lamb of God is ready to take away the sin of the world, ready to go to the slaughter as a lamb and as a sheep dumb before her shearers. Yea, the Holy One, the adorable, blessed One is ready to be stricken and smitten of God. What a path was His! Humbling Himself, He became obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. The last part of that path is now before Him. What a theme it is! What food for our souls and what exercise of soul it brings to contemplate Him who for the joy set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame.

What other applications of this touching scene in Gethsemane might be made. How it teaches us submission and obedience and the highest prayer, the sweetest prayer as well to our Loving Father "Not my will but thy will be done." We leave these meditations to our readers with the prayer that He Himself may speak to each heart. Oh Lord, our Lord, we cannot fathom Thy Being, we cannot fully understand what Thou wast, but we know Thy love for us! We praise and adore Thee. Make Thyself a greater reality to our hearts. Amen.

And what a story it is which we have before us, the story of the passion of the King. And who could be able to follow the Lamb of God and fathom the depths of His sorrow! What it must have been for Him, the Holy, spotless One, to be thus delivered into the hands of sinners! Again we say that it is quite impossible to write an exposition of all these solemn events connected with the suffering and death of our Lord. Much of what might be written by way of application we must leave unsaid; it would take volumes to do that.

It was while He was still speaking to His disciples that the enemies came to take hold of Him, to take the Beloved of the Father captive. "And while He was yet speaking, Behold Judas, one of the twelve came, and with him a great crowd with swords and sticks" (verse 47). It seems that Judas made good use of his time since he left the room where the feast was kept. The Lord had said to him, knowing the thoughts of his dark heart, "What thou doest, do quickly." Possessed by Satan, he had rushed forth into the dark night, and, in feverish haste, led on by the evil one, he had succeeded in all his plans. The officers and a detachment of Roman soldiers, most likely several hundred, were put at his disposal. These carried swords and other weapons, besides lanterns and torches. These were Gentiles; perhaps of different countries, such which Rome had conquered. But there were others, and they carried sticks. The temple guard had turned out in full force; these were the hirelings of the chief priests and elders. The rabble of the street no doubt was also represented, for it was a great crowd. What a scene! Gentiles and Jews come to lay their hands on the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, ready to commit the greatest sin. All the sinfulness of sin is now to be manifested. But why such a great multitude and such precaution to capture one man, who was "meek and lowly"? What a testimony after all to His power, which they feared and yet what blindness.

Judas appears first on the scene. Behold Judas! What a surprise it must have been for the disciples, aroused from sleep, to find him present who had withdrawn from them under such mysterious circumstances. From the Gospel of Luke we learn that he was not only the leader of the great crowd but he walked ahead of them. What a subtle plan he had laid, and in it the cunning of that same Serpent which was in that garden, in which the first Adam had been placed. How cunning and yet how blunt. All had been arranged so as to make His escape impossible. The traitor was to kiss Him so that the Lord might be known and likewise become detached from the disciples; then they were to press at once upon Him and capture Him. All was carefully premeditated. Judas by his action and his plan shows that he did not believe in the Lord as the Son of God; he knew His power. When he walked before them he may have cunningly aimed at the hiding of his satanic deed.

And now he reaches the side of Him whom he still calls "Rabbi." The first word he utters was a word of joy. "Oh, the joy! Rabbi" -- thus it reads in literal translation. Then he kissed Him eagerly. The symbol of love, devotion and faithfulness so much used in the Orient is used by the traitor. What must the Holy One have suffered, when the one who had been in His

loving company came up and had uttered that word, "Oh, the Joy"? What suffering must have passed through that loving heart when He felt the vile lips of that one upon His cheeks!

And to think that He who rebuked the sea and it obeyed His voice, whose omnipotent word had healed the sick and raised the dead, should thus be delivered up. Oh, what a story it is!

"But Jesus said to him, Friend, for what purpose art thou come?" What calm and gentle answer to the Satan-possessed Judas Iscariot. Should not this tender question have touched the conscience of the traitor? He was beyond hope. It is significant that the Lord addresses him with the word, Friend. Yet it is a different word which the Lord used in calling His disciples as recorded in John 15. The word He uses here signifies "companion." Judas had been a companion of the Lord, He had beheld His mighty works, and had by Him messianic power to heal the sick conferred upon himself. This is the last word that wicked man ever heard addressed to himself by the Lord. The next time we behold him is when he is filled with remorse, casting the pieces of silver in the temple; then he went and hanged himself.

And now they laid hands upon the Lord and seized Him. The rough hands of the inhuman Roman soldiers, the cruel hands of the hating Jewish mob took hold of that sinless body of the Lamb of God. All were energized by Satan who stands behind all this and that which follows; it is the hour of darkness and the manifestation of the power of darkness upon Him, the willing sacrifice.

But far different is the description of His betrayal in the Gospel of John. Not a word is said in that Gospel of His agony in the garden. As Son of God, described in the fourth Gospel, no such record would be in order. And when they come to take Him, He meets them with a calm, "Whom seek ye?" His majestic answer "I am," makes the whole multitude of Roman soldiers, temple guards and the mob fall down. "They went backward and fell to the ground." All He needed to do was to walk away and disappear between the trees of the garden. There is, of course, no discrepancy here. The Gospel of John simply shows the divine side of that scene. He allowed Himself bound, and that with the condition "let these go away." He surrenders Himself; His own are free. Blessed hint of that precious Gospel of the Son of God.

An incident is connected with this great event which is full of instruction. The hasty action of Peter, as we learn from the Gospel of John, almost marred the gracious scene, and only the Lord's hand could overrule the serious consequences of that action and bring good out of it. The confusion of the disciples must have been great when their beloved Master was taken captive. To see how the meek One, whom they had followed, at whose feet they had sat, in whom they believed as the Christ of God, was taken by these rough men, was too much for them. They had between themselves two swords. The words of the Lord about "Selling his garment and buying a sword" had been taken literally by them. Simon Peter possessed one of these swords, and had he not said he would be willing to lay down his life for the Lord? Now the opportunity had come to show his willingness to redeem his promise and his loyalty to his Master. In fearful rashness he draws the sword and strikes the one next to him. He strikes with the intent to kill. The one hit is the servant of the High Priest by name of Malchus. The mercy of the Lord prevented the worst and Peter only takes off the ear of the servant. Surely it was courage in Peter to do this. To attack such a large body of people was fearlessness; loyalty to Christ was the cause of the action. And yet how it belittled the Lord! Did He who had said just the word "I am" and his enemies had fallen into the dust, need such a defense? Did He who willingly stretched out His hands, the willing captive, need Peter's interference to make Him free? Upon the holy mount Peter had quite lost sight of the dignity of Him whom he called Lord and classed Him with Moses and Elias, and here he errs in the same manner. The Lord has to remind him of his mistake. "Return thy sword to its place; for all who take the sword shall perish by the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot now call upon my Father, and He will furnish me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (verses 52-54). If it were a case of self-help how easy it would have been for Him to summon the angels. Peter stood in all probability in the attitude of defiance, ready to strike again if he should be attacked in return. He is told to put up the sword. Though loyal to the Lord, he had dishonored Him and not manifested the graciousness and mind of Him, whom He tried to defend. Alas! how many of us have followed impulsive Peter in this action.

The Scriptures had to be fulfilled, and from now on we see indeed the fulfillment of Scripture. Elsewhere we read that the Lord touched the ear of the wounded servant and healed him. It was the last miracle of healing the Lord performed before He went to the cross, and that was done to an enemy. In the tumult and confusion of the hour the act of Peter passed unnoticed.

"In that hour said Jesus to the crowds, Are ye come out against a robber with swords and sticks to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple and ye did not seize me? But all this is come to pass that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left Him and fled" (verses 55-56). The word He had spoken was now fulfilled, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." The Shepherd is left alone. We pass over the account found only in the Gospel of Mark about the young man who followed clad in a linen garment.

Alone and forsaken the blessed Lord is taken away captive. What a scene it must have been! The fleeing disciples disappearing in the darkness of the night, the mob leading Him hence; no doubt they buffeted Him with blasphemous curses dragging Him along and so soon Gethsemane, the place of that solemn drama, is enshrouded in the stillness of the night. But oh, what it was that took place there. The mighty Creator, the Son of God, the Holy One in His agony and sinful man laying hold of the Lord of Glory!

We will be obliged as we pass on in meditating on the passion of our Saviour to confine ourselves strictly to the Gospel, which we study. We do not write an exposition of the entire story of His suffering and what was done to the Man of Sorrows, but only as the Holy Spirit has recorded these events in the first Gospel. And in doing this, we shall point out only the leading features.

First we see Him before Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. They expected Him to be brought in. What triumph must there have been upon their faces, when at last in that memorable night, the One whom they hated and despised was brought securely bound into their presence, under arrest in the hands of the Gentiles.

He must appear before the ecclesiastical council first; He must be tried there. But what can they say against Him? What evil had He done? They had watched Him closely. Deputations, one after another, had tried to ensnare Him. Pharisees and Sadducees, as we have seen in our study of this Gospel, had come to tempt Him. They found nothing in Him. He had asked the question in one of His great discourses, which they had heard. Which of you convinces Me of sin? There was no answer. He was the sinless One, the perfect and holy One. But it is their hour and the power of darkness. Thus we read: "And the chief priests and the elders and the whole Sanhedrin sought false witness against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death." But did they succeed? "And they found none, though many false witnesses came forward." They could find nothing. Therefore, He ought to be freed. "But at the last two false witnesses came forward and said, He said I am able to destroy the temple of God, and in three days build it." But this was a wrong quotation of His words and a wrong application. Besides this, as we learn from the Gospel of Mark, the witnesses did not agree amongst themselves. It was impossible to convict Him on such a charge. He had not a word to say. They look upon Him with their awful hatred. The high priest attempts to get Him to answer. "Answerest Thou nothing?" "But Jesus was silent." It is obvious they could not convict Him. The charge against Him was blasphemy. They had miserably failed in proving anything whatever against the Lord. But condemned to death, He must be. He must die.

There remained just one thing to be done, and that was to put a question to Him directly, a question, which He could not refuse to answer. Why did they not do this at once? He had first to be shown as the Holy One, the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. The moment has come. Most likely the High priest in his excitement had arisen from his seat. The silent victim stands immediately before Him. They are face to face. The furious, heated face of Caiaphas looks into the loving tender eyes of the Lord. Did this high priest and his associates know that this lowly One, standing bound in their presence, is the Son of God, the promised Messiah? They knew that He had given the witness to that effect throughout His public ministry. He had not only given the self-witness, that He and the Father are one, that He is the Son of God, but His works had fully established His Deity. The last question the Lord put to the Pharisees concerning the Christ, whose son He is, (Chap, 22) had been answered by Him in a way they all understood. There was no doubt, they knew Him, even as the Lord had said in the parable, "He is the Heir; come let us kill Him". The high priest knew he would succeed if he put that question concerning His Sonship to Him. But little he knew what he was doing; the blessed One could not be condemned by false witnesses. His own confession of who He was, the confession of the truth alone could bring about His condemnation. "And the high priest answering said to Him, I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus says to Him, Thou hast said. Moreover, I say to you, From henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Verses 63-64.)

Under that oath He could not be silent. For this moment He was waiting to witness that good confession. He confesses

Himself the Christ, the Son of God and witnesses to His future Glory at the right hand of power, and His visible manifestation at the time of His Coming again in the clouds of heaven. What a confirmation of the fact that He is the willing sacrifice of the Holy One, who will drink that bitter cup and fulfill the Scriptures. "They all heard it -- and, as the Law directed when blasphemy was spoken, the high priest rent both his outer and inner garment, with a rent that might never be repaired. But his object was attained. Christ would neither explain, modify, nor retract His claims. They all had heard it. What use was there of witnesses." Behold now ye have heard the blasphemy. "Then turning to those assembled, he put to them the usual question which preceded the formal sentence of death. As given in the rabbinic original it is: 'What think ye gentlemen? And they answered, If for life, "For Life." If for death: "For death."' But the formal sentence of death, which if it had been a regular meeting of the Sanhedrin, must now have been spoken by the president, was not pronounced." (Edersheim)

"What think ye? And they answering said, He is liable to the penalty of death." (Verse 66). What a justice! Satanic, fiendish injustice rather. But there He stands, the silent Lamb of God. What a picture! Oh that we might behold Him once more as He stood before this company of His enemies. What calmness. "Majestic in His silence, majestic in His speech; unmoved by threats to speak, unmoved by threats when He had spoken."

And now affecting the scene, which follows. His confession set the powers of darkness loose and the undefending Christ, the Son of God is tasting a little of the cup He had to drink. Oh to think of it! They spit in His face! That face, which in loving tenderness had gazed with compassion upon the multitudes, yea, that face, the image of the invisible God, was covered with vile spittle of men. How He must have suffered! They buffeted Him, struck Him with the palms of their hands, mocked Him. And not a word, not a murmur came from His blessed lips. "When reviled, He reviled not again, when suffering, He threatened not." And reader! it was all for such vile sinners as we are! He loved us and gave Himself for us. What a Saviour! How little we think of Him; how little that which He did for us is before our hearts and has a governing power over our lives. Oh Lord! Thou art worthy of all. And then to think that such a Saviour is rejected of those for whom He suffered thus, dishonored, His mighty work denied among those who profess His name.

The last paragraph of this solemn chapter concerns Peter. Peter had followed Him at a distance, even to the palace of the high priest and entering in, sat with the officers to see the end. Perhaps when they all had fled, he remembered his promise to the Lord and so at a distance he followed. Far better it would have been for Peter if he had not followed at all.

"Now Peter sat without in the court, and a maiden came unto him and said, Thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he had gone out into the entrance, another saw him, and said unto those that were there, this man also was with Jesus, the Nazarene. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. But after a little while, they that stood by came and said unto Peter: Of a truth thou art also of them, for even thy speech discovereth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus that He had spoken, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And going out, he wept bitterly" (verses 69-75).

Poor Peter has to learn the depths of his own self. In self assertion and self confidence, he had boasted to lay his life down for the Lord. His Lord knew him; he was a true believer, but did not know the weakness of himself. That weakness had to be uncovered, he had to be sifted as the Lord had told him. Far different was the case of Judas. He was not a believer at all, only a professing one, and the wickedness of the flesh is manifested in his case.

Peter, as a true believer, did not know what the flesh was, as alas so many believers are ignorant of the true nature of the flesh. There was no willingness in Peter to sin; he wanted to do that which he had told the Lord, but he was ignorant of his own weakness. Step by step he had approached this sad and sorrowful moment. He did not plunge suddenly into the out and out denial of the Lord; he never meant to say what he did say. Had any one told him, "Peter, you are going to curse and swear, declaring, I know not the man", he would have shuddered in horror and vowed, he could never do such a thing. Gradually he had been drawn towards this awful denial. "Watch and pray" the Lord had said "that ye enter not into temptation." Peter had slept; he had neglected prayer. He could not watch an hour with His Lord. Here the first step was made. Because he was ignorant of the real character of the flesh, that old nature, he did not pray. If he had known what the flesh is he would have cast himself upon the Lord and watched and prayed. And this is the cause of every denial of our blessed Lord; and how numerous these are!

What sad repetitions of Peter's fall in the lives of God's people. The absolute worthlessness of the flesh is learned and learned over and over again by many a sad experience. The consciousness of our utter weakness in ourselves must ever lead us into a closer fellowship in prayer with Himself. But over this sad scene of failure and denial was the gracious, loving praying Lord. Peter was His own; he could not go the way Judas went. He had foreseen all. Ere it happened He told Peter what he would do and how Satan's power linked with the flesh would result in his denial. But more than that the Lord had prayed for him. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Where would have Peter been, if it had not been for that prayer of the Lord. And so His loving eye watched him, and when the sin was committed and the right moment came, there was not a word spoken to Peter, but the Lord looked upon Peter. Their eyes met. That was enough. What was in that look? An angry reminder what Peter had done? A frown which showed displeasure? Far from that. It must have been a tender, loving, sad look. It went home to Peter's heart. He remembers now. The horror of his denial breaks upon him. Had he not been the Lord's own, had he not known the Lord, Satan who had led him gradually on, would have rushed him into despair. But we see him rushing out and behold him in the night, the dawning morning in the East, convulsed with bitter weeping. What a weeping it was, the tears of repentance, self judgment flowed freely. Broken in heart and broken in spirit with that tender look burning in his soul, he weeps and weeps. Reader do you know anything of such tears? You do if you walk with the Lord. Another one rushes out too when that morning had come. He went out and -- hanged himself. Satan claims his own. Oh what a loving Saviour and Lord we have. How He dealt with Peter. How He has dealt with us and still cares for His own, prays for them and keeps them and restores them to service as He did with His denying Peter. _286

CHAPTER XXVII

In this great chapter we follow the Lamb of God to the cross. What a journey it was! He, who had lived that wonderful life, had healed the sick, commanded the demons, raised the dead, He, who is announced in the beginning of this Gospel to be Immanuel, God manifested in flesh, the Beloved of the Father is in the hands of men, led away to the cross. What sufferings were His? Who is able to follow the depths of that shame, which He despised, the cross which He endured? But feebly we can meditate on these things, which He suffered in our stead.

The previous chapter closed with that sad record of Peter's denial and his bitter weeping. The Lord had given His great confession before the high priest, the confession of truth, which resulted in His being condemned to death. The morning had come after this eventful night. (We cannot enter here into the chronology of that week to correct some of the errors of the traditional View.) There was no sleep for many in that night. The Son of God who had watched and prayed in the garden saw no sleep; dragged along He was and reviled by sinners. Peter saw [little] sleep; he went out and wept. The forsaking disciples [had little] sleep; they had fled terror stricken. The chief priests waked and plotted on how to proceed against the Holy One in putting Him into the hands of the Roman governor. Securely bound they led Him away through the streets of Jerusalem, to hand Him over to Pontius Pilate. (Verses 1-2) What humiliation for Him to be thus led away! What a contrast with that which happened a few days before, when He was welcomed by the multitudes as the King of Israel!

But before we see Him standing in the presence of the roman governor, the Holy Spirit gives us the record of what became of Judas. "Then Judas, who delivered Him up, seeing that He had been condemned, filled with remorse, returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, I have sinned in having delivered up guiltless blood" (verses 3-4). No doubt he stood there and witnessed all what was done to the Lord. He too spent a sleepless night. He saw the meek and lowly One, buffeted and spit upon. It left him all unmoved; there was no love for the Lord in that heart. Did he expect the Lord to manifest that power of which he, the traitor had been so often an eye witness? Perhaps this very thought it was, which Satan, who had entered into him suggested. His love for money, Satan used as bait. He may have whispered "You get the money and he will take care of Himself. He will not die but get free." Thus Judas was deceived to sell the Lord. What a sin covetousness, the love of money is! It is the root of all evil; it is idolatry. And this sin is one of the great sins of the present day. Its worst feature is that betrayal of the Lord and His truth, for "filthy lucre's sake" which goes on in Christendom. Professed teachers, who are described in the Epistle of Jude and in the Second Epistle of Peter, who are nothing but natural men, not having the Spirit, who use great swelling words, which the world calls "oratory" are betraying the Lord as Judas did. They are rushing too in a darkness, just as dense as that into which Judas rushed that night. The Word declares "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

He goes to the priests, who were just as much under that satanic power as he was. He gives them his confession. He has

betrayed guiltless blood. That much at least he acknowledges. Then he hanged himself. This is the way Satan uses his victims. He deceives; he is a master in reasoning in a subtle way. He leads on and on, deeper and deeper and when the sin is committed he leads into despair and drags his victim down with himself into the place, which is prepared for him and his angels. Oh, what grace and blessing, to be delivered from the power of darkness, from that awful master. Judas after committing suicide went to his place (Acts 1:25). The view given out by some teachers that Judas will come out of his place, to which he departed, and that he will be the final antichrist, the man of sin, is highly fanciful; one does well to beware of such views.

The silver pieces he cast into the temple and the priests, as covetous as Judas, stoop down to pick them up. That which follows is only reported in this Gospel, in the other Gospel records no mention is made of the fate of Judas. It is put only in the Gospel of Matthew on account of its dispensational bearing. The priests judge very religiously that it is not lawful to put the money into the Corban, the treasury of the temple. They decide to buy with the pieces of silver, the field of the potter for a burying ground for strangers. This was in partial fulfillment of what was spoken by Jeremias. The full prophecy is found in Zechariah, but the Spirit calls here attention to what is also spoken by Jeremias. We read in that book (Chapters 17 and 19) of a potter's field, which was situated on the side of the valley of Hinnom. That valley is also called "Tophet", a fearful type with its awful memories of Gehenna. Perhaps there, Judas had ended his earthly existence, and after hanging himself had fallen down, and burst asunder. This potter's field was bought with the blood money.

"By a fiction of law the money was still considered to be Judas', and to have been applied by him in the purchase of that potter's field, for the charitable purpose of burying in it strangers. But from henceforth the name of potter's field, became popularly changed into that of "field of blood." And yet it was the act of Israel through its leaders. It was all theirs, though they would have fain made it all Judas': the valuing, the selling and the purchasing. And "the potter's field", the very spot on which Jeremiah had been divinely directed to prophecy against Jerusalem and against Israel, how was it now all fulfilled in the light of the completed sin and apostasy of the people, as prophetically described by Zechariah! This Tophet of Jeremiah, now that they had valued and sold at thirty shekels Israel 's Messiah-Shepherd -- truly a Tophet, and become a field of blood! Surely not an accidental coincidence this, that it should be the place of Jeremiah's announcement of judgment, not accidental, but veritably a fulfillment of this prophecy. (Edersheim Life and Times of the Messiah.)

Prophetically all is a foreshadowing of what was to happen to Israel and Israel 's land on account of the bloodguiltiness, which they took upon themselves. Israel 's land becoming "a burying place for strangers" and Israel scattered among the nations, finding their graves in Haqal Dama, a field of blood.

We see Him now before Pilate, the Gentile governor, where He was to be condemned to die; the Jews had no power and right to execute any one. First He was condemned by the Jews and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, who also condemned Him. The crowning sin of the world was therefore committed by both, the Jews and the Gentiles. Israel 's long promised Messiah and King was delivered by His own people into the hands of the Roman governor, the Gentile power, which was oppressing them. The charge which the leaders of the nation had brought against the Lord before Pilate was the charge of being a rebel; one who made himself king in opposition to the Roman authority. An immense multitude of people must have followed Him to the Praetorium. The governor questions Him without delay, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" The answer comes at once from his lips "Thou sayest." How brief and full of dignity! Then the accusation of the chief priests and elders began. One after the other spoke. They accused Him urgently, we read in the Gospel of Mark. Perhaps one tried to outdo the other in slandering Him and speaking malicious lies about Him. The Holy Spirit has not given us the detailed accusations they brought against Him; they all were undoubtedly of a political nature. But there He stood, the lamb of God and opened not His mouth. How calm He was in that Babel of voices. There was no need for Him to defend Himself against these unjust accusations. And the Gentile governor, the sharp, worldly, Roman politician wonders at that strange behaviour. Many a time accused criminals had been brought before him and he had witnessed their eagerness in defending themselves. Here stands one in his presence, who does not open His mouth. Nor does He say another word to Pilate after he had questioned him, so that Pilate wondered exceedingly. Such a prisoner had never been before him. He knew he was guiltless.

They had a custom, for how long we do not know, that on the feast the Roman governor would liberate a great criminal, under condemnation. As we read in the Gospel of Mark, the multitude began crying out and to beg, that he would do to them as he had always done. One notable criminal was at that time in custody; his name was Barabbas. Significant name! Translated it means "the son of the father." The old Syriac version adds another name, the very name which our Lord bore

on the earth, the name of Jesus. "Jesus Barabbas" -- a miserable, satanic counterfeit of the true "Son of the Father." Who was he? He was an insurgent and had committed murder. May he not have been a false Messiah, one of these satanic instruments, who attempted to become leaders? It is not unreasonable to believe this; in all probability he was just such a character.

"Pilate said to them, whom will ye that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? For he knew that they had delivered Him up through envy." What a scene! Barabbas still in prison, the guilty one; and here before a great multitude of people, among them the elders and the priests, moving around and whispering their satanic council in the ears of the people, there stands securely bound the Holy One, the blessed Lord, in His solemn silence. But ere the question is answered something else happens. We see a messenger coming in haste towards the seat which the governor occupies. He carries an important message, which Pilate has to see at once. The message was from his wife.

"But, as he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with this righteous man; for I have suffered today many things in a dream, because of Him" (verse 19). It was a solemn warning aimed at the conscience of the superstitious Roman. He knew the victim was without guilt. God in His mercy gave the Gentile a warning. He heeded it not.

The pause, which had come in was well used by the chief priests and the elders for they went among the multitudes and persuaded them that they should beg for Barabbas and to destroy Jesus. Fearful deed it was!

And now he puts the important question: "Which of the two will ye that I release unto you?" It does not take long to bring forth the answer. Barabbas is the people's choice. Barabbas! Barabbas! Not a voice was heard for the Lord. Where were now the multitudes who had followed Him? Where they who had cried "Hosanna"? If one of them was present they kept silent for fear of the wicked leaders. But Pilate convinced of the awful choice, which had been made, against the authority which he had, makes another attempt: "What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?" What a solemn question it was; and it is so still. The question was answered there and it must also be answered by every, person to whom the Lord Jesus Christ is offered. He must either be accepted as Saviour and Lord or rejected. The choice decides the eternal destiny; those who accept Him and own Him as their Saviour are saved and all who reject Him as Son of God and Saviour are lost. Pilate's second question is answered by a great cry, that fearful cry: "Let Him be crucified." Again Pilate asks: "What evil then has He done?" But his voice is drowned in a greater demand: "Let Him be crucified." Pilate was fully convinced of the innocence of the silent victim before him, but miserable coward he was, he would not act. When he saw he availed nothing and a great tumult was rising, he took water, washed his hands before the crowd and said: "I am guiltless of the blood of this righteous one, see ye to it." A Roman ceremony this was not, but we think rather that he borrowed it from the Jews themselves. Deut. 21:6; 2 Sam. 3:28; Psalm 26:6 at least refer to what he did here. Pilate with his "See ye to it" casts the bloodguiltiness upon the Jews. The chief priests and elders had used almost the same phrase in speaking to Judas: "See thou to it," they had said. And what did they answer to the governor's action and "see ye to it" his word to them? And all the people answering said, "His blood be on us and our children. Then he released unto them Barabbas; but Jesus, having scourged Him, he delivered up that He might be crucified."

Terrible answer it was. Barabbas is the nation's choice and the blood of the Holy One is wished by them upon their heads and the heads of their children. Has that awful wish been granted? Let the history of the Jews answer down to the present day. How His blood came upon them and their children; the end is not yet. Barabbas has been their choice and there is still that false Christ to come, who comes in his own name and whom they will receive.

Delivered up to be crucified. The Holy One is now in the hands of cruel, wicked men and all the suffering, shame and cruelty sinful man energized by Satan is capable of inflicting was heaped upon the king, the Lord of Glory. Who could describe that scene, which is before us? Painters have attempted to picture the terrible ordeal on canvas. Recently Tissot has produced pictures, which the world calls "realistic" of great artistic value. Miserable, blasphemous works they are indeed, the imaginations of the human mind. What was done to Him and what He suffered in our stead no brush, no pen, no tongue can tell. The hands tied, the back bent, the cruel scourge of cruel Rome fell upon the Son of God. Satanic hatred against the Holy One supplied the strength to inflict that awful punishment, which Roman writers called "the intermediated death" preceding death by crucifixion. At last that Holy body was a mass of torn and bleeding flesh.

Then the wicked Gentile soldiers began their mockery.

"Then the soldiers of the governor, having taken Jesus with them to the praetorium, gathered against Him the whole band, and having taken off His garment, put on Him a scarlet cloak, and having woven a crown of thorns they put it on His head; and a reed in His right hand; and bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And having spit upon Him, they took the reed and beat Him upon His head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the cloak off Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified" (verses 27-30).

A whole cohort of rough, barbaric soldiers are now taking hold of the willing victim. After that terrible scourging, the most awful indignities were heaped upon Him. First they tore His clothes from His outraged body, most likely in eager haste to have their sport with Him. Then they cast a scarlet cloak on Him. That garment was worn by kings, and the scarlet color was produced by the coccus cacti, the crushed insect. Then they wove a crown of thorns and put it on His blessed Head. The crown must have been put upon Him by these instruments of Satan, to inflict pain and to ridicule Him. The crown of thorns also points us back to the garden in which the first man fell. Thorns became the witnesses of the curse, as they are still in nature. The second Man, the Holy One, takes the curse upon His own head. They put a reed, a weak, perishable reed in His hand, the hand which upholds all things, the hand which had been outstretched in blessing over the weak, the erring, the sick, the blind and which had touched the leper; that mighty hand holds the reed, a scepter of mockery. And then the satanic drama of mockery and ridicule is complete. One after the other, these wicked men come and bow the knee before Him, they mock Him. "Oh Joy! or, Rejoice! King of the Jews." This was their greeting. But they get up from their position and spit upon Him and take the reed and beat Him on His head.

What a scene for us to contemplate! Who can measure its depths! The Son of God, He who came from the bosom of the Father, the Only Begotten, whose Glory Isaiah had seen, insulted, outraged, spit upon trampled upon by His vile creatures. And oh! reader, it was our sin which did it. How affecting to our hearts it should be and indeed it is. How He did love us to give Himself to such shame and suffering.

In that hour it was fulfilled what His Spirit had predicted of His suffering. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off my hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). And through it all He opened not His mouth. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

And as we gaze upon this scene once more we behold His Glory as well. The scene of His shame and rejection, of mockery and suffering is prophetic of His exaltation and Glory.

He is the King in Glory; the King of kings and Lord of lords. The royal garment is His. The crown of thorne gives way to the many crowns which His brow will wear. The scepter is His. Every knee must bow before Him and every tongue confess Him Lord, to the praise of God the Father. The highest Glory He reached through suffering, the crown through the cross, because He loved such as we are; because God wants us to be with Him in all eternity. Oh! glorious, blessed Gospel, how sweet to our hearts!

Thy holy head, once bound with thorns, The crown of glory now adorns; Thy seat, the Father's throne; O Lord, e'en now we sing Thy praise, Ours the eternal song to raise-- Worthy the Lord alone!

As Head for us Thou sittest there, Until Thy members too shall share In all Thou dost receive: Thy glory and Thy royal throne Thy boundless love has made our own Who in Thy name believe.

We triumph in Thy triumphs, Lord; Thy joys our deepest joys afford, The fruit of love divine. While sorrow'ng, suff'ring, toiling here How does the thought our spirits cheer The throne of glory's Thine.

And now they led Him away that He should be crucified. "Once more was He unrobed and robed. The purple robe was torn from His bleeding body, the crown of thorns from His bleeding brow. Arrayed again in His own, now blood stained, garments, He was led forth to execution. Only about two hours and a half had passed since the time that He had first stood before Pilate (about half-past six), when the melancholy procession reached Golgotha (at nine A.M.)." (Edersheim)

"And as they went forth they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to go with them that he might

bear His cross. And having come to a place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull, they gave Him to drink vinegar mingled with gall; and having tasted it He would not drink" (verses 32-35).

Physical weakness made it necessary that one should carry His cross. Was there ever such a procession seen before! The Lamb of God led forth to suffer outside of the camp! Oh, the man of sorrows, how He must have looked when they dragged Him to the place of death! But though He did not carry the cross and was weakened, yet He could not succumb at this point. The soldiers had led forth, no doubt, many a one to a similar death. Perhaps some died before the nails could be driven through the hands and feet. Did they fear that this might be the case with Him, whom they had maltreated, dishonored and mocked? Or was it mercy, which offered Him vinegar mingled with gall? Mercy, we believe it was not. It was a stimulant which they offered Him. They knew not that the Life which was in their hands could not succumb; no one could take that life from Him. He would not drink what was given to Him; He did not seek relief, He did not need it. His loving will was to endure all the suffering in perfect consciousness. But there is a prophecy that He should drink vinegar and gall in His suffering (Psalm 69). When the right moment had come for the fulfillment of that prophecy, He said, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "I thirst." Then He drank. Before the crucifixion He refused the vinegar and the gall. Golgotha, the place where they took Him, must have been to the north of Jerusalem. It was outside of the gate near gardens, in which were tombs.

Here they crucified Him. No description of the act itself is given in any of the Gospels. Crucifixion was the most horrible torturing mode of putting criminals to death; it originated in Phoenicia and was adopted by the Roman government. The Jews themselves knew nothing of putting transgressors to death by the cross. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit does not describe the awful act, the nailing of the Lord to the cross, we shall not attempt it. Lifted up, His hands and feet pierced by nails, every muscle stretched and life's blood pouring out, He hung on the cross, suffering the unspeakable tortures of such a death.

Prophecy is now being fulfilled. All the predictions of His sufferings come true. That what was foreshadowed in the different offerings and sacrifices, is now beheld in its deep and awful reality. The heavenly Isaac is upon the altar and the hand of God about to smite Him; there is no deliverance from the cup, He drinks it to the last drop.

The 22nd Psalm, that great prophecy concerning the sinbearer, comes first of all into view. "They parted His clothes amongst themselves, casting lots." This was foretold by David (Psalm 22:18). It is said that the division of the garments of the victims was a Roman custom. But there is a deeper significance than a mere fulfillment of a prophecy. His enemies, those who nailed Him to the cross, received His clothes. And so for His naked creature He has provided the robe of righteousness by His death on the cross.

In the next place the superscription is mentioned. "And they set over His head His accusation written: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." A board on which the crime of the condemned was written was generally carried before the criminal, who was led forth to the place of execution through the crowded streets. This custom was most likely followed with our Lord. Pilate himself had the superscription drawn up and it was written in three languages: Latin, Greek and the Aramaean dialect of Hebrew. We can not follow here the report of the different Gospel records about the writing above the cross. The one here in Matthew was undoubtedly the Latin inscription, while the fullest, as reported by John "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" was written in Aramean and the one in Mark "The King of the Jews" is the Greek inscription. Pilate could not help himself, he had to write as he did, though he may have had the thought in mind to avenge himself and to mock the Jews. In spite of the hating Jews He received His true title and that from the Gentile. There it stood written and could not be changed; so it is still. Jesus of Nazareth, the despised, the rejected One, is the King of the Jews, one of His titles; the throne of His Father David is His and in the wider sense He will be the King of kings.

"Then are crucified with Him two robbers, one on the right hand and one on the left." Another fulfillment of Scripture. "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).

"But the passers-by reviled Him, shaking their heads and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou art the Son of God, descend from the cross. And in like manner the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and the elders, said, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. He is the King of Israel; let Him descend from the cross, and we will believe on Him. He trusted upon God, let Him save Him now if He will have Him. For He said, I am Son of God. And the robbers also who had been crucified with Him cast the same reproaches on Him" (verses

43-44).

We behold still deeper sufferings of the Holy One. We listen again to the voice of prophecy. "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm 69:20). There is none to pity in the scene before us. He is alone cruelly mocked and He must have felt the reproach as only one who is absolutely holy could have felt it. He was reviled but He reviled not again. Our Gospel does not report a single word coming from His lips. From the Gospel of Luke we learn that the first word He had spoken after He had been lifted up, was that wonderful prayer "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." He is silent to the cruel and vile mockeries, born in the pit, the very breath of Satan. The old accusation is once more held up against Him. Little they knew that they were fulfilling that very Word about destroying the temple and that the third day, when He would arise as the mighty victor was not far hence.

But it was not only the rabble of the street, the low down element, the uncultured mob which mocked Him, but the chief priests, the elders had gone out to help in reproaching Him. They had come to deride Him in His agony. What awful depravity this reveals. It is astonishing to see that these cultured religionists in their fearful blindness quoted Scripture, when they gazed upon Him. They had said, "He is King of Israel; let Him descend now from the cross, and we will believe on Him." The great King of Israel, David, had written by the Spirit that great prophetic psalm of the suffering One, the Twenty-second. They knew that Psalm well. The ancient synagogue even had given this Psalm a Messianic interpretation. The sufferer there in that Psalm cries out, "But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." They gazed upon this great suffering One. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head." They saw the laughing throng, the cruelly mocking crowds, and they themselves joined in. But there is more than that. The wicked enemies of the great sufferer speak in that Psalm. The very Words they were to utter in the presence of the forsaken sufferer, the words with which they were to revile Him are given. "He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." (Verse 8.) These very words the sneering chief priests, elders and scribes uttered before the cross. What awful blindness had come upon them! But more solemn still and full of meaning are the words they also said. "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." How true, He saved others. And what a confession from their lips that He did save others. They owned His divine power and yet they rejected Him. He could not save Himself, for He would not. He had come to save others, and that could only be accomplished by taking the place of those He came to save. He had to die on the cross; Himself He could not save.

The robbers, too, cast the same reproaches on Him. The one, indeed, becomes ere he dies the mighty trophy of His Grace and hears from the blessed Lord that marvelous word, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." As this incident does not belong into this Gospel we pass it by.

The deepest agony has not yet been reached. Awful as the physical and mental sufferings of the Son of God must have been, there was still greater suffering before Him, a suffering before which all the other sufferings pale. Up to this point He had suffered from wicked men, energized by the devil. But now He is approaching the moment when He who knew no sin is to be made sin, when, instead of suffering from men, He is to suffer from God Himself. The cup from which His holy Being shrank He takes now to drink to the last drop.

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour; But about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (verses 45-47).

A solemn darkness settled over the whole land. Was it a darkness which covered the entire earth? Hardly, for in a part of the world it was night and darkness was not possible. No doubt the darkness covered the entire land and perhaps the entire Roman world. It enshrouded the cross with the great sufferer so that He was no longer visible to those who kept guard and those who looked on. That it was not an eclipse of the sun is learned from the fact that it was full moon at that time. It was a supernatural darkness. At the termination of the darkness about the ninth hour we hear His voice out of the darkness. About the ninth hour He cried, not in feebleness, but with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" But what is the meaning of this darkness? It was the outer sign of what passed over Him, who was then the sinner's substitute before a holy and righteous God. God had hidden His face from Him; He was forsaken by God Himself. His cry explains the meaning of the darkness, and the darkness gives us the meaning of His bitter cry. God had turned from Him, left Him, who had taken the sinner's place. He then bore our sins, was made sin for us and was the offering for sin. But who can fathom

it? Who can understand the deep mystery, the deep suffering when the holy and righteous God dealt with sin in Him, who had no sin, but who was made sin?

"He was alone with God, made sin; nothing to turn aside the cup of justice; nothing to deaden it. The power which was in Him did not shelter Him; it rendered Him capable of bearing that which weighed on His soul, the feeling of the horror of the curse in the measure in which the love of the Father was familiar to Him, the feeling of that which it was to be made sin in the measure of the divine holiness which was in Him. Neither the one nor the other could be measured. He drank then the cup of judgment of God against sin. All forced Him to utter the cry, a cry which we are allowed to hear that we might know what passed there, the reality of atonement: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' It is a forsaking which none can fathom, save He who felt it." (John N. Darby.)

Oh the blessed mystery of what transpired then in those three hours of darkness! It is true we cannot fathom it. We cannot know what it cost to make reconciliation, but we know the great work was done. The just died for the unjust that He might bring us to God. All done for us that God might be just and the justifier of him, who believes in Jesus. "And some of those who stood there, when they heard it said, This man calls for Elias. And immediately one of them running and getting a sponge, having filled it with vinegar and fixed it on a reed, gave Him to drink. But the rest said, Let be; let us see if Elias comes to save Him" (vv. 47-50). Who were those who said, This man calls for Elias? It is generally assumed that they were some of the soldiers. They knew perhaps little of Hebrew, it is said, and mistook the word "Eli" My God, for Elias. But against this it must be said that they equally knew little or nothing of Elias. We think rather the persons were mocking Jews, who understood the words and made them the occasion of new mockery. At this time it happened what is more fully recorded in the Gospel of John. "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, says, I thirst." Then they gave Him to drink after which He gave up the spirit. The work was done in the three hours of darkness. After that little unfulfilled Scripture is fulfilled at the right time He said, "It is finished."

But here in our Gospel we read "And Jesus having cried again with a loud voice dismissed His spirit." It is significant that twice we read of His loud voice. There was no sign and evidence of exhaustion. His life was not taken from Him but He gave His life; He laid it down Himself. The King Himself, when the moment had come, dismissed His spirit. And now we behold a three-fold result of His death. The veil in the temple was rent. The earth was shaken, and the tomb's were opened and the centurion made his confession as well as those who were with him.

"And lo, the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to the bottom, and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints fallen asleep arose, and, going out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered into the holy city and appeared unto many. But the centurion, and they that were with him on guard over Jesus, seeing the earthquake and the things that took place, feared greatly, saying, Truly this man was Son of God" (verses 51-54).

The rent veil is the first event following the death of the Lord. The veil was the inner one of the temple, dividing the holy of holies from the holy part. It was not an earthquake, which rent this heavy veil, but the power of God. It was done from above and not from below, "from top to bottom." It must have happened just about the time when the priests entered the holy part at the evening sacrifice. What terror must have seized these officiating priests when they beheld that unseen hand throwing open the most holy place. It has been suggested that this miracle was responsible that so many priests became converted in Jerusalem. For we read in the Book of Acts "and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). The veil itself was the sign that man was barred from coming to God; that heavy, solid veil, ever gave that testimony that it is impossible for man to approach God. The rent veil shows that it has been made possible. The rent veil declares that the great sacrifice on the cross of the spotless Lamb of God has been accepted. It is the first great answer of God to the majestic word of the dying Saviour, "It is finished." It likewise shows that the Jewish ceremonial law is fulfilled and ended. Most beautiful and uplifting is that inspired reference to this great event in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of Hope without wavering; for He is the faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:19-23).

In the next place the earth was shaken, the rocks were rent, and the tombs opened. This statement is peculiar to Matthew;

we do not find it in the other Gospel records. The death of the King shook the earth and rent the rocks. The opened tombs declared the glorious news, that His death hath broken the bands of death forever; through death He destroyed him, that had the power of death, the devil (Heb. 2:14). The interpretation that the rocks were rent and the graves opened, because the Lord in spirit descended into hades, we reject as unscriptural and fanciful, leading towards more serious errors. The Lord did not descend into hades; He went to paradise.

But besides this great sign, showing the captivity led captive, the power of death destroyed by His death, we read something else. "Many bodies of the saints fallen asleep arose, and going out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered into the holy city and appeared to many." The reader notices that the resurrection of the bodies of these saints did not take place immediately after the Lord had dismissed His spirit. They came forth after His resurrection. They could not precede Him. He is the first fruits, and these saints could not rise till He was risen on the third day. But why is it mentioned here and not in the next chapter in connection with His own resurrection? It belongs there historically. It is put here by the Holy Spirit to show the effect of the great work accomplished on the cross, the efficacy of the death of our Saviour. Death is now to be swallowed up in victory. "Where O death is thy sting? Where O death thy victory? Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin the law. But thanks to God, who gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinth 15:55-57). By His death the great work of deliverance has been accomplished, and this makes resurrection possible. The rising of the bodies of these saints is a solemn and glorious anticipation of the first resurrection, soon to come. These risen Saints, who came forth after He had left the grave, entered actually in the holy city and appeared to many. It was another mighty, supernatural witness of what had been wrought. But one might ask many questions in connection with this event. Who were they? What became of them? Where are they now? To whom did they appear and for what purpose? These questions and similar ones are unanswerable. It is useless to speculate about it. It is well in these days to abide very close to the written Word.

And the third event, the confession of the Saviour as Son of God by the centurion and the company of soldiers under him. In Luke and Mark we find the centurion mentioned alone, but here it is the entire company. They were Gentiles, heathen. The earthquake, the darkness, the loud voice which had spoken from the cross, all had filled these poor pagans with fear and from their lips, gazing up to the cross where He had bowed His adorable head, came the confession "Son of God." No such word came from Jewish lips. What a prophetic foreshadowing again. The Gentiles were to believe on Him. That for which they had condemned them and delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles is confessed by those who had put Him to death.

The work was finished, and God made it impossible that any other indignities could be put upon Him, whose body could not see corruption. It was customary to leave the bodies of the crucified hanging on the cross, the prey of wild birds. What happened about the breaking of the bones and the spear thrust is not recorded in our Gospel, but is fully made known in the Gospel of John. We mention it, therefore, briefly without attempting an exposition. "The Jews, therefore, that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for it was the preparation, for the day of that Sabbath was a great day, demanded of Pilate that their legs might be broken and they taken away." Had they succeeded, instruments of Satan as they were, the Scriptures would have been broken. But what happened? "The soldiers, therefore, came and broke the legs of the first and of the other that had been crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who saw it bears witness, and his witness is true, that ye also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Not a bone of Him shall be broken. And again another Scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced" (John 19:32-37).

Then there were many women who witnessed the sufferings of the second man how He bore the curse. They gazed upon Him from afar (verses 55-56).

"Now when even was come a rich man of Arimathea, his name Joseph, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus. He going to Pilate begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given up. And Joseph having got the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn in the rock; and having rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, went away. But Mary of Magdala was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the sepulchre" (verses 57-61).

Who was this Joseph of Arimathea? A wealthy man of the Jews and a secret disciple of the Lord Jesus. He was an

honorable councillor, belonging to the Sanhedrin, who also himself was awaiting the kingdom of God (Mark 15:43). He was a good man and just. When the Sanhedrin had come together to condemn the Holy One Joseph of Arimathea had not assented to their counsel and deed (Luke 23:51). Fear of the Jews had kept his discipleship in the background, but now when the Lord had expired on the cross, and after the mighty events, which had taken place, he comes boldly to the front. His fear became a holy boldness. During the earthly life of the Lord, though he knew Him and believed on Him, fear kept him back from avowing openly his discipleship; but now as His Lord had died He makes His great confession of Him before the Jews, the Sanhedrin and the Gentiles as well. He went right to Pilate. This person had the authority to dispose of the bodies of the crucified. Generally they were, after all dishonor had been done to them, thrown in the malefactors' graves. He then begged for the body of Jesus, and Pilate consented readily and gave his permission. The death of Christ had made a deep impression upon the Roman governor. That Jesus should have died so soon was a great amazement to Pilate. He called for the centurion to get the details from him and perhaps that official gave him his conviction that the crucified One was Son of God (Mark 15:44). And now to the astonishment of Pilate the well known, prominent and wealthy Joseph comes and begs for the body to do Him honor. How it must have disturbed the coward and troubled his conscience. But another one was there, too. That One helped in the hasty preparation for the burial. "And Nicodemus also, who at first came to Jesus by night, came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. They took, therefore, the body of Jesus and bound it up in linen with the spices, as it is the custom with the Jews to prepare for burial" (John 19:39-40). Nicodemus was a very timid man by nature. How he came to the Lord by night for fear of the Jews is well known. From His own lips he heard the blessed truth, the words of life. The precious seed had been sown in his heart. Did it spring up? He also belonged to the council. When the officers returned, having been sent to capture the Lord and they gave their report, Nicodemus, the great acknowledged teacher in Israel ventured a weak defense of the Lord (John 7:50-53). It showed the seed working. But the death of Christ brought him and Joseph of Arimathea deliverance from the fear of men; light and liberty flashed in their souls as the result of the death of Christ. The Lord had said to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up a serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." He had been lifted up and Nicodemus believing, confessed Him.

What honor then was done to the Lord. Wrapped in a clean linen sheet, after He had been lifted from the cross and then the resting place for Him, who had finished the work the Father gave Him to do, a new tomb hewn in the rock. It was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9. It is unfortunate that the authorized version gives us such a poor translation of this verse. Literally translated it is "And men appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death, because He had done no violence, neither was there guile in His mouth." The authorized version "He made His grave with the wicked" is wrong. The enemy would cast His body to the place where the bodies of the wicked were cast, but the power of God made that impossible.

The great stone is rolled to the door of the tomb. Joseph and Nicodemus depart. Only Mary of Magdala and the other Mary keep their love watch opposite the sepulchre. Thus closed the greatest day in the history of the world, the day on which the Prince of life, the Lord of Glory died on the cross of Golgotha, when the great work of reconciliation had been accomplished and peace was made in the blood of His cross.

That which follows in the chapter is peculiar to Matthew. None of the other Gospels have it. It is indeed the proper place for it.

"Now on the morrow, which is after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying, Sir, we have called to mind that that deceiver said when He was still alive, after three days I arise. Command therefore that the sepulchre be secured until the third day, lest His disciples should come and steal Him away, and say to the people He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worst than the first. And Pilate said to them, Ye have a watch; go, secure it as well as ye know how. And they went and secured the sepulchre, having sealed the stone with the watch besides" (verses 62-66).

But little comment on this striking incident is necessary. The enemy is at work to make all secure, but instead of it he only makes his own defeat complete, and the wrath of the enemy is made to praise Him. They remembered suddenly the words of the Lord, showing how they had watched His utterances. The disciples to whom He had said so often that He would rise on the third day, had forgotten all about it. It did not enter into their minds. This is proven by the way they took the news of His resurrection. It was a forgetfulness, no doubt, produced by the Spirit of God; in this very fact lies a strong argument for the resurrection of the Lord. Their imaginations could not produce, as infidelity has claimed, a supposed appearing of

the One who had died. But the enemy remembered. Yet could they really fear that His disciples would steal His body? The disciples had been scattered like sheep. Poor Peter, where was he? They had fled. Would the feeble women roll the stone away and steal His body? Could they think that fraud and deception might be practiced? It was the bad conscience which made them fear. Pilate made no objections; he let them have their desire. The stone is sealed, the guard is placed there to make fraud and illusion an impossibility. Little did they know that they were working to make the fact of the glorious resurrection of the Son of God secure beyond controversy. They furnished one of the strongest proofs for that event, thus becoming involuntary witnesses of His resurrection. _312

CHAPTER XXVIII

We have reached the last portion of our Gospel. The end is brief and very abrupt. The account of the resurrection of the Lord as given by Matthew is the briefest of all the Gospels. Only a few of the facts are mentioned. Then the characteristic feature of this last chapter is that no mention is made of the ascension of the Lord. However, the fact of His ascension is implied in numerous places in the Gospel. In the Gospel of Mark we find the statement that He was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. In Luke we read that He was "carried into heaven," but in Matthew no such statement is made. The Gospel ends as if He were still on the earth, all power in heaven and on earth in His hands and with His own to the completion of the age. All this is in perfect harmony with the scope of the Gospel.

In giving a brief exposition of this last chapter we shall not consider the different accounts of the resurrection, nor shall we attempt to harmonize the different manifestations of the risen Christ or to give the order of these. All this is beyond the work we have undertaken. We confine ourselves to the account as given here.

The chapter contains three parts. First, we find a brief account of the resurrection and the manifestation of Christ to the women. In the second place we find an account, which, like the last paragraph of the previous chapter, is peculiar to Matthew, the lying report invented by the Jews. Lastly, we see the disciples gathered in Galilee and He gives them His great commission, declares His power in heaven and on earth and assures them of His presence with them, even unto the end of the age. This is the last vision of the King in the Gospel of Matthew.

"Now late on Sabbath, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, came Mary of Magdala and the other Mary to look at the sepulchre." This is the brief introduction to the scene which follows. With the many women the two Marys had looked on the awful crucifixion scene. How they must have suffered in these hours of the agony of Him whom they loved. Then we beheld them sitting opposite the sepulchre. And now after others had gone and were taking a physical rest they could not stay away; they overcame all fear and went out to the sepulchre once more. The wording of the first verse is peculiar. Another translation reads, "And late in the week, when it was on the point of dawning into the first of the week came Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary to view the sepulchre." (Rotherham) Some have thought of two visits these women made, one on the evening and the other in the early morning. This is not probable. The dawning of the first day of the week is the time marked out. The first day of the week began after sundown on the Sabbath. It is quite correct to translate "after the Sabbath." To this agree the other records.

"And behold there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending out of heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his look was as lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became as dead men" (verses 2-4). The great earthquake was occasioned by the descending angel and the stone, so securely sealed, was rolled away and the heavenly messenger took his seat upon it. However, the resurrection of the Lord did not take place when the earthquake happened and when the stone was rolled away. Paintings often help along this unscriptural conception. No angel was needed to open the way for Him from the tomb. God raised Him from the dead and He Himself arose. The stone was rolled away to show that the tomb was empty. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was God's mighty and glorious seal upon the atoning work accomplished on the cross. It was God's answer to His strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7). The women no doubt felt the earthquake and may have seen that flash of light from above.

We have the effect of what happened upon the soldiers first, in the next place upon the women, and, lastly, upon the Jews. Three classes are seen in connection with the resurrection of the Lord in Matthew. The soldiers represent unbelieving Gentiles, the women, believers and then the Jews. The soldiers are terror-stricken. They were lying around on the ground as if they were dead. It is the effect upon the natural man of God's power made known. On what greater scale this will be

repeated when He comes again in resurrection Glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The trembling soldiers are left for the present. We shall hear of them later. The women are now addressed by the angel. They, too, must have made an outcry for the angel "answered them."

"And the angel answering said to the women, Fear not ye, I know that ye seek Jesus, the crucified One. He is not here, for He is risen as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and say to the disciples that He is risen from the dead; and Behold He goes before you into Galilee, there shall ye see Him. Behold I have told you."

What a glorious message it was. The crucified One risen from the dead! Mary of Magdala is in the foreground. Out of her the Lord had driven seven demons. She and the other Mary take the place of a Miriam and Deborah in the Old Testament. They are to herald and celebrate the mighty victory over sin, death and the devil which had been won. They hear the good news first and are the publishers of the same. As in the beginning of the Gospel, in the genealogy of the King, women are prominently mentioned, so in the closing scenes, in the triumph of the King, they have the lead.

"Fear not ye" is the message of the angel to the women. This, indeed, is the good news from the empty tomb. There is no cause to fear, absolutely none, for those who have believed on the Lord and are His own. All darkness, all uncertainty, all doubt and fear are at an end. The whole sin question has been righteously dealt with. The empty tomb, the glorious victory over death, and the grave are the everlasting witnesses. Gazing on this empty tomb, hearing that angelic message "He is risen" faith breaks forth in that song of triumph, penned by the Holy Spirit in Romans 8. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him give us all things? Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is he that condemns? It is Christ who has died, but rather has been also raised up; who is also at the right hand of God; who also intercedes for us." God is for us; He gave His Son; Christ died for us and God raised Him from the dead. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; He was buried, He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinth. 15:3-4). Thanks be unto God for His blessed Gospel.

But we must refrain from following the blessed doctrine of resurrection. If we were teaching this great doctrine we would have to follow the revelations as given in the Epistles. This is not our purpose. We are following only a partial historical account of the event itself.

The angel directs the women to bear the good news to the disciples and assures them the risen One Himself would go before them to Galilee, and there the disciples would see Him. This appointment was according to His own word. We find it in chapter 26:32. It is peculiar to Matthew and as we shall see later of no little importance.

"And going out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to bring His disciples word behold, also, Jesus met them, saying, Hail! And they coming up took Him by the feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus says to them, Fear not; go, bring word to my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see Me" (verses 8-10).

This tells us that they had entered into the empty tomb and had looked upon the place His blessed Body had rested. They must have trembled in great excitement; but greater still was their joy. The angel's message had at last brought back the remembrance of the words of the Lord about His resurrection on the third day. They ran, therefore, to bring the news to the disciples. And as they hastened on, eager to carry out the command, behold Jesus met them and greeted them with the word _Chairete "Oh! the Joy" or "Rejoice!" He was full of joy and graciously He revealed Himself to these devoted women. But oh, the joy! when at last His own are all with Him. Worshippingly they fall at His feet, while He Himself assures them "Fear not!" and repeats the message of the angel, "Bring word to my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see Me."

All this is very tersely told. In the Gospel of John we find the fuller account of the Lord's manifestation to Mary (John 20:11-18). It is often said by those who do not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures that there is a discrepancy between Matthew and John. In Matthew they fall at His feet and worship Him, but in John's Gospel the Lord says to Mary "Touch me not." There is no difficulty here at all. She fell at His feet and touched them, and laying hold of them the Lord uttered the words which are found in the Gospel of John. The taking hold by the feet is reported in the Gospel of Matthew,

and the words He spake in the Gospel of John. This is one of the beautiful evidences of the divine authorship of the Gospel records. In our Gospel Christ is seen in relation to Israel. He is the risen Messiah in connection with His believing remnant. Well can she claim Him and take hold of His feet. As the women fell at His feet and worshipped Him, so His earthly people will at some day worship the Lord and own Him as the Messiah. But in John it is the heavenly side. He is to ascend, to go away, leaving the earth and going on high; His bodily presence on the earth in relation to Israel is not the revelation found in the fourth Gospel. Then the Lord calls His own "Brethren." In the Gospel of John we find the same command. Never before did the Lord call His disciples "brethren," but on that glorious resurrection morning He uses this expression. It is now fully manifested that "He that sanctifieth and they are sanctified are all of one; therefore He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11-12). The word itself is mentioned in Psalm 22. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" (verse 22). That Psalm, containing the great prophecy of the suffering and exaltation of Christ, is prominent in the closing scenes of Matthew. We saw the fulfillment of the sufferings on the cross and here the prediction which relates to His resurrection. The main thing, however, insisted upon in the resurrection account in Matthew is Galilee. The disciples are told to go there; there the Lord will meet them and send them forth on their great mission among the nations. Before we behold them gathered in the mountain, which the Lord had appointed, another scene is introduced.

"And as they went, behold some of the watch went into the city, and brought word to the chief priests of all that had taken place. And having assembled with the elders, and having taken counsel, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers saying, Say that His disciples coming by night stole Him while we were sleeping. And if this should come to the hearing of the governor we will persuade him and save you from all anxiety. And they took the money, and did as they had been taught. And this report is current among the Jews until this day" (verses 11-15).

As previously stated this is peculiar to Matthew and the continuation of the story contained in the last paragraph of chapter 27. We learn that the effect of the resurrection of the Lord was a hardening one for the Jews. These wicked men had given thirty pieces of silver to have him delivered into their hands and now they are giving an immense sum to circulate a lie about His resurrection. The watch had sufficiently recovered from their awful fright, and some of them hasten back to the city. Surely something must have happened or why should they leave their important post and return to the city to make a report? Then it is strange that they went to the chief priests first and not to the Roman governor. This was indeed a very irregular proceeding. From this fact we must conclude that in the estimation of these soldiers, that which they had to report, was of greater importance for the chief priests to know than it was for Pilate. Who knows but these priests had instructed the guard, that if something should happen at the sepulchre and He should come forth, that they were to come to them first of all? This is probable. They bring their report and this was nothing less but a witness of the resurrection and that the tomb is empty. The enemies were the first witnesses of His triumph. The whole Sanhedrin was then hastily summoned to receive the report in an official way. The straightforward statement, as men of a military training are apt to report, made doubt about veracity impossible. The agitation of the guard, their frightened looks, the evidences that they had passed through a terrible experience, substantiated the truth of what they had reported. The Sanhedrin had nothing else left but to accept the report. To impeach these witnesses, to accuse them of falsehoods, would have been insane. There was no doubt in their minds that all had really happened as they reported. An earthquake had taken place, an angel had come down from heaven, the stone was rolled away, the tomb was found empty. What motives could make these soldiers to rush back to the city? Did they not do it at the risk of their own lives? The Sanhedrin was, therefore, in an awful predicament. What would happen, this must have flashed through the minds of these blinded men, if this truth should get out among the people? Perhaps they thought too of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two of their number who had confessed Him by their devoted actions. Then they had thought of the possibility of something to happen with the sepulchre and had the guard placed there. And now the attempt to defeat the resurrection of the Lord had miserably failed. He has risen from the dead. His own words came true. The temple which was destroyed was built again; as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so He was in the heart of the earth. He is risen. The very guards they had placed before the sepulchre to make any deception impossible bear the witness. Their fine minds, some of them legally trained, saw the hopelessness of their case. One thought was written upon every one of their dark hearts; the truth about the resurrection must be denied. This again could only be accomplished by inventing a lie. The only possible lie was to say that His disciples stole the body. The whole story they invented is, of course, incredible. It is far easier to believe He arose from the dead than to believe what the Jews invented about His resurrection. If His disciples could have stolen the body, if it had been possible, they surely would not have done it. But if they had a desire to steal the body, they could not have done so, for with the guard placed at the tomb, it was an impossibility. The disciples had forgotten all about the resurrection promise; they were a scattered, poor and timid lot of people. But even if they had been anxious to steal the body, how could they have done it? Here was the company of armed men. They were experienced guards and careful watchers, trained in that profession. Then there was the sealed, heavy stone. How could they have rolled away the stone and carried

away the body without being detected? Impossible. But the utterly ridiculous side of the whole lie came out with the report which these soldiers were to circulate, being well paid for it by the Sanhedrin. The disciples came and stole the body, while they were sleeping! In the first place, it is incredible that all these men had fallen asleep at the same time. All were fast asleep, so fast asleep that the commotion of rolling away the stone and the carrying away of a dead one did not disturb them. Furthermore, sleeping at a post meant death for the Roman soldier. One might have nodded and thus risked his life, but that all slept is an impossibility. But the report is foolish; they were asleep, and while they were asleep they witnessed how the disciples stole the body of Jesus. How ridiculous. The whole proceedings were out and out fraud and falsehood. And this was indeed the only statement they could possibly bring against the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a miserable lie. And this lie is continued to the present day. A small volume is still circulated among the Jews, the "Toledoth Jesu" in which the most blasphemous things are said about our blessed Lord, and the lie about His resurrection invented by the Sanhedrin is likewise printed. This lie will be upheld by the unbelieving Jews till the day comes when He appears the second time, and the believing remnant of His earthly people will cry out, "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." We might mention here the testimony of Josephus. He says in his antiquities: "He appeared to them alive on the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him."

Indeed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, His physical resurrection is unassailable. How wicked then to deny it or any part of it! Yet this is of common occurrence in these last days. (That evil system known by the name of "Millennial Dawnism," or "Russellism, [also known as Jehovah's Witnesses]" belongs to those movements which introduce damnable heresies in the last days (2 Peter 2). "Millennial Dawnism," among other things, denies the literal, physical resurrection of our Lord.)

And now but a few brief sentences remain with which the Gospel of Matthew closes.

"But the eleven disciples went into Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted. And Jesus coming up spoke to them, saying, "All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age" (verses 16-20).

What mountain it was He had appointed as the meeting place we do not know. Some one has said "Matthew is the Gospel of the Mountain." (H.G. Weston.)

From a mountain He gave as King His great proclamation, the so-called sermon on the mount, in which He proclaimed the principles of His Kingdom. On a mountain we saw Him transfigured, the blessed type of His second coming in majesty and glory for the establishment of that Kingdom. On the mount of Olives He took the place as Son of David to ride down into Jerusalem. From the same mountain He delivered His great prophetic discourse concerning the future of the Jews, the Christian profession and the nations. And now we see Him and His own on the Galilean mountain. But why is Galilee made so prominent in the last chapter of Matthew?

It is, indeed, a strong and important point in this Gospel. Galilee was the place of His rejection. This is evident in the whole Gospel of Matthew, which gives us exclusively His Galilean ministry. Jerusalem would not have Him. It rejected Him and sought to kill Him through Herod in His infancy. This is only found in Matthew. Therefore, when the King began His ministry He began it in "the Galilee of the nations" (chapter 4). The most ignorant Jews resided in Galilee and they had become mixed with the Gentiles. The scribes despised Galilee and as we know said "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52). His first appearing there was prophetic. It was a sign that Israel would reject Him and that the people sitting in darkness would behold the great light and that to them which sit in the region and shadow of death, light would spring up (chapter 4:16). Jerusalem did reject Him and, therefore, in this Gospel of the Kingdom, the Kingdom preached and rejected, we see the risen One passing by Jerusalem. He returns to the place of His rejection and His disciples have to go there and meet Him in Galilee. Here on this significant ground He gives them the great commission to proclaim the kingdom world-wide, to disciple all nations and to baptize them.

This is the Kingdom commission. In Luke 24 we have the proper Christian mission. A time is coming when this great commission here will be carried out by a remnant of Jewish disciples, who are represented by the eleven. It is the same remnant as in Matthew 24.

We desire to give this fact in the words of another, which will be helpful. (Collected writings of J.N.D., page 327.)

"It is well to notice what has been alluded to: -- the ministry in the Acts is not the accomplishment of this commission in Matthew, but of the mission in Luke, the book itself being, as is known, the continuation of his Gospel; nor was the ministry of Paul, who took up by a separate divine mission the evangelization of the nations, the carrying out of this (the commission here in Matthew). His was fully more even yet a mission from the ascended and glorified Saviour, to which was added the ministry of the church. It connects itself even much more in its first elements with Luke. The ministry here established stands alone. The disciples are not sent to Jews, as in Luke. But Jerusalem is rejected and the remnant is attached to Christ (His brethren and owned in this character) sent out to Gentiles. This as far as Scripture teaches us has never been fulfilled. The course of events under the hand of God, the disciples remain in Jerusalem. A new mission is sent forth in the person of Paul and that connected with the establishment of the church on earth. The accomplishment of the commission here in Matthew has been interrupted, but there is the promise to be with those who went forth in it to the end of the age. Nor do I doubt it will be so. This testimony will go forth to the nations before the Lord comes. 'The Brethren' will carry it to warn the nations. The commission was given, but we find no accomplishment of it. It connects the testimony with the Jewish remnant owned by a risen Lord of all, with the earth and His earthly directions, and for the present it has in fact given place to a heavenly commission, and the church of God."

How wonderful and harmonious is the Word of God. If anything else had been put at the close of Matthew it would have disturbed and marred the scope of the whole book. Man's wisdom could never have produced such a work.

The eleven then saw Him there. Some doubted. How this indeed carried conviction with it of the truthfulness of the report. Most likely they were taken by surprise, beheld Him from a distance; soon all doubts vanished, for He came up and spoke to them.

All power is His; all power in heaven and on earth. Soon the day will come when indeed He will have all things put under His feet. And the last word, "And behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age." Precious promise to faith! He will never leave nor forsake, and He who is with us is the "I am," the mighty Jehovah, the Immanuel, having all power in heaven and on earth.

The Gospel of Matthew begins with Immanuel, "God with us," it ends with Immanuel. With Him, our Saviour and Lord, we shall be in all eternity. Forever with the Lord. With all our hearts we praise God for such a Saviour, for such a Lord, for such a Gospel and for such a future with HIMSELF, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Our study is ended. We lay this work at His feet, and if it pleases Him to use it for the edification of His people, for the defence of the faith, above all for the PRAISE AND GLORY OF HIS ADORABLE NAME, we shall praise Him for it in all eternity. Amen and Amen.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelien

Introduction

The Gospel of Mark is the briefest of the four Gospels. The traditional view, which holds that the Apostle Peter dictated this record into the pen of Mark, so that he was only an amanuensis, has been proven erroneous. Equally incorrect are other theories, that the Gospel of Mark was written first and served Matthew and Luke in giving their account, copying from it and making additions, or, the hypothesis that there was an original record, a common source, which the Evangelists used. All these opinions are mostly the inventions of men who disbelieve the inspiration of the chosen instruments of God in giving a fourfold picture of His blessed Son on earth. An unswerving faith in the inspiration of the four Evangelists solves all the supposed difficulties and discrepancies of which we hear so much in our days. Inspiration makes error impossible.

Mark was not an Apostle. Two Apostles were chosen to write Gospel records, Matthew and John. The other two, Mark and Luke, did not belong to the twelve. Mark's and John's Gospels give us the chronological account, while Matthew and Luke were led under the guidance of the Holy Spirit not to pen the events chronologically, but to arrange them in such a way as to bring out the distinctive features of their respective Gospels.

While Matthew describes the Lord Jesus Christ as the King, Luke as the Son of Man in His perfection, John as the true God and the eternal life, Mark was chosen to write the account of our Lord as the obedient Servant. It was announced by the Prophets that He would appear as a servant. Isaiah beheld Him as the Servant of God. Through Zechariah the Spirit of God announced, "Behold, I will bring forth my Servant, the Branch" (Zechariah 3:8). And after He had been on earth in the form of a servant, the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Philippians tells us again that He who ever existed in the form of God "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). Mark, himself a servant, was graciously called to give a pen picture of this blessed Servant and to record His toil, His service of love and patience, as well as His mighty works. All which does not stand in definite relation to our Lord as the Servant is carefully omitted, and many other things omitted by the other Evangelists are added, to describe the manner and perfection of the Servant's work.

The purpose of the Gospel of Mark must never be lost sight of in studying it. Well may we call it the neglected Gospel, for it is the least studied. God gave it that we His redeemed people might as His servants have a pattern in our service. One thing, however, is absolutely necessary in the intelligent and spiritual study of Mark and that is a constant comparison with the Gospel of Matthew. Such a comparison will bring out the beauties of the record given by Mark and shows the divine power which guided infallibly these men of God.

We have therefore given in the analysis the parallel passages from the Gospel of Matthew and from the Gospel of Luke. The analysis contains many hints and annotations, which will help in a closer study. At the close of the analyzed Gospel the reader will find several articles on the personality of Mark, the characteristic features of this Gospel and other information, which, we hope, will prove of help to all students of this part of God's Holy Word.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."
Chapter 10:45.

Part I. The Servant; who He is and how He came. Chapter 1:1-13.

Part II. The Servant's work; not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Chapter 1.14-10:52.

Part III. The Servant in Jerusalem. Presented as King and rejected. Chapter 11-13.

Part IV. Giving His Life a ransom for many. Chapter 14-15:47.

Part V. The Servant Highly exalted. Risen and Ascended; His commission to His servants and working with them. Chapter 16.

PART I. THE SERVANT; WHO HE IS AND HOW HE CAME

Chapter 1:1-13

1. The Servant, the Son of God. Verse 1.
2. His coming promised and announced. Verses 2-8. Matthew 3:1-11; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:19-30.
3. The Servant comes forth. Verses 9-11. Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34.
4. The Servant in the wilderness. Verses 12-13. Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

1. The Servant, the Son of God. Verse 1.

No other Gospel begins in this way. The Deity of our Lord is first of all emphasized. Nothing is said about the virgin birth, nor is a genealogy given. The miraculous birth is most fully brought out in Luke's Gospel, the Gospel of our Lord's humanity. No genealogy appears in Mark; a servant does not need such. Nor do we find Bethlehem mentioned, or the event which is characteristic to the Gospel of Matthew, the visit of the wise men, seeking the newborn King of the Jews. All these and other matters are omitted because they do not fall within the scope and purpose of the Gospel of Mark. The Servant is the Son of God. This great truth is fully attested by His obedience in always doing the will of Him that sent Him and by His mighty miracles which accompanied His loving service. If He were not the Son of God He could not have rendered the perfect service. Sonship and Service always go together. Only a Son of God can be a servant of God. Grace makes us, if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, sons of God. True service for God is the result of the enjoyment of our sonship in Christ Jesus. A deeper realization and enjoyment of our sonship will be followed by a more obedient and constant service. The Gospel of John gives the fullest witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). The Gospel of Mark shows that He is the Son of God by His wonderful character as the Servant.

2. His Coming promised and announced. Verses 2-8.

Prophets promised His Coming (Malachi 3:1). The passage proves Him to be Jehovah. In Malachi we read that Jehovah says "he shall prepare the way before Me." The Spirit of God changes the "Me" to "Thy Face." The servant is none other than Jehovah, who spoke to the Prophets. Isaiah 40:3 is likewise quoted. Here too we find the same testimony that Jesus the Servant is Jehovah. "Prepare ye the way of Jehovah."

The account of the ministry of John the Baptist is the briefest in the Gospel of Mark. A few sentences only describe his testimony in the wilderness and his person. All the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem went out to him. The baptism of John in the river of Jordan was the outward sign of repentance. They confessed their sins. A comparison with the record of the Baptist's ministry in Matthew, Luke and John is very instructive. In Mark all the preaching of John concerning the state of the nation is omitted, for the Holy Spirit describes in Mark John's ministry only as a necessary preliminary to introduce the Servant and His ministry. Of the baptism which Christ is to bring Mark mentions "the Holy Spirit;" "and with fire" is left out. The fire baptism is His judgment work stated in Matthew and Luke. Christ as the humble Servant does not execute judgment, but the coming King (Matthew) and the Son of Man coming again (Luke) will judge and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.

3. The Servant comes forth. Verses 9-11

The Servant appears to begin His service. From Nazareth of Galilee He came forth. There too during the hidden years He had served. The Servant was absolutely sinless and yet He was baptized in Jordan. He showed His perfect willingness to take, in obedience to the Father's will, the sinner's place in death. In verse 10 the word "straightway" is found for the first in Mark. It is the characteristic word of this Gospel describing the promptness of His service. The anointing by the reception of the Spirit follows. In Matthew we read "heaven was opened unto Him." In Luke, "heaven was opened." In Mark "He saw the heavens opened." Encouraging sight for Him, who had taken the lowest place! All God's servants need the vision of this opened heavens. The Father's voice proclaimed Him then as His beloved Son.

4. The Servant in the Wilderness. Verses 12-13

Upon this He was driven immediately into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. His fitness to be the Servant to minister and give His life for a ransom was fully proven in His victorious conflict. The different temptations are not reported by Mark; they belong to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, where we find them. But here we have a statement which is peculiar to Mark. "And was with the wild beasts." It tells of his deep humiliation. Moses and Elijah were in the wilderness being prepared for service. David also had been alone in the solitary places. None, however, was in the place which He took, whose eternal abode was the Father's bosom. The wilderness and the wild beasts are the witnesses of a marred creation; the mighty Creator had come in the form of the creature to meet and overcome under such conditions the fallen being, Satan. Some have taught that He was in danger of being attacked by the wild beasts. This was impossible (Psalm 91:9-13).

PART II. THE SERVANT'S WORK; NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO, BUT TO MINISTER -- Chapter 1:14-10:52

Chapter 1:14-45. The Ministry in Galilee after John's Imprisonment.

1. The Servant in Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Verses 14-15. Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 4:14-15.
2. The Calling of fellow servants. Verses 16-20. Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11.
3. The Servant in Capernaum. Verses 21-28; Luke 4:31-37.
4. Peter's Mother-in-law raised up. Verses 29-31. Matthew 8:14-15; Luke 4:38-39.
5. The Servant heals many and casts out demons. Verses 32-34. Luke 4:31-37; Matthew 8:16-18; Luke 4:40-41.
6. The Servant in prayer. Verse 35.
7. The Interruption and the renewed service. Verses 36-39. Luke 4:42-44. 8. The Leper healed. Verses 40-45. Matthew 8:1-4; Luke 5:12-16.

1. The Servant in Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Verses 14-15.

The Servant begins His blessed service in Galilee immediately after John had been put into prison. And now the Lord takes up the hushed testimony of the forerunner. The heralding of the Kingdom at hand through the presence of Him who came to His own is less prominent in Mark. In the first twelve chapters of the Gospel of Matthew it is one of the leading features. The time, indeed, was fulfilled. While Matthew and Luke report the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom with the demand to repent, here in Mark the words are added "and believe the Gospel." This gospel is of course not the Gospel of our salvation. That was not preached till after He had finished the work the Father gave Him to do.

2. The Calling of fellow servants. Verses 16-20.

It is a blessed scene which we have before us. The Servant of God calls fellow servants, weak and sinful men, to become fishers of men. These are Simon and Andrew, James and John. They knew Him and had believed in Him. They were his disciples. But now He calls them into service. "Come ye after Me." The Grace which called them gave them power to forsake earthly things and to come after Him. Boats and nets, their trade as fishermen and even their father, Zebedee, were left behind. Oh! blessed place to serve the Lord Christ and yield obedience to His call. We must own Him as Lord and follow Him in His own path of faith, obedience and humility. To seek others and bring them to Himself is the service to which He still calls. Note the word "straightway" in verses 17 and 20.

3. The Servant in Capernaum. Verses 21-28.

The Servant and His fellow servants went to Capernaum. Straightway he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath to teach. His first preaching in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30) is not reported by Mark. It is after they thrust Him out of the city where He had been brought up, that He went to Capernaum. The blessed Servant knew no discouragement nor self pity. They laid their wicked hands on Him in Nazareth, then He went on to Capernaum and straightway taught there. His doctrine uttered with authority and power astonished all, yet He ever was the meek and lowly One. But the Word had another effect. A man with an unclean spirit interrupted Him in the synagogue. Satan's power was present and the demons were forced to confess "Jesus of Nazareth" as "the Holy One of God." Then the Servant's power is manifested. He rebuked him and commanded the demon to come out of him. The Servant's fame spread abroad throughout all that region.

4. Peter's Mother-in-law raised up. Verses 29-31. This miracle is found in the Gospel of Matthew in a different setting. For the dispensational setting see "The Gospel of Matthew," chapter 8. The place given to this miracle here is equally significant. The first healing of disease in the Gospel of Mark follows the casting out of the demon, the defeat of Satan's power. This order will be followed when He comes again, not as the lowly Servant, but as the mighty King. Then Satan will be bound first and the greatest spiritual and physical blessings will come to this poor world at last. Concerning the healing of Peter's wife's mother, Matthew tells us "He touched her hand;" Luke "He stood over her and rebuked the fever." Mark's testimony by the Holy Spirit is "He took her by the hand and lifted her up." How beautiful! It reveals the tenderness, the loving sympathy of the blessed One. With what gentleness He must have lifted her up so as to avoid another pang of pain in her feverish body; but immediately she was healed. And He is still the same.

5. The Servant heals many and casts out demons. Verses 32-34. Deliverance from demons and divers diseases came to many on that memorable day "when the sun did set." We must view these deliverances and healings in Mark's Gospel not so much as the evidences of His power as the manifestations of the great love and goodness of the Servant. Then He suffered the demons not to speak, because they knew Him. He loved to be unknown and did not want the applause of men nor the witness of the unclean spirits. Of His unostentatiousness we shall find further evidences.

6. The Servant in Prayer. Verse 35. And after such a day of uninterrupted toil, preaching, healing diseases, driving out demons, occupied from early morning till the sun did set, we find Him, rising a great while before day, in a solitary place, praying. He is alone in the presence of the Father. Thus it was fulfilled, "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear as the instructed" (Isaiah 50:4). Only Mark gives us this precious information. It tells us that the Servant, though the Son of God, walked in complete dependence on God His Father. Prayer is the expression of such dependence. He had been anointed with the Spirit for His work, heard the Father's loving approval, defeated Satan, cast out demons, healed divers diseases, yet He is still the dependent One. Independence in service for God is a snare, the very spirit of Satan. The perfect Servant had His times for quietness, retirement and prayer, in which He cast Himself anew upon Him, whom to glorify He had come to earth. "And if He thus retired to be with God, Himself the Lord God, before He entered upon the work of the day, can we wonder that we fail so much in outward labor, who fail yet more in this inward intimacy with our Father? Be assured, the secret of holy strength and endurance in service is found there alone." (W. Kelly. "Gospel of Mark.") What child of God does not feel the deep necessity of this and deplores the neglect of this blessed privilege?

7. The Interruption and the renewed service. Verses 36-39. But He is followed by his disciples and is interrupted even in prayer. No rebuke comes from His lips. Willing He responds to the new demands. For that He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

8. The Leper healed. Verses 40-45. Leprosy, that vile and loathsome disease, is a type of sin. Like sin it is incurable and only Jehovah could cure leprosy. When Jehovah had healed the disease the priest had to pronounce the leper clean. This

leper recognized in the humble Servant the mighty Jehovah. He kneeled in His presence and expressed his faith in His power and implored Him to make him clean. Here again Mark tells us something of our blessed Lord, which we find neither in Matthew or Luke's account. He was moved with compassion. Thus the spirit of God in some brief additions portrays the Servant in His loving service. The leper is healed. The Servant is Jehovah and both His love and His power are revealed. He charged him to say nothing to any man. In this the Servant once more manifests His humility, that He served in an unostentatious way. He did not want honor from man. His Father knew all His service; that was enough for Him. Yet the enemy through the cleansed leper attempted the popularity of the Servant. He sought the desert places once more to hide Himself. May we serve after this great pattern Servant.

Chapter 2

1. The Servant again in Capernaum. The healing of the Paralytic. Verses 1-12. Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 5:17-26.

2. Levi called. With the Publicans and Sinners. Verses 13-17. Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32.

3. The Question concerning Fasting. Verses 18-22. Matthew 9:14-15; Luke 5:33-39.

4. The Question concerning the Sabbath. Verses 23-28. Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5.

1. The Servant again in Capernaum. The healing of the Paralytic. Verses 1-12. His second visit to Capernaum brought out a large multitude. We see Him occupied with preaching the Word. He always preached the Word first, to make known the Truth; for this He had come (1:38). Then in the next place He confirmed His Word by His mighty works. The Paralytic tells of man's impotence; leprosy is the type of Sin as a defiling, incurable disease, paralysis shows man's helpless condition. The paralytic is likewise the picture of Israel. The helpless paralytic is brought into the presence of the Lord. Mark alone tells us that four carried him and describes fully the obstacles in the way. They had faith in His love and in His power. How it must have refreshed His heart! As His servants we can still bring sinners into His presence and honor Him by our confidence. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." With this blessed Word He touches the root of all evil. To deal with it He had come. The proof that He is Jehovah and has power to forgive sins is the healing of the paralytic. Love and Power are here blessedly manifested. Love in forgiveness, power in healing and restoration. It is ever repeated in the case of every believing sinner. The two great elements of the Gospel are here. In some future day converted Israel will know this (Psalm 103:1-3).

2. Levi called. With the Publicans and Sinners. Verses 13-17. Levi, the son of Alphaeus, is Matthew, the writer of the first Gospel. He was a tax gatherer. As such he was despised by the nation Israel. Not alone were they considered thieves, but they were the miserable hirelings of the Romans and as such hated as Apostates. What Grace to call such an one to the office of an Apostle! And the feast which followed reveals both the loving condescension of the Servant-Son and His Grace to seek that which is lost. The Servant had taken a low place by associating with the tax-gatherers. In the eyes of the self-righteous Pharisees it was an abomination. God in the person of His Son had come in Love and Grace seeking man.

3. The Question concerning Fasting. Verses 18-22. The disciples of John approach Him next with a question. The Servant's ear was always ready to listen to the perplexities, difficulties and sorrows of others. He was always approachable. Under the Law they fasted. The Grace of God had now appeared and Grace was soon to take the place of the Law. He Himself is the Bridegroom. No need of fasting and mourning while He was with them. His rejection would come and with it their fasting. A significant parable follows. The old garment and the old wineskins are symbolic of Judaism with its laws and ceremonies. The new piece and the new wine stand for the Gospel. Law and Grace must not be mixed. If the Gospel of Grace, the new wine, is put into the old wineskins, Judaism with its laws, the wineskins go to pieces and the new wine is spilled. Much in Christendom today is neither Law nor Grace. The Servant announced a change of dispensations.

4. The Question concerning the Sabbath. Verses 23-28. The question concerning the Sabbath is closely connected with the preceding parable. The Sabbath, not a seventh day, but the seventh day, was the day on which God rested in Creation. It was also the sign of His covenant with His people Israel. Plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath to eat them is nowhere forbidden in the Law. It was one of the hard and burdensome man-made traditional injunctions. The Lord cites David's case. Mark adds that David was not alone hungry, but "he had need." David, though anointed King, was despised and in need. His greater Son and His disciples were in the same condition. What is greater with God, the maintenance of an

ordinance or the need of Man? Surely the latter. He, the humble Servant, was none other than the Lord of the Sabbath. He had rested in His Creation work and instituted the Sabbath for His people. He had become the Son of Man for the need of Man. As the Lord of the Sabbath He speaks, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." On the ground of Grace the Sabbath no longer exists. We have the Lord's day, the first day of the week to enjoy communion with our risen and glorified Lord, resting from our daily occupation. Blessed privilege to adore Him on that day and to follow His own example of doing good.

Chapter 3

1. In the synagogue. The man with the withered hand healed. Verses 1-6. Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11.
2. The Withdrawal of the Servant. Many healed. Verses 7-12. Matthew 12:15-21; Luke 6:17-19.
3. On the Mountain calling the Twelve. Verses 13-19. Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12.16.
4. The interrupted meal. Verse 20.
5. The Servant charged with madness. Verse 21.
6. The Blasphemy of the Scribes; His Warning. Verses 22-30. Matthew 12:22-32; Luke 11:14-23.
7. Old relationship disowned and a new relationship announced. Verses 31-35. Matthew 13:46-50; Luke 8:19-21.

1. In the Synagogue. The Man with the withered hand healed. Verses 1-6

This incident stands in closest relation to the preceding chapter. In their blindness they watched Him, if He would heal on the Sabbath. "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to do evil; to save life or to kill?" He answered the question by healing the sufferer. Note the addition by Mark, which is not found elsewhere. "When He had looked round about them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." It was a righteous wrath when He saw them in their wicked and wilful hardness. His service was rendered in the deepest emotions of His holy soul. He did good, but Pharisees and Herodians were ready to destroy Him.

2. The withdrawal of the Servant. Many healed. Verses 7-12

The sudden departure of the Lord is not without meaning. Not alone did He withdraw Himself from the hatred of the Pharisees and Herodians to continue His ministry of love and power elsewhere, but His withdrawal indicates that the nation Israel was to be set aside dispensationally. He withdrew Himself to the sea. The sea is symbolical of the Gentile nations. Again they crowd about Him--a great multitude from the border land of the Gentiles (Tyre and Sidon). Satan's power was likewise manifested. Unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him. These were demon possessed persons. They had to own and confess the Glory of the Servant. But He did not want their witness and forbade them to make Him known.

3. On the Mountain calling the Twelve. Verses 13-15

In Matthew we find all these events and actions of our Lord in a different setting. In vain do we look in our Gospel for the Sermon on the Mount. It is not reported and only given in full in the Gospel of Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount is the proclamation of the King concerning His Kingdom. Mark, describing Him as the ministering One, had to omit the utterances of the King. If we look for a place in Mark where the Sermon on the Mount belongs chronologically, it is at this point. For the peculiar arrangement of the events in the Gospel of Matthew see "Exposition of Matthew." He ordained the twelve to be with Him and endowed with supernatural power to be sent forth by Him. In Luke we read He prayed all night. The calling of the Twelve was for the extension of His loving ministry. Notice also the giving of names. "Boanerges" for the sons of Zebedee is only found here.

4. The interrupted Meal. Verse 20

This is likewise mentioned by Mark exclusively (see chapter 6:31). It shows that the Servant was ever ready to minister, forgetting his own physical need.

5. The Servant charged with madness. Verse 21

This is also a characteristic statement in Mark's Gospel. It shows that His own relations were ashamed of Him. They looked upon Him as being out of His mind. Thus His perfect service of love, the untiring labor, never ceasing toil, was judged by them.

6. The Blasphemy of the Scribes. His Warning. Verses 22-30

Still worse, the Jerusalem Scribes attributed His Divine power to Satan. What an awful accusation! They could not deny the power, but refused to believe that it was the power of God. Under Satanic impulses they called the Holy Spirit a demon power. But the perfect wisdom of the Lord silenced their blasphemy. The power He manifested was a power in the most blessed mercy to man, the prey of Satan and his demons. If it were Satan's power then his kingdom is divided. This is the unpardonable sin. No forgiveness for this sin. The words "is in danger of eternal damnation" are better rendered by "is guilty of an eternal sin" (see 1911 Bible).

7. The Old Relationship disowned and a new Relationship announced. Verses 31-35. He refused to see His relations. This refusal indicates the broken relationship with Israel. He no longer recognizes His own, and speaks of a new relationship, founded upon obedience to the will of His Father. It was spoken in anticipation of the present dispensation.

Chapter 4

1. Teaching by the Seaside. The Parable of the Sower. Verses 1-20. Matthew 13:1-23; Luke 8:4-15.

2. The Word to shine forth in testimony. Verses 21-25. Luke 8:16-18.

3. The Parable of the Growth of the Seed and the Harvest. Verses 26-29.

4. The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Verses 30-34. Matthew 13:31-35; Luke 13:18-19.

5. The Storm on the sea and the wind rebuked. Verses 35-41. Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25.

1. Teaching by the Seaside. The Parable of the Sower. Verses 1-20

In the Gospel of Matthew the scene which closes the preceding chapter is followed by the seven parables (Matthew 13). In the seven parable discourse the Lord teaches the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven in its present form. These parables belong into the first Gospel because it is the Gospel of the King. First He proclaimed the principles of the Kingdom (Matthew 5-7); then after His rejection He taught in parables the Kingdom in mystery. Only two of these parables are reported by Mark, the parable of the Sower and of the Mustard Seed. Both relate to His work of ministry. Another parable, however, is added, which is found nowhere else in the Gospels.

The parable of the Sower is explained by Himself (verses 13-20). He Himself is the great Sower and His fellow servants sow after Him. That which is sown is the Word, even as He came to preach the Word. The devil, the flesh and the world are the hindering forces.

The Parable of the Sower is very simple. It is also noteworthy that Mark adds a sentence, which is not found elsewhere. "Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye be acquainted with all parables?" It is a fundamental parable and a key to other parables. He graciously explains it. What patience He had with His dull fellow servants! He is the Sower. That which is sown is the Word; for this He came. Man cannot bring any fruit. That which He sows can produce fruit. The

devil, the flesh and the world are antagonistic to the Word and the causes of failure and unfruitfulness. Those who hear the Word and receive it (believe) yield fruit. But the devil, the flesh and the world are even then active and influence fruitbearing.

2. The Word to shine forth in testimony. Verses 21-25

The Word received in faith gives life and yields fruit. It must also shine forth in testimony. This testimony may be obscured by "the bushel and the bed." The bushel stands for the cares and material things of this present age; the bed for ease and comfort. The cure for occupation with earthly things and for an ease-loving life, the hindrances of a bright shining testimony, is to remember the coming day of manifestation (verse 22). How bright and perfect the example of the Servant. He did not know the bushel nor the bed.

3. The Parable of the Growth of the seed and the Harvest. Verses 26-29

This parable is not recorded by any of the other evangelists. It is closely linked with the words which precede. The day of manifestation is the day of the harvest. The seed sown grows in secret. None knows how. Life is in the Word. The blade, the ear and the full corn, after that the harvest. This is the comforting assurance of the Servant. He sowed the seed and then "slept and rose"--He died and rose from the dead. In view of it He could rejoice in the knowledge that the seed would spring up, increase and bring a harvest. And the sower will put in the sickle. The harvest (the end of the age) is more fully revealed in Matthew 13. What was His comfort is the comfort of all His true servants who sow the word.

4. The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Verses 30-34

The unexpected growth of the Kingdom during the absence of the Sower is taught in this parable. In Matthew it is linked with the parable of the leaven. The external growth (mustard seed) and the internal corruption (leaven) of Christianity are foretold by Him. Christendom has developed into a powerful world institution and become the lodging place of the fowls of the air. These typify unclean beings (4:4, 15). The humble Servant never meant the Word to produce such an abnormal growth.

5. The Storm on the Lake and the Wind rebuked. Verses 35-41

The close of the chapter fits in beautifully with the whole. The Servant is seen in chapter 4 as the rejected One. He is sowing the seed. He leaves the earth while the seed groweth unto the harvest. The storm on the lake gives the picture of the trials and dangers of His own during this age; but He is in the ship. Note a statement peculiar to Mark. "They took Him even as He was in the ship." The Servant, though Lord of all, had a real human body. Here we have a little picture of His weariness as Servant. Yet what a scene! He had perfect rest in the midst of the storm while His disciples were unbelieving. And then He manifested His power in rebuking the wind.

"Reader, do you think that the power of the Son of God and God's counsels could have failed because of an unexpected storm? Impossible! The disciples were in the same boat with Jesus. Here is a lesson for us. In all the difficulties and dangers of the Christian life, during the whole journey upon the waves, often agitated by the tempestuous sea of life, we are always in the same boat with Jesus, if we are doing His will. It may seem to us that He is sleeping; nevertheless, if He allows the tempest to rise in order to prove our faith, we shall not perish since we are with Him in the storm; evidently neither He or we can perish. His security is our own."

Chapter 5

1. The Servant's Power over Satan's work. Verses 1-20. Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39.

2. The Servant's Power over disease and death. Verses 21-43. Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-58.

1. The Servant's Power over Satan's work. Verses 1-20

The Storm on the Lake was the work of Satan, but here the power of the enemy is more prominent. The description of the demoniac differs from Matthew's and Luke's account. His condition is described in fullest detail. He dwelt in the place of the dead. No one could chain him; Satan's dominion and power cannot be conquered by the effort of man. Then there is self-torture and delusion in thinking of Christ as a tormentor. The complete identification of the legion of demons with this poor victim is seen in verse 9. The power of the Lord delivers the man. This miserable world is still in the thralldom of Satan and his legion of demons. Demon possessions have not ceased. And the Lord Jesus Christ is still the same. The demons enter the swine by their own request and when granted the herd of swine rushed to destruction. This is an evidence of the character of the devil. He is the murderer from the beginning. But oh! the blessed change which had come for the demoniac. Delivered completely, in the attitude of rest, no longer rushing to and fro in torment, his nakedness covered and in his right mind. These are still the results of salvation. He would remain in constant fellowship with His deliverer. But the Servant demands service--and He announces directly what the Lord had done for Him. This is still the blessed privilege of all who have been delivered. They asked the Servant, with His loving Power to save to the uttermost, to leave their coast. "When the presence of God is felt, it is more terrible than that of Satan. Man would wish to free himself from the latter, but cannot; but the presence of God is insupportable when it makes itself felt, and indeed man has driven God (in the person of Christ) out of this world." It shows once more the rejection of the Servant.

2. The Servant's Power over disease and death. Verses 21-43

And now He manifests Power over disease and death. The daughter of Jairus was sick unto death. The willing Servant responds at once to the request of her father. While on the way the poor, suffering woman touches the hem of His garment. Verse 26 is found only in Mark. The Lord knows the touch of faith and healing power goes forth from Him. She is healed. The sick daughter had died, but the Lord raised her up. All has its blessed spiritual and dispensational lessons. Man is dead in trespasses and sins but One has power to give life and raise the dead. Faith is beautifully illustrated in the woman who touched Him. Jairus' daughter represents Israel. The Lord will come again into this earthly scene and then will call the remnant of Israel to spiritual and national life. The woman, so hopeless, so helpless, suffering and getting worse, is typical of the Gentiles. The hand of faith can touch Him still. In verse 43 we see once more how the Servant loved secrecy and despised ostentatiousness.

Chapter 6

1. The Servant rejected in Nazareth. Verses 1-6. Matthew 13:54-58; Luke 4:16-30
2. The Servant sends forth the Twelve. Verses 7-13. Matthew 10:5-15; Luke 9:1-6
3. King Herod troubled. Verses 14-16. Matthew 14:1-2; Luke 9:7-9
4. The Martyrdom of John. Verses 17-29. Matthew 14:3-12
5. The Servant's withdrawal for Rest. Verses 30-31. Luke 9:10-11
6. The feeding of the Five Thousand. Verses 32-44. Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-13
7. The Servant alone and His Return walking on the waters. Verses 45-52. Matthew 14:22-32; John 6:15-21
8. New Manifestations of His love and Power. Verses 53-56. Matthew 14:34-36.

1. The Servant rejected at Nazareth. Verses 1-6

Once more we find Him in Nazareth. The first thing is teaching, and though they were astonished at His wisdom and power, they did not own Him as the Lord, but called Him the Carpenter and were offended in Him. Such is the heart of man. Unbelief tied His hands, yet in Love He healed a few and marvelled because of their unbelief. But did He abandon them? Oh! the infinite patience and seeking Grace of this perfect Servant! "He went round about the villages teaching," if perchance faith might yet respond to His willingness and power to heal.

2. The Servant sends forth the Twelve. Verses 7-13

Now He sends His Apostles forth and endows them with power. They are to depend in their ministry upon Himself. Thus they were to be His followers for He was ever dependent on God. Blessed principles are here which still hold good, though the sending forth had a special meaning for Israel (see Matthew 10:5-15).

3. King Herod troubled. Verses 14-16

It is the story of a troubled conscience and fear produces the thought that it is John the Baptist risen from the dead.

4. The Martyrdom of John. Verses 17-29

The faithful herald of the Servant suffered martyrdom. In the whole sickening scene of lust and bloodshed the prince of this world, the god of this age is manifested in this awful rule and power. It is a picture of the present age in opposition to God. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life hold sway. And this evil age is not gradually improved and getting better, It is not abandoning its lusts and pride, its hatred of God and His Christ. As long as Satan is the ruler the age must be evil. In such a scene the Holy One came to minister and to give His life.

5. The Servant's withdrawal for Rest. Verses 30-31

We have noticed different withdrawals of the Lord. He withdrew for prayer and to the sea and now when the Apostles gathered unto Him, the One to whom the fellow servants must ever gather, to give a report of what they had done and taught, He withdrew with them into a desert place. The Lord does not say anything about their success (verse 13). There was danger of the self-exaltation of the messengers. The silence of the Lord puts a check upon it. It was His own power, which in goodness and mercy had done all this. Instead we hear Him say, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." This again is found nowhere but in Mark. How needful for all servants it is to heed this loving word. How easily in constant service a servant can be lifted up and attribute something to himself. True service only is possible by being occupied with the Lord. And therefore we must ever learn to seek the presence of God. He remembered the need of His messengers and the time of rest with Him gave them new strength.

6. The Feeding of the Five Thousand. Verses 32-44

Here we have the compassion of the Servant in remembering the physical need of the people. But before He supplied that need, "He began to teach them many things." The Word stands always first. He came to serve. The giving of the Word followed by the works of goodness and power is the order maintained in His service. Note the contrast between Him and the request of the disciples. How untiring, loving, gracious He was in all His service for man. May we learn of Him. A comparison of the account of this miracle in the four Gospels will teach us many lessons. He feeds the poor with bread (Psalm 132:15) as the true Shepherd of His people. He is the miraculous giver, but He uses His disciples in dispensing His blessing. His power for the good of others is at the believer's disposal. And the little put into His hands was not only sufficient for all but more was left over than they had given to Him. And still He delights to take the little things and manifest through them His power, if we but trust Him.

7. The Servant alone and His Return walking on the Waters. Verses 45-52

All is full of blessed meaning. He is once more alone in the mountain to pray. His disciples are alone on the stormy sea. He is absent now and has sent the people (Israel) away. He is in the presence of God as our intercessor. The stormy sea with the contrary wind is a type of this present age. Trouble and perplexity is the lot of His disciples during His absence. About the fourth watch of the night He came unto them walking upon the sea. Mark does not mention Peter going forth to meet Him. They see Him coming, but do not recognize Him, believing Him a spirit. His loving voice soon assures them, "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid." Thus He will return across the stormy sea to meet and deliver His own. Blessed are we if we ever behold Him as the mighty One, who is above all circumstances and if we hear His words of comfort. How He cares for us. And when He comes the wind will cease.

8. New Manifestations of His Love and Power. Verses 53-56

What a scene of toil! What ministry in doing good! Dispensationally it stands for the blessed time, yet in store for this world, when He comes again. Then He who was the Son of Man in humiliation will, as Son of Man, with power and glory, be known to all. Then the earth will be blessed as Gennesaret was.

Chapter 7

1. The Opposition of the Pharisees. Verses 1-23. Matthew 15:1-20

2. Grace shown to the Syrophenician Woman. Verses 24-30. Matthew 15:21-28

3. The healing of the deaf man. Verses 31-37. Matthew 15:29-31.

1. The Opposition of the Pharisees. Verses 1-23

This paragraph is of much importance. The scope of the analysis forbids a full annotation, but we refer the reader to the exposition of Matthew, chapter 15:1-20, the parallel passage. The Servant in His divine wisdom uncovers the hypocrisy which lies underneath the traditions of the elders. He shows that the Pharisees had rejected the commandment of God for the sake of men-made inventions and traditions. Their ritualistic service founded upon tradition was dishonoring to God and His Word. Such ritualism springing from tradition must always be. He condemns religiousness, which knows nothing of heart obedience and holiness of life. And this outward, human, man-made religion, which boasts of being something and doing something, He condemns. Then He shows that man's defilement does not consist in what enters into him, but the things which come out of him. He shows what man is within (verses 21-23). No, mere religiousness cannot take away this defilement. Thus He uncovers the hypocrisy of an outward religion and the true state of the heart of man. The product of the natural heart of man, though it may delight in religious observances, is nothing but vileness.

2. Grace shown to the Syrophenician Woman. Verses 24-30

While the omniscient Lord in the form of the Servant showed what the heart of man is, He now also uncovers His own heart in showing Grace to one, who belonged to the Gentiles. In the borders of Tyre and Sidon the blessed Servant sought quietness and entered a house; but He could not be hid. Note again that Mark mentions this exclusively, because it brings out His character as Servant. He also informs us that she was a Gentile, a Syrophenician, belonging to the enemies of God's people, Israel. But Mark leaves out Matthew's statement, that she appealed to Him as "Son of David." Matthew's Gospel is the proper place for that. What evidences all along we find of the inspiration of these records. She had no claim on His Mercy and Power, for she was under the curse. Her daughter had a demon. And though she had no claim on His power and no promise, she believed in His love. She takes the place He gave to her and the daughter was restored. What a manifestation of Grace! And how it must have cheered the Servant's heart! In that moment His omniscient eye must have beheld the multitudes of Gentiles, who, after His death on the Cross, as lost sinners with no promise, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, would believe in His love.

3. The healing of the deaf man. Verses 31-37

A comparison with Matthew shows that the account here is peculiar to Mark's Gospel. In Matthew 15:29-31 we find the dumb man mentioned among others whom He healed. He represents Israel. Altogether deaf, unable to hear God's voice, which spoke through the One who had come and an impediment in speech. They attempted to speak of God and praise God. And such is man's natural state. And such He came to heal. Israel might have had the ear opened by Him, the Servant, whose ear was always open, and Israel might have the tongue loosed, to praise His Name. He heals the afflicted one. And how the Servant looked to heaven and groaned. What must He have felt!

Chapter 8

1. The feeding of the Four Thousand. Verses 1-9. Matthew 15:32-39

2. The Pharisees ask a sign. Verses 10-13. Matthew 16:1-4
3. The Warning against the leaven of the Pharisees. Verses 14-21. Matthew 16:5-12.
4. The healing of the blind man. Verses 22-26
5. Peter's Confession. Verses 27-30. Matthew 16:13-16; Luke 9:18-20
6. The first announcement of His coming rejection and death. Verses 31-33. Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 9:22
7. His Disciples to follow in His path. The Coming Glory. Verses 34-38. Matthew 16:24-28; Luke 9:23-27
1. The Feeding of the Four Thousand. Verses 1-9

The compassion and loving care of Him who came to minister is once more seen. Again He meets the need of the multitude in a miraculous way. But here we have seven loaves and seven baskets are left over. It points clearly to the manifestation of Divine power, for the number seven occurs twice. He in His great goodness and great power is sufficient to meet all human need. The miracle foreshadows the great and perfect blessings of the coming Kingdom age.

2. The Pharisees ask a sign. Verses 10-13

Though the religious leaders had seen so many signs and display of Divine goodness and power they asked a sign from heaven. Unbelief ever looks for something new and is never satisfied. Their request may be looked upon as a temptation. He could have shown a sign from heaven, but with it He would have left the humble path of the Servant. "He sighed deeply," which is another phrase peculiar to Mark's account, showing His deep emotion. He refused the sign. The next sign will be "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" at the time of His glorious return. Then a believing remnant of His people will welcome Him.

3. The Warning against the leaven. Verses 14-21

He warns against the leaven of the Pharisees and Herodians. It is the only time the word leaven is found in Mark. It means, as elsewhere in the Word of God, evil. The leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy, insincerity of an unbelieving heart in opposition to God. The expression of it is self-righteousness in pride. The leaven of the Herodians is worldliness. He warns His disciples to beware of it for the leaven of the Pharisees was in them too. They did not fully see His Glory, though they believed in Him as the promised Messiah. Their state and the Lord's Power and patience towards them is beautifully brought out in the healing of the blind man.

4. The Healing of the blind man. Verses 22-26

This healing at Bethsaida is only recorded by Mark. It reveals the tender, patient and successful method of the Servant in His ministry. The disciples' case is illustrated. They saw "men as if they were trees." Their sight was imperfect. But He did not leave them in that condition. Their clear sight came, when the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, was given to them. But many other lessons are found here. See how He led the blind man outside and what pains He took, and though He knew all about the effect of putting His hands upon his eyes, yet He inquired lovingly "if he beheld anything." If we are in His loving hands, separated from Bethsaida ("place of snares," a picture of the world), He will deal with us in the same tenderness and patience. Verse 26 tells us once more how He did not seek honor from man.

5. Peter's Confession. Verses 27-30

How perfectly all is linked together. Though the disciples were imperfect in their sight yet they knew that He was the Christ. That is true faith, which they all possessed, with the exception of Judas, who never addressed Him as Lord. Mark gives the briefest account of Peter's confession. Matthew contains the completest record. The church, as a future thing, is

announced in Matthew as well as the Kingdom. The church is not mentioned by Mark. All shows the divine hand which guided the pens of these instruments. What is dispensational is always fully given in the kingly, dispensational Gospel by Matthew and omitted by Mark.

6. The first announcement of His coming rejection and death. Verses 31-33

The Servant now speaks of Himself as the Son of Man, the title both of His rejection and of His exaltation. For the first time He announces His coming death. He knew all from the beginning. He knew it when He went into the dark waters of Jordan. He knew it all along in His ministry of toil. Yet with the vision of His rejection, of His suffering on the cross, constantly before Him, He continued uninterruptedly in His ministry of love. Nothing could swerve Him from it. What perfection and beauty! But He also spoke of His resurrection. He knew the glory that should follow. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross and despised the shame. In our service for God the Cross and the Glory should ever be seen. We, too, must be willing to share His reproach and look forward to the crowning day, the day of His Glory and ours as well. Peter becomes, on account of his blindness, the mouthpiece of Satan, rebuking the Lord. Then "He looked on His disciples," an addition in Mark. What a look it must have been! He rebuked Peter in the words He used when Satan made the same suggestion to avoid the cross.

7. His Disciples to follow in His path. The Coming Glory. Verses 34-38, 9:1

Well may God's people ponder over these words. Salvation is by Grace. Nothing can save but Grace. Eternal salvation is not dependent on our walk. But the way which leads to Glory is the way of self-denial and suffering. It is His own path. "Is it not true that we naturally like to escape trial, shame and rejection; that we shrink from the suffering which, doing God's will, in such a world as this, must ever entail; that we prefer to have a quiet, respectable path in the earth--in short, the best of both worlds? How easily one may be ensnared into this!" (W. K.) We may not be called upon to lose the life for His sake, but "let him deny himself" we can always do, enabled by His Grace. All the words our ever blessed Lord spoke to His disciples hold good in this dispensation of Grace. He announces His coming Glory. It is His second Coming in the Glory of His Father.

Chapter 9

1. The Glory to Come foreshadowed in the Transfiguration. Verses 1-13. Matthew 17:1-13; Luke 9:28-36.

2. The helpless disciples and the secret of failure. Verses 14-29. Matthew 17:14-20; Luke 9:37-42

3. The second announcement of His death. Verses 30-32. Matthew 17:22-23; Luke 9:43-45

4. The self-seeking disciples. Verses 33-37. Matthew 18:1-5; Luke 9:46-48

5. The Servant's gentleness and tolerance. Verses 38-41. Luke 9:49-50

6. The solemn warning. Verses 42-50. Matthew 18:6-9.

1. The Glory to Come foreshadowed in the Transfiguration. Verses 1-13

The Lord had the transfiguration in mind when He spoke of some standing there and not tasting death. 2 Peter 1:16 gives the meaning of the transfiguration as a type and earnest of His Coming into His Kingdom. On that mountain the three disciples saw the Kingdom of God come with power. The Servant appears in Glory. The Saints are represented by Moses and Elias, those who have died and those changed in the twinkling of an eye. The three disciples represented the Saints on earth, when He comes into His Kingdom; the Shekinah cloud was there. And Peter blundered again when he lowered the dignity of the Lord by putting Him alongside of the two Old Testament Servants of God. The Father's voice is heard once more, vindicating the honor of His Son. What an encouragement the transfiguration must have been for the Servant-Son.

2. The helpless disciples; the secret of their failure. Verses 14-29

The whole scene is of greatest importance. The Conditions He finds returning from the mount of transfiguration are typical of the conditions on the earth when He comes again. Here are helpless disciples, triumphant, unbelieving scribes and the manifestation of Satan's power. All this we cannot follow in detail. Notice the additions in Mark's account. They had no power to cast out the demon, because they were "faithless." The Lord told them that lack of prayer and fasting were the causes of their failure. Dependence on God and denial of self are meant. How gracious was the complete deliverance of the afflicted boy. If God's people knew more of real prayer and real denial of self, there would be a greater manifestation of His power through them.

3. The second announcement of His death. Verses 30-32

Passing again through Galilee He announced His death and resurrection the second time. They understood not and were afraid to ask Him. The cross was foreign to them. Other thoughts occupied their hearts.

4. The self-seeking disciples. Verses 33-37

And while He who had made of Himself no reputation, who came to be the Servant of all, was looking towards the goal of His earthly ministry, the cross and its shame, they disputed all the way who should be the greatest. Vain glory filled their hearts in expectation of the earthly kingdom for which they waited. They were unable to enter into His thoughts. They were silent because they realized that their dispute was wrong. Then He taught them. The desire of being first shows only fitness to be last. Such a desire reveals nothing but self. Humility must ever be a leading characteristic of the disciple. Then He illustrates it by the small child He took in His arms. Such in dependence, humbleness in mind and confidence, the disciples must be to enjoy His fellowship. With such He can identify Himself.

5. The Servant's gentleness. Verses 38-41

Another form of self appears among the disciples. John would have the Lord rebuke those who used His name effectually and belonged not to their company. It was a narrow sectarianism. Of all the manifestations of self the religious sectarian self, as expressed in exclusivism, rejecting those who do not fellowship with them--is by far the worst, and in the Epistles by the Spirit of God is designated as a work of the flesh. How very offensive it must have been to God's perfect Servant. Yet what a gentle answer He gives. How we all can learn from Him. The smallest service in doing honor to His name would not be forgotten of God.

6. The Solemn Warning. Verses 42-50

The words are for both saint and sinner. We quote from another on this solemn word. "Nevertheless, as regards themselves, all depends on the faithfulness of Christ; and on this account they need to free themselves from all the things which tend to separate from Christ, which led into sin, and bring on apostasy in the heart as well as outward apostasy. God will keep His own, but He will keep them in making them obedient to His Word. Besides this, God puts all to the proof; the fire of His judgment is applied to all, both to saints and sinners. In the saints it consumes the dross, in order that the pure gold may shine in its true lustre; in the case of sinners it is the fire of eternal judgment that is not quenched.

"'Every sacrifice must be salted with salt' refers to Leviticus 2:13. The salt represents the power of the Holy Spirit to keep us from all that is impure and produce holiness in a heart devoted to God, to keep us from all corruption. 'Have salt in yourselves.' He wishes us to exercise diligence in order that our souls, in our walk, may be thus sanctified before God, and then manifest it before the world and that we should walk with others in peace." (J.N. Darby on "Mark.")

"The burden" where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, "falls on the conscience stricken like the bell that tolls the felon to his doom. Would that it might kindle our hearts who believe into an unwonted earnestness on behalf of perishing souls!" Many attempts are made to deny the solemn warning in its fearful meaning, but they are eternal truth. The Son of God came from Heaven's Glory, walked on earth as the Servant and tasted death, yea, forsaken of God on the Cross, to save man from the unquenchable fire.

1. The question concerning Divorce. Verses 1-12. Matthew 19:1-9.
2. Children are blessed by Him. Verses 13-16. Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17.
3. The rich young Ruler and Warning against Riches. Verses 17-27. Matthew 19:16-26; Luke 18:18-27.
4. Concerning Rewards. Verses 28-31. Matthew 19:27-30; Luke 18:28-30.
5. On to Jerusalem. The third announcement of His death and Resurrection. Verses 32-34. Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34.
6. The Desire of James and John. Verses 35-45. Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-27.
7. At Jericho. The Healing of Bartimaeus. Verses 46-52. Matthew 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43.

1. The Question concerning Divorce. Verses 1-12

The Lord restores in teaching the original meaning of marriage and speaks against divorce Moses had permitted on account of the hardness of their hearts. Thus He restored the original institution of marriage. His ministry is now almost ended and He is on His way to Jerusalem to go to the cross.

2. Children are blest by Him. Verses 13-16

Again the disciples failed. They showed a kind of self-importance and dignity in rebuking those who brought the little children. He was indignant. They had no right whatever to rebuke and to shut out from His presence. They usurped His place and by their domineering attitude misrepresented Him. And priestcraft has brought this to perfection. But oh! the contrast. He received them and tenderly took them into His arms to bless them. Such is the Kingdom of God. Sin is in them. But the little children present some characteristics of uncorrupted nature. The way into the Kingdom is the new birth; and that must be received as a little child.

3. The rich young ruler and warnings against Riches. Verses 17-27

Here is one, who would inherit eternal life by doing. He "kneeled" (mentioned only by Mark) and showed reverence, and yet he called Him only "Good Master." He was a moral Young man but unsaved. The reply of the Lord is significant, He refuses the address "Good Master." The young man did not believe on Him as Son of God. The logic is perfect. If He is not God, He could not be good, and if He is good, then He is God. Yet "Jesus, beholding him, loved him;" a statement found only in Mark. He did not see the truth that man is not good, but a sinner, and salvation cannot be by works but is by Grace. Note the beautiful answer the Lord gave to His disciples. "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus looking upon them saith, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Man cannot be saved by what he is or does. Blessed truth. But God has accomplished salvation by the gift of His Son and this salvation is received by faith in Him.

4. Concerning Rewards. Verses 28-31

It was a selfish question, which Peter asked. Somehow he would remind the Lord that while the young man refused to part with his riches, they had left all. And the meek and lowly One answers graciously and gives the promise of reward in this life and in the age to come. But it is reward only if it is done for His sake and the Gospel's. It is a blessed thing to leave the rewards with Him.

5. On to Jerusalem. Third announcement of His death and Resurrection. Verses 32-34

But were they willing to leave all for His sake? As the Servant now at the close of His ministry went up to Jerusalem they

were amazed at His calmness and determination to go to the place, where death awaited Him, according to His own predictions. They were afraid of their own lives as they followed Him. The Servant went before them in the lead; the frightened group came behind. The third prediction of His death is the completest.

6. The Desire of James and John. Verses 35-45

Their fear was short-lived. They did not grasp the solemn announcement that the Son of Man would have to die and did not understand that all the promised blessings could only be realized through His death on the cross. They had faith in a coming Kingdom of Glory, faith in the Servant so lowly to be the King and that they were to reign with Him. The request is stated and answered graciously by the Lord. And the two who were afraid when He turned towards Jerusalem now say that they are able to drink the cup with Him and be baptized with the baptism, which awaited Him, the inward and outward sufferings of the cross. But these two forsook Him a few days later and fled. The others were much displeased, no doubt for selfish reasons, and then still other words of instruction came from His lips.

7. At Jericho. The Healing of Bartimaeus. Verses 46-52

This healing stands at the beginning of the end of that blessed life lived on the earth. Up to verse 45 He speaks of Himself as "Son of Man." The phrase "Son of David" appears only once in Mark's Gospel. Bartimaeus calls upon Him by that name and is healed. It is the prelude to the great events in Jerusalem, His presentation as King, rejection, suffering and death. The miracle of Jericho holds the same place in the three Gospels. Israel's condition is easily seen in Bartimaeus' blindness. The Son of David had come to give sight to the blind and in Jericho (the place of curse) He shows His gracious Power. Bartimaeus followed Him as the blessed witness of His power.

PART III. THE SERVANT IN JERUSALEM PRESENTED AS KING AND REJECTED -- Chapters 11-13

Chapter 11

1. The Servant enters into Jerusalem. Verses 1-11. Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-16

2. The fig tree cursed. Verses 12-14. Compare with Matthew 21:19-21

3. The Cleansing of the Temple. Verses 15-18. Matthew 21:12-19; Luke 19:45-48

4. The Withered Fig tree. Verses 19-26. Matthew 21:20-22

5. Again in the City. His Authority Questioned. Verses 27-33. Matthew 21:23-27; Luke 20:1-8.

1. The Servant enters Jerusalem. Verses 1-11

He presents Himself as the promised Son of David to the nation as written in the prophecy of Zechariah (9:9). As King the multitudes welcome Him. Hosanna (save now); Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord. "Blessed be the Kingdom of our Father David, that cometh in the Name of the Lord: Hosanna in the Highest." They expected the promised Kingdom and they welcomed Him as Son of David with power to save. But He knew what it all meant. He is silent, according to Mark, but enters into the temple and looked around upon all things without uttering a word. There is nothing for Him there. He then left the city and returned to Bethany (meaning: house of affliction). When He comes the second time with Glory, He will be greeted by a remnant of His people and set up the Kingdom of David.

2. The Fig Tree Cursed. Verses 12-14

He was hungry. In all the enthusiasm no one had thought of His need. The rejection of the Servant-Son is evident in this. The fig tree is the emblem of the Jewish nation. He came looking for fruit and found none. "The fig tree was punished not for being without fruit, but for proclaiming by the voice of those leaves that it had fruit; not for being barren, but for being false; and this was the guilt of Israel, so much deeper than the guilt of the nations" (Trench).

3. The Cleansing of the Temple. Verses 15-19

Twice He cleansed the temple, in the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13-16) and at the close. Most likely the desecration of the house was worse at the end than in the beginning. The greed for money is the prominent feature in the defilement of the temple. The actions of the Lord brings out the Satanic hatred of the scribes and chief priests. He was hated as the Servant without a cause and hated unto death. Again He went out of the city.

4. The Withered Fig Tree and Instructions. Verses 20-26

The dried up fig tree is made the occasion to teach the disciples the power of faith in God. The fig tree typifies the religious condition of the people. The mountain, the nation as such, thinking themselves firmly established. But soon that mountain was to be removed and cast into the sea (the sea of nations). Faith was exercised by the Servant and He calls upon His own to have faith in God. Faith can remove every obstacle. For the disciples it meant the obstacle of that mountain, the nation. Verse 24 is precious and has the same meaning today as it had when the words were spoken. God ever answers faith. But that faith must be paired with forgiveness.

5. Again in Jerusalem. The Authority of the Servant Questioned and His Answer. Verses 27-33

Visiting the temple again He met His enemies, who questioned Him concerning His authority. His authority was completely established by the mighty works He had done. The omniscient One knew their hatred and asked them a question, which they did not dare to answer. He, the perfect Servant had zeal for God and for His house; they, the religious leaders, had only zeal for their own authority, This is still the mark of all ritualism.

Chapter 12

1. The Parable of the Vineyard. Verses 1-12. Matthew 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19

2. The Question concerning the Tribute Money. Verses 13-17. Matthew 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26

3. The Sadducees Questioning concerning Resurrection. Verses 18-27. Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-38

4. The Question of the Scribe. Verses 28-34. Matthew 22:34-40

5. His Question. Verses 35-37. Matthew 22:41-46; Luke 20:41-44

6. Beware of the Scribes. Verses 38-40. Matthew 23; Luke 20:45-47

7. The Servant's loving sympathy and praise. Verses 41-44. Luke 21:1-4.

1. The Parable of the Vineyard. Verses 1-12

The parable is a review of the history of Israel and its culmination in the rejection of the Son. With what calmness the perfect One relates it all. He is ready to have all done unto Him of which He speaks. A comparison with the Gospel of Matthew will show that Mark is brief and passes on rapidly, omitting utterances of the Lord which are not needed in his description of the Servant.

2. The Question concerning the Tribute Money. Verses 13-17

With this paragraph we have the different classes of Jews approaching the Lord to tempt Him. Pharisees and Herodians, Sadducees and a Scribe. The Lord manifests His wisdom and they are defeated. Then He turns questioner and warns against the scribes. His authority they could no longer question and now they tried to catch Him in His words. Pharisees and Herodians, so opposed to each other, could make a common cause in hating God's Servant. If He had answered "yes"

the Pharisees would have condemned Him for favoring the Gentile yoke. If He had said "no," the Herodians would have accused Him as an enemy of Caesar. How wonderful His answer! They even had to marvel and yet it only intensified their hate. Caesar's image told out the story of their sin.

3. The Sadducees Questioning concerning Resurrection. Verses 18-27

The Sadducees were rationalists and denied the existence of angels and the resurrection. They only believed in the giving of the law and accepted the Pentateuch. It was a fine spun argument. The Lord silences them from the portion of the Scriptures they endorsed.

4. The Question of the Scribe. Verses 28-34

A scribe now makes the last attempt. But he was indeed "not far from the Kingdom of God." The one step was the acceptance of Christ, whose wisdom he had owned.

5. His Question. Verses 35-37

Then the Lord turned questioner. His wisdom had closed their mouths. In Matthew's Gospel this significant question is more fully given. He refers to Psalm 110. In connection with Matthew four great facts are stated by the Lord. 1) This Psalm was written by David. 2) It was written by inspiration. 3) It is a Messianic Psalm. 4) Christ is David's Lord and David's Son. While it silenced the scribes it also silences the present day Sadducees, the higher critics with their inventions. They claim that Psalm 110 was not written by David and Christ is not foretold in it.

6. Beware of the Scribes. Verses 38-40

In Matthew the Holy Spirit reports the full discourse against the scribes and Pharisees (chapter 23) ending with the solemn statement, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." In Mark, where the divine design is to give us the picture of the Servant, only a few sentences are given. Yet they contain the chief characteristics of the corrupt leaders of the nation. Love of being seen, love of applause, love of preeminence, assumed religiousness and the devouring of the poor are all mentioned. These hireling servants shall have greater damnation.

7. The Servant's loving sympathy and praise. Verses 41-44

He had rendered such perfect service free from seeking applause or preeminence and now He shows His loving sympathy to one of the poor widows who were being spoiled by the greed of the Pharisees. That poor, yet rich, widow had two mites. It was her all and she gave it. She might have given one mite and retained the other. She cast in all she had. And He saw it and His sympathy was towards her for she reminded Him of His own service in giving all. How it must have refreshed His heart. May we remember that nothing escapes His eye.

Chapter 13

1. The Destruction of the Temple Predicted. Verses 1-2. Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:5.6

2. The Questions of the Disciples. Verses 3-4. Matthew 24:3; Luke 21:7

3. The Olivet Discourse. Verses 5-37. Matthew 24:4-42; Luke 21:8-38

1. The Destruction of the Temple Predicted. Verses 1-2

He went out of the temple for the last time, when one of His disciples called attention to the temple buildings. They were of the most massive construction, some of them still in process of erection. He predicted complete destruction, which was fulfilled later in the year 70. The destruction of Jerusalem is more fully foretold in Luke 21:20-24.

2. The Questions of the Disciples. Verses 3-4

Mark gives us their names, which are omitted by Matthew and Luke. What follows is the answer.

3. The Olivet Discourse. Verses 5-37

Mark's report is the briefest, Matthew's the longest. omitted in Mark are the parables, which have special reference to the Christian profession (Matthew 25) and the judgment of living nations (chapter 25:31-46). These belong in Matthew, but would be out of keeping with the purpose of the Gospel of Mark. The Service of our Lord, as we have seen, is in the foreground. The three characteristic discourses in Matthew nowhere else reported in full are: 1. The Sermon on the mount, which is the Proclamation of the King. 2. The Parable Discourse in Matthew 13, the mysteries of the Kingdom. 3. The Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24-25, the future of the Kingdom. But why should there be anything at all in the Gospel of Mark about the future things, such as the end of the age and His Return in Glory, if only the Servant is described? it will be seen that the predictions are in part at least in view of their service. He forewarned them as His servants of what was to come after His departure.

It is not the purpose of this annotated analysis to give an exposition of this discourse. We must ask the reader to turn to our commentary on Matthew. We give here a subdivision of the discourse as contained in Mark: 1) The characteristics of the present age and the end of the age. Verses 5-13. 2) The abomination of desolation or the great tribulation which precedes the Second Coming of Christ. Verses 14-23. 3) The visible manifestation of Christ. He will come again in clouds as Son of Man not as an humble Servant but as the King of Glory. The regathering of the elect Israel then takes place. Verses 24-27. 4) The Signs of His Coming. The budding fig tree is Israel awakening to new national life. Verses 28-33. Note that in verse 32 "neither the Son" is added. This statement of our Lord that even He the Son does not know the hour of His return has been used to deny His Deity. All kinds of theories have been invented to explain it. It is explained by the Lord having taken the place of humiliation as a Servant for "the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth." This is why the statement appears only in Mark. It does not affect the truth of His Person. 5) The solemn exhortation to watch. It behooves the servants to watch during the absence of the Lord.

PART IV. GIVING HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR -- Chapters 14-15.

Chapter 14

1. Seeking by Craft to put Him to Death. Verses 1-2. Matthew 26:2-5; Luke 22:1-2.
2. The Anointing. Verses 3-9. Matthew 26:6-13; John 12:1-8
3. Judas offers to betray Him. Verses 10-11. Matthew 26:14-16; Luke 22:3-6
4. The last Paschal feast. Verses 12-21. Matthew 26:17-24; Luke 22:7-18, 21-23
5. The Lord's Supper instituted. Verses 22-25. Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-20
6. Peter's denial predicted. Verses 26-31. Matthew 26:31-35; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38
7. The Suffering in the Garden. Verses 32-42. Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46
8. The Betrayal and Arrest of the Lord Jesus. Verses 43-52. Matthew 26:47-56; Luke 22:47-53
9. Before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin. Verses 53-65. Matthew 26:47-68; Luke 22:47-55; John 18:2-24. 10. Peter's denial. Verses 66-72. Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:56-62; John 18:17, 25-27.

1. Seeking by Craft to put Him to Death. Verses 1, 2

His enemies were plotting, but over all was God and His eternal counsels. They were now ready "to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28). The Servant is to die as the true passover lamb and He who had ministered in such a perfect way is to give His life a ransom for many. They had resolved it should not be on the feast day. But God's will demanded that it should be on that day; and so it was.

2. The Anointing. Verses 3-9

The woman is not mentioned by Mark. It was Mary of Bethany, who sat at His feet when He had come to her house and who wept at His feet when Lazarus had died. She alone had grasped the meaning of the Lord's announcement concerning His death and resurrection. She did not go to the grave as others did. She anointed His body for the burial. What love there was in her heart! How it must have delighted His heart when she did this act of faith and love.

3. Judas offers to betray Him. Verses 10-11

The anointing hastened Judas to betray Him (see John 12:5-6).

4. The last Paschal feast. Verses 12-21

First there was the preparation (verses 12-16) and then the feast itself (verses 17-21). What calmness and dignity is seen in all He does! He knew all what awaited Him. During the feast He announced the coming betrayal. Awful are the words coming from such lips, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born." The same is true of every human being who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ and dies in sin.

5. The Lord's Supper instituted. Verses 22-25

It is His own supper, the blessed memorial feast. "Do this in remembrance of Me." They did not know then what it meant. But when the Holy Spirit had come they broke the bread. The passover was the memorial of the deliverance of the people out of Egypt and reminded them of the blood that was sprinkled. A better blood was soon to be shed and a greater deliverance wrought by the Lamb of God. A blessed privilege to carry out His request (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

6. Peter's denial predicted. Verses 26-31

The hymn they sang was composed of Psalms 115-118. With what emotion of soul He must have sung with His disciples. The shadow of deepest agony and death was upon Him and yet the fullest praise flowed from His lips. He announced the scattering of the sheep and His own smiting by the hand of God. What must it have meant for Him, when He said with His perfect knowledge, "I will smite the shepherd." That smiting, which took place on the cross, is the heart and mystery of the atonement. Peter's denial is then predicted.

7. The Suffering in the Garden. Verses 32-42

In Gethsemane we are face to face with the most solemn event in the life of the Servant-Son, save that hour, when He hung on the cross, forsaken of God. What was His suffering there? No saint can ever fathom its depths. He did not shrink from death, nor was the agony on account of the physical sufferings He knew were to be His lot; nor was Satan, as some foolishly teach, ready to slay Him. All such statements are dishonoring to Him. He was not in danger of death in Gethsemane. What was the cup He dreaded? The Sinless One, who knew no sin, was now soon to be made sin for us. God's face upon which He had ever looked was soon to be hid. And what was it when at last He was made sin for us on the cross? One sentence gives us the answer, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

8. The Betrayal and Arrest of the Lord Jesus. Verses 43-52

He surrenders Himself as the willing victim. Peter was ready to fight and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Mark omits the healing for he is to picture the Servant in His suffering and all relating to power is now out of place. In John's Gospel the Lord said one word, "I am," and those who came to arrest Him fell backward to the ground. John was guided

by the Spirit of God to make a record of it. It could have no place in Mark's Gospel. They all forsook Him and fled. But only Mark tells of a certain young man, who followed and then fled naked. The young man may have been Mark himself.

9. Before the high priest and the Sanhedrin. Verses 53-65

We behold the Servant now delivered into the hands of man and behind man stood Satan. Man's wickedness and Satan's power are there, and in the midst, in solitary grandeur, stands the perfect Servant-Son. Mark tells us exclusively that the witnesses brought against Him did not agree. The Holy Spirit continues to hold Him up as the perfect Servant, in whose character and service not a flaw could be detected. But He witnesses the good confession and upon that blessed Word of Truth as it came from His lips He is condemned. Then they condemned Him to death and man's vile hatred energized by Satan cast itself upon the blessed One.

10. Peter's denial Verses 66-72

The Lord had given the true testimony and Peter followed with his shameful denial. Mark gives what the other two evangelists omit, the cock crowing twice. The lessons from Peter's fall are simple. He had to pass through this terrible experience to become broken down and learn to know his own weakness. And how we all need to know that we are in ourselves good for nothing; "in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing."

Chapter 15

1. Before Pilate. Verses 1-5. Matthew 27:1-14; Luke 23:1-4; John 18:28-38.

2. Barabbas released and the Servant condemned. Verses 6-15. Matthew 27:15-26; Luke 23:16-25; John 18:39-40

3. Crowned with thorns and mocked. Verses 16-21. Matthew 27:27-32; Luke 23:26-43; John 19:1-16

4. Crucified. Verses 22-32. Matthew 27:33-44; Luke 23:26-43; John 19:17-27

5. Obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. Verses 33-41. Matthew 27:45-56; Luke 23:44-49; John 19:28-37

6. The Burial. Verses 42-47. Matthew 27:57-61; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42.

1. Before Pilate. Verses 1-5

The council had condemned Him to death and now the whole council delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. First the religious power had condemned the blessed Servant and the civil Power had to do the same. It will be seen that Mark's account of our Lord's trial before Pilate is the briefest, while Matthew's is the longest. Again the Servant witnesses a good confession. But when accused by the chief priests His blessed lips were sealed. He stood there to witness and not to defend Himself. What a gracious example He gives to all His servants. The hatred of the religious leaders of the people is especially emphasized by Mark. For the complete exposition of this trial before Pilate see "Exposition of Matthew."

2. Barabbas released; the Servant condemned to be crucified. Verses 6-15

The Story of Barabbas and his release is full of helpful instruction. "So true it was that, even in this last scene, Jesus delivers others at His own cost and in every sense. He had just before delivered the disciples from being taken; He is now the means of delivering Barabbas, wicked as he was. He never saved Himself. It was the very perfection of the moral Glory of Christ to deliver, bless, save, and in all at the expense of Himself." ("Gospel of Mark," W. Kelly) Barabbas was released, though guilty and condemned, because the Lord Jesus took his Place. Christ was his substitute. Barabbas released might have gone out and looked up to Him, who hung on the cross and said, "He died for me; he paid my penalty." It is a blessed illustration of the atonement. They ask for the murderer Barabbas and demand the horrible death by crucifixion for God's perfect Servant and their King. The chief priests had moved the people to make this fatal choice. See the interesting additions in Matthew's Gospel on account of its Jewish-dispensational character.

3. Crowned with thorns and mocked. Verses 16-21

Oh! the heart piercing scenes of this section of our Gospel! They led Him away to heap the greatest indignities upon the Holy One. That is man's answer to that service of love and power He so unceasingly had rendered. After the cruel scourging they clothed Him with a purple robe in mockery. Matthew reports a scarlet cloak. This is not a discrepancy. "A scarlet military robe was made to represent the imperial purple, hence the designation, a purple robe. And because this is the symbolic import of the robe, there is no discrepancy" (Lange). The scarlet cloak was used to represent in mockery the imperial purple robe. The crown of thorns was made to inflict cruel pain upon His brow. Thorns came on account of man's sin; they are the signs of the curse. He took the curse upon His own head. Mark tells us most definitely who Simon the Cyrenian was, who was compelled to bear His cross, the father of Alexander and Rufus (see Romans 16:13). God did not forget this service; Simon's sons became believers.

4. Crucified. Verses 22-32

It is interesting to note here that Mark speaks of bringing Him to Golgotha. The word translated "bring" really means "bear" (translated thus in Mark 2:3 and Luke 23:26). "And they bear Him unto the place Golgotha." They had to hold Him up. The blessed Servant had spent His strength. What appearance He must have presented after all the scourging and cruel indignities! His face from the awful blows was marred. No wonder that His real human body was weak. But could He succumb? Never. No one could take His life. It could not be touched by man or Satan; death (the result of sin) had no claim on Him. He gave His life for a ransom. Mark also reports exclusively that the wine they offered Him was mingled with myrrh. This was considered an anodyne, to relieve and deaden the pain. The Servant who had come to spend all He had and to give Himself did not need it, but refused the concoction. Mark gives the hour of crucifixion as "the third hour." In John's Gospel (19:14) the sixth hour is mentioned when Pilate said, "Behold your King." The critics triumphantly point to this as a discrepancy. But John gives the Roman way of reckoning the civil day and Mark adheres to the Jewish timekeeping.

The superscription on the cross is the briefest in Mark. He gives the substance of the accusation and not the full wording of it. The perfect Servant who had so fully glorified God and given Himself in all His service, hangs between the two thieves, who had robbed God and man. How true it was (though they knew it not), "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." He did not save Himself for He came to die. He was obedient unto death.

5. Obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. Verses 33-41

What hours those were! What heart can penetrate its deep mysteries or fathom the depths of the sufferings of the Lamb of God, when He was obedient unto death, the death of the Cross! Nature bears witness to it by the supernatural darkness, for the One who created all things suffers for the creature's sin. And what a scene in Heaven, when God's own hand rested upon that One! Worship, praise and adoration is here more in order than an attempt of explanation. He was forsaken of God; and then He paid our penalty and stood in our stead in the presence of a holy God. Never say He was forsaken by His Father. Read John 16:32. The Servant's cry with a loud voice shows that no one took His life, but that He gave "Himself." And there was the rent veil from top to bottom (rent by God's own hand). Then came the utterance of the Centurion: a Gentile confessing Him as Son of God. And the women are mentioned, who had ministered unto Him. The men had fled, the feeble women were there. All service now after the great victory He won, must be in weakness, depending on Him alone.

6. The Burial. Verses 42-47

Joseph of Arimathea, like Nicodemus, identified himself with Him, who had died on a cross and confessed Him boldly by this action. In Pilate's astonishment that He had died so soon we have additional evidence that the Servant "gave His life." Death by crucifixion, perhaps so often witnessed by the centurion, is a lingering death. They would have given Him the grave of the wicked, but God had predicted it otherwise (Isaiah 53:9 read, "they appointed His grave with the wicked, but with the rich He was when He had died"). The tomb was one in which no other dead had ever been. "The one born of a Virgin-womb could only be fittingly honored in a virgin tomb. He who could not see corruption, could not lie in a tomb which corruption had defiled."

PART V. THE SERVANT HIGHLY EXALTED. RISEN AND ASCENDED; HIS COMMISSION TO HIS SERVANTS AND WORKING WITH THEM

Chapter 16

1. The Resurrection and His Manifestation. Verses 1-13. Matthew 28:1-8; Luke 24:1-35; John 20:1-18.
2. The Commission. Verses 9-18. Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-29.
3. The Ascension. Verses 19-20. Luke 24:50-53

1. The Resurrection and His Manifestation. Verses 1-8

Again we notice the brevity of Mark's account of the Resurrection of the Lord. The resurrection of Him who saved and toiled so patiently, who was cast out of His own city and suffered and died on the cross, was the fullest vindication of His person. A still greater vindication lies in the future, when He returns in power and glory. By His resurrection He was declared the Son of God (Romans 1:4). Had He not risen in the same body He had taken on in incarnation, His death on the cross would have no more power for redemption than the death of any other human being (1 Corinthians 15:12-20). His resurrection is also the completest proof that His work on the cross is accepted by God. The women last mentioned at the cross are the first at the tomb. In the first eight verses the Lord Himself is not mentioned as being seen. The stone rolled away, the empty tomb and the angel's words declare that He is risen indeed. In Mark, Peter is specially mentioned, "but go your way, tell His disciples and Peter." Peter's denial is described by Mark in the fullest way. How fitting that he should record the divinely sent message to Peter. What comfort and peace it must have brought to sorrowing Peter.

Higher criticism declares that the proper ending of the Gospel of Mark is verse 8. They disputed the genuineness of verses 9-20. Another hand, they claim, added later these verses. That spurious translation, which goes under the name of "The Twentieth Century New Testament" (wholly unsatisfactory) also gives this portion as "a late appendix." It is not. Mark wrote it and some of the best scholars have declared that it is genuine. How foolish to assume that the blessed document, which begins with the sublime statement "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" could end with "they were afraid!" The trouble with these critics is that they approach the Word of God with doubt and reject its inspiration.

2. The Commission. Verses 9-18

To her who came to the tomb very early in the morning He appeared first. Mary Magdalene had been under the control of demons in a most awful way. She is there as a trophy of His Power over Satan; as the mighty victor over Satan He appeared first to her. Knowing Him and His power as well as the risen One, He sends her forth with the glad message. This is fully given in the Gospel of John. The disciples did not believe. Then He appeared to the disciples on the way to Emmaus so fully reported in Luke. Even then they did not believe their testimony. He appeared unto the eleven as they were at meat and at that time He gave them the commission. But before He upbraided them with their unbelief. How it must have humbled them. And such weak, unbelieving, doubting men the perfect Servant sent forth to preach the Gospel to every creature. The commission differs in many ways from that given in the Kingdom Gospel of Matthew. In Mark the Kingdom is not in view, the Servant has served, He has given His life for a ransom and upon that the good news goes forth. The message is to be believed and faith confessed. He that believeth not shall be damned. Signs were to follow them (but not all) that believe and signs did follow. Signs were never universal, not even in the days of the Apostles. The Lord's own sovereign will is over this.

3. The Ascension. Verses 19-20

The Gospel of Matthew makes no record of the ascension. If we had only Matthew we would think the Lord still on the earth even as some day He will be earth's glorious King. The Holy Spirit gives through Mark a brief Word on the Return of the Servant-Son to the Glory from where He had come. The Servant who had stooped so low is lifted so high. There at the right hand of God He has taken His place--the Man in Glory. The work is finished. But the word "work" appears once

more in this Gospel. "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following." Nowhere else in the Gospels is the statement given that the risen One works with His servants. How fitting that the Holy Spirit put it at the close of the Gospel of the Servant. He came from God to take the Servant's place; He served on earth; He sacrificed Himself for our sins, and now as His servants go forth to serve in His name He still works with them. What joy it ought to be for all who love and adore Him to be obedient to such a Lord, who was such a Servant on earth and whose delight is still to serve.

Mark the Writer of this Gospel

Were we to give even the gist of theories on the Gospel of Mark and how it was written, we would have to fill many pages. That is needless and even unprofitable. The chosen instrument to write this Gospel in which the Lord Jesus Christ is so beautifully pictured as the Servant of God on earth, was not an Apostle, but himself a servant. We find his name mentioned for the first time in Acts 12:12-25. His full name was John Mark and his mother's name Mary. In Acts 13:5, 13 he is called by the first name John, while in 15:39 we read of him as Mark. He accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey as a helper. We read nowhere that he addressed a single gathering. When they reached Perga he left the Apostles and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). The reason of this abrupt departure was failure on Mark's side. He did not want to work and had become unprofitable (Acts 15:38, compare with 2 Timothy 4:11). On account of his failure Paul and Barnabas had a falling out and separated from each other. Paul refused him as a companion on the second journey, but Barnabas wanted to take him again (Acts 15:37-40). He went with Barnabas to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). The Holy Spirit has nothing to report of this journey. A period of unprofitableness followed for John Mark till he was restored to service. That such was the case we learn from Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4:11. He had become Paul's fellow laborer. This personal history of John Mark is of blessed encouragement. He who had such an humble place as a servant of the two mighty men of God and who even failed in that, when restored became the divinely chosen and inspired instrument to pen the perfect Servant's path down here. Have we failed as servants? Let us go and tell Him all about it. He will have better service for us.

Tradition linked him with Peter and makes him a Bishop in Alexandria. There is no truth in it. All we know is that he was led to Christ by the Apostle Peter and was with him in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13).

THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF MARK. *

A careful study of the preceding analysis and comparison with the other Gospel records will bring out the characteristic features of this Gospel. Many events recorded in Matthew, Luke and John are omitted in Mark because they have no bearing upon the Servant's work. We find not a word about a genealogy, nor is there any reference to Bethlehem, David's city. The Lord is called but once the son of David in Mark's Gospel. Nor do we find a word about His childhood spent in Nazareth and the details of His temptations in the wilderness. The sermon on the mount so fully reported in Matthew is altogether omitted, because He spoke it as the king, proclaiming the principles of the kingdom. Many of the parables are omitted by Mark, for instance, five of those which appear in Matthew 13; also a number of others found in Matthew, notably those of Matthew 25, and the description of the judgment of the nations, when He comes again. The lengthy woes pronounced upon the religious leaders of the nation (Matthew 23) are likewise nearly all absent. All these omissions are the evidences of the verbal inspiration of this Gospel and if closely studied will show the divine wisdom. The word "Lord" as applying to Him is carefully omitted by Mark. Textual investigation has shown that "Lord" in Mark 9:24 does not belong there. But in the Resurrection chapter He is called "Lord." In a number of passages in the analysis attention has been called to additions, sentences, verses and sections not found in other Gospels. Many have not been mentioned, but the most prominent are pointed out. These additions reveal the quality of His service and give us descriptions of His moral Glory. We ask our readers to look up once more the following passages and compare them with the Gospel of Matthew. Chapters 1:13; 1:31, compare Luke 4:39; 3:5 compare Matthew 12:13; 3:34 compare Matthew 12:47 and Luke 8:21; 4:33; 6:31 compare Matthew 14:15; 4:36; 8:33 compare Matthew 16:23; 9:36 compare Matthew 18:2; 8:23; 8:33; 9:27 compare with Matthew 17:18; 10:16 compare Matthew 19:13,15; 10:21,23 compare Matthew 19:21-23; 16:7 compare Matthew 28:7, et cetera.

The parable in chapter 4:26-27 is found only in Mark. Then there are two miracles which are exclusively reported by Mark. They are characteristic of true ministry. These are the deaf man in 7:32-37 and the blind man at Bethsaida, 8:22-26.

The characteristic word of the Gospel of Mark is the word "straightway." The Greek word has also been translated "forthwith" and "immediately." It occurs some 40 times in this little Gospel and is the Servant's word.

"But enough. Blessed be God that such service has been seen on earth; that there has been such a hand, such an eye, and such a heart here, among the sons of men. And blessed be God, that by the same Spirit He waits to mould us to His pattern, yea, that He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His beloved Son. And if the Head was content to serve thus;--if, while He tarried here, He lived to meet the need of all who sought succor;--if, now risen, He is yet the same, still the loving Worker, interceding within the veil, and working here too for us;--if He shall yet serve us, 'for the less is blessed of the greater,' when in the coming kingdom He shall still lead His flock to living fountains, and wipe away their tears;--shall not we whom He has purchased, in whom He seeks to dwell, who are His witnesses in a world which knows Him not, wait upon Him until His mantle fall on us, and His Spirit, 'the oil which was upon the Head,' run down even to us also; till we catch the mind of heaven, and are made like unto the angels, children of God and children of resurrection, called to stand in the presence of God, and yet to serve, as ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation? God is serving,--'the Father worketh,'--Oh! what works of love, from the rain and fruitful seasons up to the mighty work of raising man from earth to highest heaven; and Christ has served, and is serving; and the Holy Ghost is serving, taking of the things of Christ, to reveal them to us, and then to work them in us; and angels are serving, and saints are serving, and the Church proclaims her call, that she too because redeemed must be a servant here, and that her rulers are but servants, yea, servants of servants; and heaven is serving earth, and earth the creatures on it, So let us, after our Pattern, being redeemed, go forth to serve also. 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Verily, He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and He will come forth and serve them.' O Lord, Thou canst perform it; perform it to Thy praise; Oh! shew us the glory of Thy service, full of grace and truth, that in its presence we may be changed; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, may even here bear to Thy glory the image of the heavenly. Amen." (A. Jukes)

* We can heartily recommend "The Gospel of Mark" by W. Kelly. The excellent notes and hints by the editor of this volume, Mr. Whitefield, make the book still more valuable. Also A. Jukes on the four Gospels. We acknowledge our indebtedness to both.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelien

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke is the third of the so-called Synoptics. The word synoptic means "seeing the whole together or at a glance." Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic Gospels, because they present a common narrative, relate the same incidents of our Lord, with much the same words, though characteristic differences, omissions, and additions are equally apparent. Various theories have been advanced to explain the similarity and differences, so often called discrepancies, of these three Gospels. One is the theory that originally there existed a primitive Gospel, which has been lost. Out of this primitive Gospel, it is claimed, the three Gospels were constructed. Another theory is that they grew out of one another; that one wrote first and the others followed to add to it and omit what they thought best to omit. It is beyond the scope of our Bible study work to take up these attempted explanations of how the Gospels came into existence. Nor can we follow in detail the intensely interesting historical evidences, which so wonderfully demonstrate their authenticity. However, we desire to say that the last word in the controversy of the Gospels and their genuineness has been spoken. The attacks upon the historicity of the narrative, the denials which have been made, have been silenced, though infidelity cannot completely be silenced, at least not in the present age.

The well-known scholar, Dr. Schaff, made the statement, "The essential identity, of the Christ of the Synoptics is now universally conceded." This is true. But the differences, the divergences in numerous things of the story the Synoptic Gospels reveal, how are they to be explained? There can be but one answer. The three persons who have written were chosen by the Spirit of God to write the narrative in exactly the way in which they did. The characteristic differences of their work is not man-made, but God-breathed. They 'wrote independently of each other. They did not try to improve upon a record already in existence. The Holy Spirit guided the pen of each, so that we possess in these three Gospels the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the Lord Jesus in a threefold aspect. The proof of this will soon be found in the careful and prayerful study of the Gospels. The truth is not discovered by learning and research in linguistic or historical lines, but by earnest searching in the Word itself. The three Gospels make the humanity of the Lord Jesus prominent, but not to the exclusion of His Deity. The full revelation of His Deity is given in the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, but not excluding His true humanity. The Transfiguration is given by each of the Synoptics, but it is not found in the fourth Gospel. There is no room for it in the Gospel of John. Of the characteristic features of the Gospel of John and the contrast with the Synoptics, we have more to say in our introduction to that Gospel.

We have already seen that Matthew describes the Lord Jesus as the King and Mark pictures Him as the obedient servant, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. The Gospel of Luke is the Gospel of His Manhood; we behold Him in this Gospel as the Son of Man. It has often been pointed out that the early church possessed these fundamental facts concerning the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John and that knowledge may be traced in an outward form through centuries. It was Irenaeus who, as far as we know, called first the attention to the fourfold appearances of the Cherubim and the four Gospels. He declared that the four faces of the Cherubim are images of the activity of the Son of God. The Cherubim had the faces of the lion, the ox, the man, and the eagle. The application to the four Gospels of the four faces of the Cherubim has been maintained for many centuries as the true application. Ancient manuscripts, illuminated missals, etc., bear witness to it. The Lion, the kingly animal, represents Matthew's Gospel. Mark, the Gospel of the Servant, is represented by the Ox, the burden-bearing animal. In Luke we see the Face of a Man and the Eagle, sweeping the heavens, coming from above and returning there, represents Him, who came from the Father and has gone back to the Father.

We turn now our attention to the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of Manhood.

The Writer of the Third Gospel

The writer of the third Gospel does not mention his name, though he speaks of himself in the opening verses of the first chapter. The first verse in the Book of Acts makes known that the same writer who wrote the Book of Acts also wrote the third Gospel and that both mention the same person, who is addressed, that is Theophilus. Furthermore, we learn from Acts 1:1, that the third Gospel had been written, when the writer of Acts began his work. Inasmuch as Luke is undoubtedly the writer of the Book of Acts, he is also the penman of the third Gospel. "It has been generally and almost unanimously acknowledged that the Gospel, which we now possess is that written by Luke." (Dean Alford.)

Luke did not belong, as some hold, to the seventy our Lord sent forth to minister. His own words answer this statement. (Read Luke 1:2.) The Epistles give us the only reliable information about his person. In Colossians 4:14 we read of him as "the beloved physician." In the Epistle to Philemon he is called a fellow laborer of the Apostle Paul. From Second Timothy we learn that he was in Rome when Paul was a prisoner and remained faithful to him when others forsook the Apostle. He had also joined the Apostle during his second missionary journey at Troas (Acts 16:10). The evidence of it is found in the little word "we." He went with Paul to Macedonia and remained sometime in Philippi. In Colossians, chapter 4 we find also the fact brought out that he was a Gentile. First Paul mentions those of the circumcision (Colossians 4:11). Then Epaphras, a Colossian Gentile, is mentioned, followed by the names of Luke and Demas, both undoubtedly Gentiles. He is therefore the only writer in the Bible who was a Gentile. The reason that he was selected to write the Gospel, which pictures the Lord Christ, as the perfect Man, and the Book of Acts is more than interesting. The Gospel of Luke, a Gentile, addressed to a gentile (Theophilus) is the Gospel for the Gentiles. And the same Gentile instrument was chosen to relate the history of the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem to the Gentiles. Other critical questions, such as the time it was written, where it was written, etc., we are obliged to pass by.

The Characteristic Features Of The Gospel Of Luke

We have seen from the study of Matthew that our Lord is seen in it as the King and in Mark as the Servant. The Gospel of Luke has even more characteristic features which bring out the great purpose of the last Synoptic Gospel. The perfect Manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, His moral perfections, His tender sympathies as the Saviour of man, are written here in a most precious way. The Priesthood the glorified Son of Man exercises now in behalf of His people, being touched with a feeling of our infirmities has for its foundation His true Manhood. "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed in behalf of men in things Godward, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; since he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Hebrews 5:1-2). That He was the true and perfect Man, tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin; holy, blameless, undefiled and separate from sinners, is fully seen in the Gospel of Luke.

A glance at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke reveals at once its object. Matthew's Gospel begins with a genealogy; the genealogy of the King and is followed by the account of the wise men coming to Jerusalem looking for the new born King of the Jews. Mark begins abruptly, one might say in a hurried way, as if the writer is anxious to introduce the untiring ministry of the perfect Servant at once. And so he does.

How different is the beginning of the third Gospel! It is perfectly human. A friend writes to a friend and when he begins to tell the story he starts also in a very human way, "There was in the days of Herod the King." The two opening chapters are peculiar to Luke. All is new. We do not find anywhere else the details of John's birth, Gabriel's visit to Mary and the announcement of the coming birth of Christ, and the beautiful outbursts of praise of the two women and Zacharias. The Gospel, which is to reveal "the face of a Man" had to give these blessed facts. The second chapter, containing the most beautiful description of the birth of our Lord; bringing out the facts that He entered the world, whose Creator He is, like every other son of man, born of a woman, no room in the inn, his first resting place a manger, known to Matthew, Mark and John, were omitted by them. Luke, chosen to describe the perfect Man, had to embody these blessed details in his narrative. The babe, the child growing, the twelve year old boy in the temple, His increase in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and man, all related in the second chapter of Luke show Him forth in His true humanity. The authenticity of these two chapters has often been doubted. There can be no valid reason for it; on the contrary their genuineness are as completely proven as the rest of the Gospel. Another beautiful feature of this Gospel is that Luke speaks more of the prayers of our Lord than the others. Prayer is the expression of human dependence upon God. Inasmuch as the Son of God had taken the Creator's (creature's?) place, He prayed and was cast upon God. Being baptized "and praying" heaven was

opened. (Luke 3:21.) Before He called the twelve Apostles He continued all night in prayer (6:12-13). "As He was praying" He asked the disciples, "Whom say the people that I am," (9:18). According to Luke He was transfigured "as He was praying." He also said to Peter "I have prayed for thee." All this is peculiar to this Gospel and is needed to bring out His true humanity. When Luke speaks of Him more than the other evangelists, that "He sat down to eat meat" we have the picture of a true man among men. And what more do we find in the Gospel of the beloved physician, which brings out His tender human sympathy. The story of the raising up of the widow's son at Nain is alive with tenderness and sympathy. Then there are the parables peculiar to Luke. The parable of the lost coin, the prodigal son, the parable of the importunate friend, the unjust steward, the good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the Publican praying in the temple and others are reported only by Luke. In this Gospel only we have the record of the story of the rich man and Lazarus, their life on earth, their death and their state after death; the conversion of Zacchaeus; the dying thief and his salvation; the walk to Emmaus and other incidents. How fitting that Luke, the Gentile, should also tell us what the others were not commissioned to write in reporting the prophetic utterances of our Lord, that Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

All these characteristic features and many others, such as the genealogy in chapter 3, His ministry as reported by Luke, the description of His suffering, His death, and His resurrection are pointed out in the annotations. May it please the Holy Spirit to give us through the study of this Gospel a new vision of Him who was rich and who became poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be rich.

Events and Principal Circumstances Reported Exclusively by Luke

It will be of much help to the student of the Gospels to possess a list of events and a number of circumstances, which are not reported by Matthew, Mark and John, but only by Luke. These interesting peculiarities of the third Gospel shed much light upon the Gospel itself. We give the list of fifty-eight items by chapter and verse.

1.--The vision of Zacharias, and conception of Elisabeth 1:5-25.

2.--The salutation of the Virgin Mary 1:26-38

3.--Mary's visit to Elisabeth 1:39-56

4.--The birth of John the Baptist, and hymn of Zacharias 1:57-80.

5.--The decree of Caesar Augustus 2:1-3

6.--The birth of Christ at Bethlehem 2:4-7

7.--The appearance of angels to the shepherds 2:8-20

8.--The circumcision of Christ 2:21

9.--The presentation of Christ in the temple 2:22-24

10.--The account of Simeon and Anna 2:25-38

11.--Christ found among the doctors 2:41-52.

12.--Date of beginning of John's ministry 3:1-2.

13.--Success of John's ministry 3:10-15.

14.--Genealogy of Mary 3:23-38

- 15.--Christ preaching and rejected at Nazareth 4:15-30
- 16.--Particulars in the call of Simon, James and John 5:1-10
- 17.--Christ's discourse in the plain 6:17-49
- 18.--Raising of the widow's son at Nain 7:11-17
- 19.--Woman in Simon's house 7:36-50
- 20.--Women who ministered to Christ 8:1-3
- 21.--James and John desiring fire to come down 9:51-56
- 22.--Mission of seventy disciples 10:1-16
- 23.--Return of seventy disciples 10:17-24
- 24.--Parable of the good Samaritan 10:25-37
- 25.--Christ in the house of Martha and Mary 10:38-42
- 26.--Parable of friend at midnight 11:5-8
- 27.--Christ in a Pharisee's house 11:37-54.
- 28.--Discourse to an innumerable multitude 12:1-53
- 29.--Murder of the Galileans 13:1-5
- 30.--Parable of the barren fig tree 13:6-9
- 31.--Case of the woman diseased 18 years 13:10-20
- 32.--Question on the few that be saved 13:22-30
- 33.--Reply to the Pharisees' warning about Herod 13:31-33
- 34.--Case of a dropsical man 14:1-6
- 35.--Parable of the lowest room 14:7-14
- 36.--Parable of the great supper 14:15-24
- 37.--Difficulties of Christ's service 14:25-35
- 38.--Parable of the lost sheep and piece of money 15:1-10
- 39.--Parable of the prodigal son 15:11-22
- 40.--Parable of the unjust steward 16:1-18

- 41.--The rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31
- 42.--Instruction to disciples 17:1-10
- 43.--Healing of ten lepers 17:12-19
- 44.--Question and answer about the coming of God's kingdom 17:20-37
- 45.--Parable of the importunate widow 18:1-8
- 46.--Parable of the Pharisee and Publican 18:9-14
- 47.--Calling of Zacchaeus 19:2-10
- 48.--Parable of the pounds 19:11-28
- 49.--Christ weeping over Jerusalem 19:41-44
- 50.--Special warning to Peter 22:31-32
- 51.--Direction to buy sword 22:35-38
- 52.--Appearance of an angel, and bloody sweat in garden 22:43-44
- 53.--Pilate sends Christ to Herod 23:6-16
- 54.--Women deplore Christ's sufferings 23:27-32
- 55.--The penitent thief 23:39-43
- 56.--The appearance of Christ to two disciples going to Emmaus 24:13-35
- 57.--Circumstances attending Christ's appearance to the eleven 24:37-49
- 58.--Christ's departure in the act of blessing 24:50-53.

The Division of the Gospel of Luke

As already stated, the Gospel of Luke in its beginning gives the birth and childhood of our Lord; then reveals His perfect Manhood, ministering, suffering and dying as the Saviour of men. The last chapter reveals the second Man in His resurrection glory and His ascension. All is cast in such a way as to bring out His true and perfect humanity. The best verse to quote as key for this Gospel is found in the nineteenth chapter: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10). Various divisions have been made. Seven great parts, however, are clearly marked.

- I. The Birth and Childhood. Chapter 1-2:52.
- II. The Beginnings of His Ministry. Chapter 3-4:13.
- III. The Ministry in Galilee. Chapter 4:14-9:50.
- IV. The Journey to Jerusalem. Chapter 9:51-19:27.

V. In Jerusalem. Chapter 19:28-21:38. VI. His Rejection, Suffering and Death. Chapter 22-23.

VII. His Resurrection and Ascension. Chapter 24.

We give the different chapters with their contents in the Analysis.

Analysis and Annotations

I. The Birth and Childhood -- Chapter 1-2:52

CHAPTER 1

1. The Introduction. 1-4
2. Zacharias and Elizabeth; the Vision. 5-12
3. John the Baptist, his birth and ministry announced. 13-17
4. Zacharias' Unbelief and Punishment. 18-26
5. The Angel's Announcement to the Virgin Mary. 27-33
6. Mary's Question and the Answer. 34-38
7. Mary Visits Elizabeth 39-45
8. The Virgin Mary's Hymn of Praise. 46-56
9. The Birth of John. 57-66
10. The Prophetic Song of Zacharias. 67-80.

Verses 1-4

The third Gospel begins in a way that no other Gospel does. It begins in a very human and humble way corresponding beautifully with the purpose of the Gospel. Yet it is couched in the choicest language. "Not only is it written in most classical Greek, but it reminds us by its contents of the similar preambles of the most illustrious Greek historians, especially those of Herodotus and Thueydides" (Prof. F. Godet). From the introduction we learn that Luke was not an eye-witness and minister of the Word; he did not belong to those who walked with the Lord during His earthly ministry. We do not know who the "many" were who had written on the great things which had taken place on earth and which all Christians believed. The remark has no reference to Matthew or Mark. Some have found in this simple introduction, in which Luke has nothing to say about a divine commission to write, an evidence that he did not write by inspiration. Others have pointed out the fact that the words "from the very first" mean literally "from above" (so rendered in John 3:3) and found in these words an evidence that Luke was inspired. This, however, is incorrect; Luke does not assert his own inspiration. The entire introduction rather shows the guidance of the Spirit of God.

"It is a beautiful example of how naturally the Spirit of God works, or may work, in what we term inspiration. The instrument He uses is not like a mere pen in the hand of another. He is a man acting freely--for 'where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty'--as if from his own heart and mind alone. He uses all the means he has got, and uses them diligently. You are quite prepared to find in his work the character of the writer: why should not He who has prepared the instrument, use it according to the quality of that which He has prepared? Why should He set aside the mind which He has furnished, any more than the affections of the heart which He has endowed?"--Numerical Bible.

Verses 5-12

For about 400 years the Lord had sent no communication to His people Israel. The silence of heaven is at last broken. The ministering Priest Zacharias beholds the Angel Gabriel, the same wonderful being, who brought heaven's messages to Daniel. The names of the aged and pious couple are significant. Zacharias means "Jehovah remembers," and Elizabeth is translated "the oath of God." If we join them together we have the sentence "Jehovah remembers the oath of God." The time of remembrance had come. Prophecy is about to be fulfilled.

Verses 13-17

John's birth and ministry are announced. "John" means "Favor of Jehovah." It fits in beautifully with the names of Zacharias and Elizabeth. "Jehovah remembers the oath of God" and the blessed result of the remembrance is "the Favor of Jehovah." Gabriel (which means: "God is mighty") announces that Zacharias' prayer had been heard and the answer was now given. The prayers of many years had not been forgotten. God's time for the answer had come. John is not Elias, but he came in the spirit and power of Elias. Malachi 4:5-6 is yet to see its fulfillment before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Verses 18-26

The announcement of the birth of a son was not believed by Zacharias. Like Abraham and Sarah he looked to earthly circumstances. He did not reckon with the power of God. Disbelieving the words of Gabriel he was struck dumb. He should have shouted praises; instead, he expressed his doubt. Unbelief insults God; the character of God demands judgment upon unbelief.

Verses 27-33

Next God's messenger is sent to Nazareth of Galilee to carry the greatest message, which was ever given to an angel. He appears in Nazareth and came in to the Virgin Mary. How simple and beautiful is the narrative! Here is the woman, the Virgin of Prophecy, who is to bring forth the long promised Son. She is to conceive; bring forth a Son; His name is to be called Jesus; He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest. Even so it came to pass. Then we have an unfulfilled part of the announcement. "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." When He comes the second time, not in humiliation, but in power and great glory, He will receive the throne of His father David and the promised Kingdom. "Let us beware of spiritualizing away the full meaning of these words. The house of Jacob does not mean 'all Christians.' The throne of David does not mean the office of a Saviour to Gentile believers. These words will yet receive a literal fulfillment, when the Lord Jesus comes a second time. The Kingdom of which he speaks is the glorious Kingdom of Daniel 7:27." (Bishop Ryle.)

Verses 34-38

The Virgin's question "How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?"--is not the result of unbelief. She believed, presupposing the absolute reality of the promise, in asking the exact manner of its fulfillment. The blessed mystery of the incarnation, how the Son of God should take on the human form and become man, is made known. It is a great mystery. "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee" means that the human nature of our Lord was produced in the Virgin by a creative act of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18-20). And therefore He possessed an absolutely holy nature. "And the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." This is not a repetition of the first statement. It means that the Son of God, who is the Most High, overshadowed the Virgin, uniting Himself with the miraculously prepared human nature. He is designated in His Being "that holy thing" because He cannot be classified. And because He is holy there could be nothing in Him, who was born of the Virgin, which is unholy. And beautiful is the submission of the Virgin to the will of God.

Verses 39-45

Mary then visited her cousin Elizabeth. How perfectly human is the whole account! And how beautiful the language of the

elder woman calling the Virgin "the mother of my Lord." Surely this was a great revelation she received. With holy reverence we also should use that worthy Name. Well has it been said, "Let us remember the deep meaning of the words 'the Lord' and beware of using them lightly and carelessly." Then she blessed Mary. "Blessed is she that believed."

Verses 46-56

The marvelous outburst of praise which comes from Mary's lips is a beautiful echo of the Old Testament Scriptures. The pious Virgin knew the Word of God; her heart was filled with it and the Holy Spirit used the Word in the expression of her praise. Many Psalms are touched upon, but especially are we reminded of Hannah's inspired song. (1 Samuel 2.) Notice also Mary's deep humility and her acknowledgment of the need of a Saviour. The invention of Rome, of the sinless and immaculate person of Mary, is disproved by everything in the Word of God.

Verses 57-66

When John is born Zacharias' tongue is loosed. He is a type of Israel. Now that people is dumb; some future day when "the Grace of Jehovah" is acknowledged by them, when they see and believe, the remnant of Israel will praise and bless God. No doubt Zacharias was also afflicted with deafness. The last written word of the Old Testament is a curse, Malachi 4:6; the first written word of the New Testament is "grace"--Bengel, "Gnomen" (John: Grace of Jehovah).

Verses 67-80

Zacharias prophesies. He praises God for the fulfillment of His promises spoken by the mouth of His holy Prophets. The Lord of salvation is Messiah. It denotes strength and power. He brings deliverance, salvation from enemies and the promised covenant mercies. (psalm 132:17-18). He beholds the blessings of the promised Kingdom and beholds the blessed results of the visit of the day spring from on high. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the O.T.) translates the word branch in the Old Testament with "day spring." Christ, the Branch, is also the day spring from on high. The fulfillment of Zacharias' prophecy takes place with the second coming of the Lord.

CHAPTER 2

1. The Birth of Christ at Bethlehem 1-7
2. The Glad Tidings Announced to the Shepherds. 8-20
3. The Circumcision and Presentation 21-24
4. Simeon and His Prophecy 25-35
5. Anna the Prophetess 36-38
6. In Nazareth 39-40
7. In the Temple 41-51
8. The Increase 52.

Verses 1-7

The appointed time (Galatians 4:4) had come. According to prophecy the Saviour had to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). But Mary lived in Nazareth. God in His own marvelous way ordered everything and Caesar Augustus was directed to issue the decree of taxation at such a time and in such a way and also the journey of Joseph and his espoused wife, Mary, that she had to be in Bethlehem when the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. The great Roman Emperor knew nothing of what God was accomplishing by his decree. Then He was born, who left the glory of Heaven and became

poor for our sakes. What condescension we behold here! The Maker of Heaven and Earth, born of a woman, taking the creature's place! The first resting place of Him, who came from the bosom of the Father is a manger! There was no room for Him in the inn.

Verses 8-20

Here not the birth of a King is announced as in Matthew, but the birth of a Saviour. The wise men from the East looking for the newborn King are not mentioned by Luke. Poor shepherds hear the glad tidings first. Heaven is opened. The Glory of the Lord shines round about; angels' voices are heard, telling out in heavenly praise, what will be the ultimate result of the work of the Second Man. "Glory to God in the highest, Peace on Earth, good will toward men." But the world rejected Him. Good will toward men sounds forth in the glad tidings, but "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth" is yet to come, when He, the Son of Man, appears again. The shepherds were obedient. They made haste. How simple their faith; how great their reward!

Verses 21-24

And now we find that He, who came of a woman also was made under the law. The circumcision made Him "debtor to do the whole law" which He alone could fulfill; and then to redeem those upon whom the curse of the law rests, by being made a curse for us. (Galatians 3:13). The name announced before His birth is then given to the child. (Matthew 1:21). Five other persons in the Bible were named before their birth: Isaac, Genesis 17:19; Ishmael, Genesis 16:11; Josiah, 1 Kings 13:2; Cyrus, Isaiah 44:28, and John the Baptist. As the firstborn, according to His own law, He is presented unto the Lord. The required sacrifice is brought, in which is written the story of the cross. The sacrifice tells the story of poverty, for the sacrificial birds were only for the poor. "If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtle doves, or two young pigeons." (Leviticus 12:6).

Verses 25-35

Simeon had the divine revelation that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Anointed. He belonged to the faithful remnant of Israel, who in the dark days of decline and apostasy held fast the Word and waited for its promised fulfillment. The Lord had then a faithful remnant, who waited for His first coming; and now His faithful people wait for the blessed Hope, His coming again to receive them unto Himself. Simeon had the revelation that he should not see death, till He had come. This corresponds to the greater promises in 1 Corinthians 15:51 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The Spirit led him into the temple at the right moment. His waiting ended when he held the child in his arms. It was a babe, like any other babe. Yet faith saw in Him what He is, the Lord's salvation for His people; He who had come to do the great work. "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people, Israel." This is prophetic. The Gentiles are put first. Even so it has come to pass; after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in all Israel will be saved. See Isaiah 49:5-6; Romans 11:25-26. And Simeon, holding the babe in his arms, blest the mother and Joseph, not the child, for he knew He was the Blesser.

Verse 36

Then a daughter of Phanuel, Anna, appeared to add her testimony. What a beautiful woman she must have been in her self-denying service! No sooner had she seen the Lord than she spake at once of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. In the midst of the wicked city, soon to become a city of murderers (Isaiah 1:21), there was a company of men and women who looked for redemption.

Verses 39-40

They returned to Nazareth. The visit of the wise men, the flight into Egypt and the return are omitted. Twelve years passed and it did not please the Holy Spirit to give us a report of them. Spurious Gospels of the Infancy were circulated later; they are all legendary and unreliable. As the true Man He grew from infancy to boyhood. Of all the sinless conditions of the human body He was partaker. He grew both mentally and physically. His heart ever seeking God and being in subjection unto Him.

Verses 41-50

Every Jewish boy of twelve years visited Jerusalem at the time of the great festivals. He stayed behind and his anxious mother and Joseph found Him in the temple three days later. For three days He was lost to them. May this not be a reminder of the three days He was thought lost by His disciples? (Chapter 24:21). Here the human infirmity of Mary comes to light. She was nervously anxious. Her words have an accusing tone. The greatest mistake she committed was the mentioning of Joseph as "thy Father." In all this her human failure is in evidence. But how sublime the answer of the twelve year old boy! He is astonished that they should have sought Him; He came to seek them. He is astonished that they did not know that He had to be about His Father's business. What an answer it is! These are His first words recorded in the Gospels. He corrects His fallible mother, who had said, "thy Father and I." His Father, He declares, is He in whose house He had gone. It is the first self-witness to His Deity.

Verses 51-52

And He went down with them to Nazareth and was subject unto them. He was obedient in all things.

II. The Beginnings of His Ministry -- Chapter 3-4:13

CHAPTER 3

1. The Ministry of John the Baptist. 1-14.
2. His Testimony to Christ and his Imprisonment. 15-20.
3. The Baptism of the Lord Jesus. 21-22.
4. The Genealogy of Mary, the Mother of our Lord. 23-38.

Verses 1-14

Eighteen more years of silence follow. It is broken by the voice of the forerunner, John, who preached at Jordan the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. He is not reported here preaching "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He preached thus as the witness for the King and the Kingdom about to come. Matthew had to give the report of this preaching. Here we read that "all flesh should see His salvation." This awaits still its great fulfillment when He comes the second time. John's call to repentance is answered by the people, by the publicans and by the soldiers. They asked "What shall we do?" How different, however, the question concerning salvation and the answer. (Acts 16:30-31).

Verses 15-20

Then he gave witness concerning Christ. The expectation among the people was great and some thought that John might be the Messiah. The answer he gives directs the people to the coming One. Verses 16 and 17 blend together the first and second Coming of Christ. The fire-baptism takes place when He comes again; it is the fire of judgment. His first coming has brought for all who believe in Him the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Verses 21-22

We request the reader to turn at this point to the remarks made in our annotations on Matthew and Mark. Luke omits, however, the conversation which took place between our Lord and John; then there is the additional information that our Lord was praying, when heaven opened and the Holy Spirit came upon Him. The descent into the water signified His death and as the result of His death, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit came down. As He prayed in Jordan so He prayed in Gethsemane as He approached the cross. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death and was heard in that He feared." (Hebrews 5:7).

Verses 23-38

The age of our Lord, about thirty years, is only given by Luke. In the Gospel of the Manhood this properly belongs. The annotations on the first chapter in Matthew should be carefully considered here and the two genealogies compared. The genealogy in Matthew is that of the King; Luke's genealogy is that of the Son of Man. Matthew's genealogy begins with David and Abraham and leads up to Joseph; Luke's genealogy begins with Joseph and leads up to Adam, the first man. It is a tracing backward to the head of the human race, Adam; and back of Adam is God Himself. So He who is God had come and became the Son of Man, the Second Man, the last Adam. The genealogy in Matthew is that of Joseph, a son of David, through the line of Solomon; Luke's genealogy is that of Mary, the mother of our Lord, who also is of David through the line of Nathan. Joseph is called in Luke's genealogy the son of Heli, because Mary was a daughter of Heli. Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary.

CHAPTER 4:1-13

1. The Temptation in the Wilderness. 1-12.
2. The Devil Defeated. 13.

Verses 1-13

What interests us most is the different order in which the three temptations of the Lord are reported by Luke. The second temptation the devil brings to bear upon Him (in the high mountain) is the last in the Gospel of Matthew. Why did Luke change the order and put the second temptation last and the last temptation into the second place? Matthew gives, no doubt, the correct order. The Lord's word to Satan, "Get thee behind me, Satan," proves this. (These words must be omitted in the 8th verse. They are not found in the best manuscripts.) The order in Luke corresponds to the nature of man. Man is composed of Body, Soul and Spirit. The first temptation concerns the body; the second the soul, and the third the spirit. The temptations man has to go through in life are clearly seen here. In youth it is the lust of the flesh; in manhood the lust of the eyes, to possess and to enjoy; in old age the pride of life. The change in the order is made to correspond to this. But "the holy thing," the holy Son of God, had nothing in Him which could ever respond to this trinity of evil. He did not sin, nor could He ever Sin. The devil departed from Him for a season.

III. The Ministry in Galilee -- Chapter 4:14-9:50

CHAPTER 4:14-44

1. In the Synagogue of Nazareth 14-21
2. Unbelief and Rejection of Christ. 22-32
3. A Demon Cast Out in Capernaum 33-37
4. Peter's Wife's Mother Healed; Many Healed. 38-44.

Verses 14-21

And now the description of the ministry of the Son of Man begins. The beginning is in His own city. How all written here is again in a very human manner. He had been brought up in that city and as His custom was "He went into the synagogue," and as He had done, no doubt, before, He stood up to read and like a man finds the place in the scroll which the servant had handed Him. Isaiah 61:1-2 is read by Him and then applied to Himself. The Spirit of the Lord was indeed upon Him to preach the Gospel to the poor. But He stopped in the middle of a sentence. The acceptable year of the Lord, is the last word He read. In His Person all this had appeared. He came to preach the Gospel, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind and to set at liberty them that are bruised. He did not

read "the day of vengeance of our God." That too is His work, but not as long as the acceptable year of the Lord lasts.

Verses 22-32

"Is not this Joseph's son?" It is the first hint of the coming rejection. Then when He declared that God's grace is not to be confined to Israel, but that it will, as in days of old, in the case of the widow of Sarepta and Naaman, go out to the Gentiles, they were filled with wrath. They were ready to kill Him. What happened? "But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way." Was it a miracle? Is it the same as when He passed through shut doors? It was the result of His own dignity as the perfect Man, which awed the crowds, so that no one dared to touch Him.

Verses 33-37

The same incident is reported in Mark 1:21-28. The demons knew him but He had come to spoil the enemy and here He manifested His power.

Verses 38-44

Many works of power followed. As the seeker of the lost to preach the good tidings, He went from city to city.

CHAPTER 5

1. The Miraculous Drought of Fishes. 1-11
2. The Leper Healed. 12-16
3. The Paralytic Healed. 17-26
4. The Call of Matthew and the Feast 27-29
5. The Scribes and Pharisees Answered 30-35
6. The Parable of the Garment and the Bottle. 36-39.

Verses 1-11

Two miraculous draughts of fishes are found in the Gospels. The one here at the beginning of His ministry; the other after His resurrection. (John 21). Both demonstrate His power as Lord over the animal creation. Here the net broke (or began to break), in the other miracle it did not break. Peter is prominent in both. Here he falls at His feet crying out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The divine presence, made known by the miracle, showed Peter his own condition. The Lord graciously calms his fear. The soul that sinks down at the blessed feet of the Lord and owns his sinfulness is safe. He came to seek and to save what is lost. And more than that. He calls into service. "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." They left all and followed Him. It would have been strange if they had done anything else. The highest and best besides knowing the Lord as our Saviour is to follow Him and to be obedient to His call.

Verses 12-16

Luke describes the leper as being full of leprosy. The terrible disease had advanced so as to cover the entire body. Leprosy is the most awful, incurable disease. It is a living death and one of the best illustrations of sin and its ravages. He has the power, and He alone, to heal the leper, as He is the only One who can heal the spiritual leprosy. Then great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed. How men were attracted to Him and sought Him! But He went instead into the wilderness to pray. He felt the need as the perfect man to seek the Father's presence. He has given us an example. It is the pattern we should follow.

"Why is it that there is so much apparent religious working, and yet so little result in positive conversions to God,--so many sermons, and so few souls saved,--so much machinery, and so little effect produced,--so much running hither and thither, and yet so few brought to Christ? Why is all this? The reply is short and simple. There is not enough private prayer. The cause of Christ does not need less working, but it does need among the workers more praying. Let us each examine ourselves, and amend our ways. The most successful workmen in the Lord's vineyard, are those who are like their Master, often and much upon their knees."--Bishop Ryle

Verses 17-26

The same miracle is reported by Matthew and Mark. (Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12). See annotations there.

Verses 27-29

The Publican Levi is Matthew, the writer of the Gospel of Matthew. He was a tax-gatherer and as such despised by his own brethren, because he was serving the hated Roman government. Tax-gatherers and sinners the Son of Man came to call. Levi left all and followed him. That he became at once a witness for the Lord is seen by the feast he made and the large number of tax-gatherers he had invited.

The concluding verses of this chapter we have already considered in the preceding Gospels.

CHAPTER 6

1. The Son of Man the Lord of the Sabbath. 1-5
2. The Man with the Withered Hand Healed. 6-11
3. The Twelve Apostles Chosen. 12-19
4. Blessing and Woe. 20-26
5. Good for Evil. 27-31
6. Instructions to Disciples. 32-38
7. Warnings. 39-45.

Verses 1-11

The opening verses of the chapter are nearly alike in the three Gospels. The arrangement in Matthew is different. It is used there to bring out the consummation Of the rejection of the King. (Matthew 12:1-8). Then He healed the man with the withered hand. The healing was done in their midst; it was a miracle done before their eyes. How different from the pretended healings of Christian Science and other Cults. They were filled with madness and began their plotting.

Verses 12-19

Before He chose the twelve Apostles He spent the whole night in prayer. It was "in those days," the days when they were rejecting Him. The refuge of the perfect Man was then in God. He sought His presence and cast Himself upon Him for guidance. The Gospel of Luke has much to say about the prayers of the Lord Jesus. His prayers are the expression of dependence of His perfect humanity. Among the twelve is Judas the traitor. He was called to be an apostle that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. The Lord knew him from the beginning. He was not a believer in the Deity of our Lord; Judas never called Him, Lord. A very old commentary gives the following suggestion: "Judas is chosen that the Lord might have an enemy among His attendants, for that man is perfect who has no cause to shrink from observation of a

wicked man, conversant with all his ways."--Anselm, who lived from 1033-1109.

Verses 20-45

Certain parts of the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew it occupies the most prominent place, for in the Gospel of the King it is the great proclamation He utters in the beginning of His ministry. See the Study pamphlet on Matthew. Luke reports only a part of the great discourse. A comparison will show that Luke gives a number of additions, which are all in line with the purpose of the Gospel. There is no allusion made as in the Gospel of Matthew to the Law, nor is there given in Luke the expansion of the Law. The instructions concerning alms and prayer are likewise omitted. In Luke's Gospel the words are reported which touch upon the wants of the disciples as men, who are in the world. Their separation from the world, their conduct, besides warnings are fully given. In Matthew we read, "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Luke changes by divine guidance the word perfect to "merciful." The correct rendering is "Become ye merciful." The Son of Man came to this earth in mercy to meet man; the disciple is to manifest the same mercy. The word "perfect" given by Matthew is the larger description; it includes "mercifulness," which Luke is led by the Spirit of God to emphasize.

CHAPTER 7

1. The Centurion's Servant Healed. 1-10.
2. The Widow's Son Raised from the Dead. 11-17
3. John's Questions and the Answer. 18-23
4. The Testimony Concerning John. 24-29
5. The Unreasonableness of Unbelief. 30-35.
6. The Woman With the Alabaster Box. 36-40
7. The Parable of the Two Debtors. 41-50.

Verses 1-10

In Matthew the healing of the Centurion's servant comes after the healing of the leper. It teaches there the dispensational lesson, that the Gentiles would enter the Kingdom and the children of the Kingdom would be cast out into the outer darkness. As Luke writes for another purpose he omits Matthew 8:11-12. Luke tells us that the Centurion sent the Jewish Elders first; when on the road to the Centurion's house, the friends of the Centurion with the message of unworthiness, met the Lord. Some have tried to explain these differences by making the two accounts, two different miracles. This is not the case at all. The account given by Matthew is more fully explained by Luke. The Centurion first sent messengers to our Lord, and afterwards he came to speak to Him in person. Matthew relates the personal interview and Luke the message. "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," is a marvelous utterance of faith. The Centurion owned Him as Lord of all, with power over all. To him He is the Creator with omnipotent power. And the Lord marvelled at him. It is an evidence of His true humanity. Twice He marvelled; here at faith and in Mark 6:6 at unbelief.

Verses 11-17

The account of the raising of the widow's son is peculiar to Luke. The story brings out the deep compassion of the Son of Man and that is why it is exclusively reported in the third Gospel. The only son of a widow had died. Here is human sorrow in the fullest sense. A widow losing her only son, her only support. He had compassion on her. How human and filled with sympathy were His words "Weep not." And the second Word He spoke in touching the bier was "Arise." And when the young man came back to life, He delivered him to his mother. "Weep not!" the word of His sympathy; "Arise" the word of His power. No wonder that the people declared, "God hath visited His people." Elijah raised the son of a

widow, but he had to humble himself and had to cry to the Lord. Elisha also raised the son of the Shunamite, but only after having stretched himself over the child. But the Lord commands and death has to release its prey at the one word. The Second Man has power to deal with sin and death and man's need is fully met.

Verses 18-35

John, perplexed with doubt, sends to Him two of his disciples. "Honest doubt never stays away from Christ, but comes to Him for solution." The disciples beheld the miracles the Lord did at that time. Then when John had evidently made shipwreck of his witness bearing, the Lord bears witness to him. He declares the greatness of his person. (Verses 27-28). All this is recorded in Matthew 11:2-15; but Luke gives an interesting addition. Two classes of people stood there. The people who had heard John, accepted his message of repentance and who had been baptized. They and the tax-gatherers justified God. The leaders of the nation rejected the counsels of God against them, they had testified to that by not being baptized by John.

Verses 36-50

The balance of this chapter is again peculiar to Luke. He is seen as the friend of sinners, who had come to seek and save that which is lost. Beautiful sight this woman so sinful, standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, so that she wet His feet with her tears! This incident must not be confounded with the similar one reported by Matthew, Mark and John; nor was the woman Mary Magdalene. She seeks shelter with her burdened soul at the feet of Him, whom the proud Pharisees called "a friend of publicans and sinners." How great must have been His compassion, how marvelous His lovingkindness, that a woman could come thus in His presence. The loveliness and attractiveness of the perfect Man as the friend of sinners is here fully seen. And the proud host, the Pharisee Simon, doubts that He is a prophet, for would He then not know what kind of a woman she is! The Son of Man at once gives him the evidence of His omniscience. Not alone does He know who the woman is, but He also knows the unspoken thoughts of Simon. The parable the Lord gives to Simon explains the great love of the woman, much had been forgiven her. The consciousness of that forgiveness had produced these blessed actions of the woman. And once more she hears from the lips of the Friend of Sinners, what countless thousands have heard spoken to their hearts by His Spirit; "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

CHAPTER 8

1. The Ministering Company 1-3.
2. The Parable of the Sower. 4-15.
3. The Parable of the Lighted Candle. 16-18
4. The Declaration of a New Relationship. 19-21.
5. The Storm on the Lake. 22-25
6. In the Country of the Gadarenes; the Maniac Healed. 26-36
7. His Rejection by the Gadarenes. 37-40.
8. The Woman With the Issue of Blood Healed. 41-48. 9. The Daughter of Jairus Raised. 49-56.

Verses 1-3

This also is reported exclusively by Luke. What wonderful preaching it must have been when He with the Apostles went about preaching! And the trophies of His power and grace were also with Him. Here we read that women ministered unto Him of their substance. What privilege was theirs to minister to Him!

Verses 4-18

The parables which follow are known to us from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The parable of the Sower is here not in the dispensational setting in which it appears in Matthew (Chapter 13). The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are reported later by Luke. The parable of the Sower is linked here with the preaching of the Word in verses 1-3.

Verses 19-56

The events which follow are also found in the Synoptics. The Storm on the Lake shows His true humanity. He is asleep. But in the threatening danger, when the helpless vessel fills with water, He knows no fear. They have to wake Him. The wind and waves obey His Word. And blessed be His Name! He is still the same. Then there is the man in his fallen pitiful condition, under the complete dominion of Satan, both in body and in soul. And once more the Son of Man shows His absolute power over Satan. The sufferer is completely healed. What a transformation took place! "The 'many devils' by whom he had been possessed were compelled to leave him. Nor is this all. Cast forth from their abode in the man's heart, we see these malignant spirits beseeching our Lord that He would 'not torment' them, or 'command them to go out into the deep,' and so confessing His supremacy over them. Mighty as they were, they plainly felt themselves in the presence of One mightier than themselves. Full of malice as they were, they could not even hurt the 'swine' of the Gadarenes until our Lord granted them permission.

CHAPTER 9:1-50

1. Christ Sends Forth the Twelve Apostles. 1-6
2. Herod Perplexed. 7-9
3. The Return of the Apostles. 10
4. The Feeding of the Five Thousand. 11-17
5. Peter's Confession of Christ. 18-21
6. The Son of Man Announces His Death and Resurrection. 22
7. Necessity of Self-Denial. 23-26
8. The Transfiguration. 27-36
9. The Demon Cast Out. 37-43
10. The Second Prediction of His Rejection. 44-45
11. Disciples Rebuked. 46-50.

Verses 1-9

The sending out of the twelve is briefly given by Luke. The full account is in Matthew. All this shows the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Matthew writing concerning the King must needs give all the details of the sending out of the Kingdom messengers. In the foreground is put here the power and authority which the Lord gave to the Apostles over all demons and to cure all diseases. Did Judas also have this power? Assuredly, for he was an Apostle. The authority and power was conferred upon them and not for any faith, virtue or merit on the Apostle's side. They went forth preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. They are the messengers of the compassionate friend of sinners. Herod here fears Him and desires to see Him, who was greater than John, whom he had beheaded. Herod saw Him later. He had desired to see Him for a long time. At last He stood before Him bound, the willing sacrifice to be led away to the cross. Herod never heard a single word

from His lips. Then the wicked King mocked. (Chapter 23:8).

Verses 10-26

The compassion and tenderness of the Lord is blessedly revealed throughout these verses. The Apostles returned and He took them away for rest. The multitude followed Him "and He received them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing." The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is reported in all the Gospels including John. He graciously supplied their need. Peter's confession is preceded by prayer. In Matthew we read the fuller confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." There also the Lord saith that it was revealed unto Peter by His Father. Luke alone tells us He prayed before. May we then not look upon the confession as an answer to the Lord's prayer?

Verses 27-50

In the transfiguration scene we see Him again in prayer. "And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening." Luke tells us of the subject of the conversation between the Lord, Moses, and Elijah. They spoke of His decease, which He should accomplish in Jerusalem. He had announced for the first time His coming suffering and death (verse 22) and that death demanded by the Law (Moses) and predicted by the prophets (Elijah), which must needs be and precede His, glory, is the great theme. Another statement is found in Luke, which is absent in Matthew and Mark. Moses and Elijah "appeared in glory"; not their own glory, but His glory. Luke also informs us that when they entered the overshadowing cloud, they feared. The Transfiguration is prophetic. Some day the Second Man, the last Adam, the head of the new creation, will appear in His Glory, and all His Saints will share that coming Glory.

IV. The journey to Jerusalem -- Chapter 9:51-19:27

CHAPTER 9:51-62

1. His Face Set Toward Jerusalem. 51-52
2. The Rejected Messengers and His Rebuke. 53-56
3. Tests of Discipleship. 57-62.

The fifty-first verse marks a new part in this Gospel. The time was come; His hour was approaching. As the perfect Man we have seen Him. As babe, as child, as man in all His loveliness we have seen Him and now the compassionate, loving One, He, who always pleased God in a perfect obedience "steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem." Coming from Galilee the messengers entered into a village of the Samaritans, who would not receive Him because His face was set toward Jerusalem, the city the Samaritans hated. James and John asked the Lord to command fire to come down from heaven to consume them as Elias did. They believed the Lord had the power to do this. They had been with Him and had seen His deeds of love and kindness and yet they could make so strange a request. He then rebuked them. Later John went again into Samaria, but manifested a far different spirit (Acts 8).

CHAPTER 10

1. The Seventy Appointed. 1-16
2. The Return of the Seventy and the True Rejoicing. 17-20
3. Jesus Rejoiced in Spirit. 21-24
4. The Question of the Lawyer. 25-29
5. The Parable of the Good Samaritan. 30-37

6. Martha and Mary. 38-42.

Verses 1-24

Seventy others are commissioned by Him to be His heralds. They were to visit every city and place, which He would visit. How great and extended the labors of the Son of Man must have been. The Gospel of the Kingdom was then heralded as a witness. And He knew that the message would be rejected. The meek and lowly One, the friend of sinners pronounces as Judge the woes upon the cities, who had already rejected the message. When the messengers returned He said unto them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." According to Revelation 12, he is still occupying the heavens and the casting out of Satan is still future. The Lord beheld this complete downfall of Satan; the work the seventy had done was but a little anticipation of that which is yet to come. Then He rejoiced. Three times we read of Him that He wept, but only once that He rejoiced. He uttered concerning Himself a great declaration, which reveals His glory. "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Only He who is very God could utter such a declaration.

Verses 25-37

The lawyer's question leads to the utterance of the parable of the good Samaritan, to answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?" The parable answers the question fully, but it also contains the most blessed Gospel truths. Jerusalem is the city of God; Jericho represents the world. The traveller is the type of humanity. Man has fallen in the awful road which leads down, fallen among thieves, naked, wounded, helpless and hopeless. The failure of the Priest and the scribe to help illustrates the inability of the law and the ordinances to save man out of his deplorable condition. The good Samaritan is the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to the place where the lost are and He alone could have compassion on him. The wine typifies His precious blood He shed to save us. The oil is the type of the Holy Spirit, who applies the blood. He takes care of fallen man found by Him. The inn is typical of the church, where the Lord through His Spirit cares for His own. The two pence are not typical of "two sacraments" but speak of the reward, which those receive, who, under the Holy Spirit, care for souls. The promised coming again with a greater reward offered is the Second Coming of our Lord. The Gospel of the Manhood records this parable exclusively.

In verses 38-42 we find another incident reported exclusively by Luke. The story of Martha and Mary is closely linked with the preceding paragraph. Martha and Mary were both disciples. Martha was busy serving the Lord, while Mary took her place at His feet and let the Lord serve her. In this He delights.

"Martha has received Christ into her house, and surely into her heart. If she is busy, she is busy serving Him; yet that does not prevent her being distracted by it. She is more: she is vexed and irritated. Mary her sister is sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus, listening to His word; and she blames even the Lord for permitting it, while she needs her help so much. But the Lord asserts that Mary has chosen the good part, and it is moreover the only needful thing: it shall not be taken from her.

But is learning of Jesus, then, the one needful thing? Is activity nothing? is service nothing? We may be sure the Lord is very far from meaning that. But if a man brings me, let us say, an apple, I do not despise it when I say, "The one thing is the tree that bears the apples."--Numerical Bible.

Twice more we find in the Gospels Mary at the feet of the Lord. When her brother Lazarus, had died, she wept at His feet and He comforted her. When she anointed Him, Mary again was at His feet. She owned Him as Prophet (Luke 10) as Priest (John 11) and as King (John 12).

CHAPTER 11

1. The Prayer Given to the Disciples 1-4.

2. The Friend at Midnight. 5-10

3. Encouragement to Pray. 11-13
4. A Demon Cast Out and the Blasphemous Accusation. 14-23
5. The Return of the Unclean Spirit. 23-26
6. The Blessedness of Hearing the Word. 27-28
7. The Sign of Jonas. 29-32
8. The Single Eye. 33-36
9. The Pharisees Exposed and Denounced. 37-44
10. The Lawyers Exposed and Denounced. 45-54.

Verses 1-13

Prayer is here more fully dealt with. We have learned how the perfect Man, the Son of God, who had taken the creature's place, made use of prayer. Again we see Him praying and when His disciples request Him to teach them to pray, He gives them the form of prayer, commonly known as "the Lord's prayer." But the better name is "the Disciples' Prayer," for the Lord Jesus had no need to pray, "forgive us our sins." Many teach that this form of prayer was given twice, once in the Sermon on the Mount and the second time here. This is of course not impossible, but far from probable. If the prayer had been previously given, why should the request be made again? The ending which appears in Matthew, "For thine is the kingdom, etc.," is omitted here as it ought to be in the Gospel of Matthew, for it was undoubtedly added by someone else. The parable which follows is peculiar to Luke. The parable was spoken to encourage perseverance in prayer, to pray without ceasing, continue in prayer, to always pray and not faint, which are all exhortations to His people. The promise contained in the thirteenth verse was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost. To plead this promise now is unscriptural. The Holy Spirit has been given; He has come and dwells in the believer.

The story of His rejection is followed much in the same way as in Matthew. Verses 24-26 are in Matthew's Gospel applied to the nation. The unclean spirit of idolatry had left them and is to return with seven others. But here the words of the Lord have a wider application, for He speaks of the state of a man. Outward reformation without true conversion and the reception of the nature from above, but brings Satan back with seven other spirits. Self-reformation cannot save.

The chapter closes with the judgments pronounced upon the Pharisees and Lawyers. Verses 37-54. He had entered the lawyer's house as his guest. When the Pharisee marvelled, that He had not washed His hands in the ceremonial way, as commanded by the traditional law, the Lord uttered these solemn woes. They remind us of Matthew 23, but a closer study reveals the fact that the words of judgment Luke reports here were uttered at another occasion entirely. The words in Matthew were uttered in Jerusalem, while the words in Luke were spoken when He was journeying towards Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 12

1. Warning Against Hypocrisy. 1-3
2. Encouragements. 4-14
3. Warning Against Covetousness. 15-21
4. Warning Against Anxiety. 22-31
5. The Disciples Comfort and Hope. 32-40

6. The Parable of the Steward. 41-48

7. The Purpose of God and the Resulting Division. 49-53

8. Concerning signs. 54-57

9. The Failure of Israel. 58-59.

Verses 1-31

Nearly all of the entire twelfth chapter is not found in the other Gospels. Perhaps the largest multitude, which ever gathered to hear the Lord, is seen here. He speaks to His disciples first of all and warns of the leaven of the Pharisees. But the warning was also meant for all who heard Him. He declares a coming day, when the hidden things shall be uncovered. Then He gives encouragement to His friends, "Be not afraid." What meaning these words have, coming from such lips! The entire first half of the chapter is taken up with warnings and encouragements to those who heed the warnings and are His friends.

Verses 32-48

He speaks of His own coming again. The little flock is assured of the kingdom. Everything else is uncertain, insecure and passing away. He is coming again and His return will bring the reward to His friends, who are obedient to His Word. They are to wait for Him. "From the wedding" is better rendered by "because of the wedding." The wedding, the marriage-feast does not precede His return, but follows that event. "He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." This is a wonderful statement. What service that will be, when He has His faithful people with Him! The Romans divided the night into four watches. The Lord speaks of the second and third watches, but does not mention the fourth. However in Matthew 14 we read that He came to His toiling servants in the fourth watch.

"He says nothing of the fourth, simply for the reason that the disciples, from that, should note that His return was by no means to be expected as late as possible; even as He does not name the first, because it would weaken the whole representation of the watchful servants. The Parousia does not come so quickly as impatience, nor yet so late as carelessness supposes, but in the very middle of the night, when the temptation to fall asleep is great and therefore must be most vigorously combated. It may even tarry longer than the servants think; but, grant that it should not take place even till the third, or should come even in the second watch of the night, whosoever perseveres faithfully at his post shall in no wise lose his reward."--Van Oosterzee.

He assures them that He will come "at an hour when ye think not." The parable of the Steward is closely linked with all this. A solemn declaration is made, found only in Luke, concerning the penalties. (Verses 47-48.) The punishment is according to the knowledge of the Lord's will. His rejection by Israel has brought for the world the results of which He speaks next.

CHAPTER 13

1. The Necessity of Repentance. 1-5.

2. The Barren Fig Tree. 6-9

3. The Healing of a Daughter of Abraham. 10-17

4. Parable of the Mustard Seed. 18-19

5. Parable of the Leaven. 20-21

6. Solemn Teachings. 22-30

7. The Answer to Herod. 31-33

8. Lament over Jerusalem. 34-35.

Verses 1-9

Luke alone gives the parable of the fig tree as well as the historical incidents preceding the parable. The absolute necessity of repentance is emphasized by the Lord. The fig tree is the nation Israel; but the individual application must not be eliminated. When there is no repentance, after God's merciful patience, the delayed judgment will be executed. Israel illustrates this fully. The tree was hewn down, though the root remains. In Matthew we read of the budding fig tree, the sign that the summer is nigh.

Verses 10-17

The healing of the daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound for eighteen years, is reported only by Luke. Attention has been called to the significance of the number 18. Upon 18 fell the tower of Siloam and the woman, who was bound for 18 years. "The number 18, which is 3 x 6 (six the number of man) speaks of evil manifested in its highest uprise"-- Numerical Bible. Satan had manifested his dreadful power over this daughter of Abraham but the Son of Man, who came to seek and to save that which is lost, has the power to deliver her. She was made straight and glorified God. The expression "daughter of Abraham" signifies that she was a believer. Satan was permitted to afflict her body; it was the same with Job. See also 1 Corinthians 5:5.

Verses 18-21

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven appear in Luke in an entirely different setting than in Matthew. We have already seen in our annotations of Matthew 13, what these two parables teach. Here in Luke they are evidently closely linked with the parable of the barren fig tree, showing that when Israel has failed and passed under the national judgment, the Kingdom of God, as resting in the hands of man, becomes like any other kingdom of the world, sheltering the unclean (fowls), and internally it is corrupted by leaven.

Solemn teachings follow in answer to the question "Lord, are there few to be saved?" The door is open, but narrow. And the door to salvation will one day be shut for those who refused to enter in. And here we find the words which were omitted by Luke in the account of the healing of the Centurion's servant. The application to the Jews, who rejected Him, and the acceptance of the Gospel by the Gentiles is self-evident. The person, whom our Lord calls "fox," most likely was Herod himself. The "today and tomorrow" refer to His great work in bearing testimony and working miracles; the third day, when He would be perfected, is the day of resurrection. Then follows His lament over Jerusalem. The consecutive teachings of this chapter, beginning with the necessity of repentance, Israel's failure, the demonstration of His power, His solemn words and finally His lament over Jerusalem are intensely interesting.

CHAPTER 14

1. The Man with the Dropsy Healed on the Sabbath. 1-6

2. The Wisdom of Humility. 7-11

3. Recompensed in Resurrection. 12-14

4. The Parable of the Great Supper. 15-24

5. Conditions of Discipleship. 25-35.

Verses 1-6

Again He heals on the Sabbath. In the house of a ruler, a Pharisee, they were watching Him. He had gone there to eat bread. What condescension! They were His enemies, yet He loved them. He healed the man with the dropsy. The question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" was answered by the very power of God.

Verses 7-14

The parable which follows, also peculiar to Luke, emphasizes the wisdom of humility. The natural man with the pride of life as a governing principle loves self-exaltation. Abasement for him follows in judgment to come; but if man humbleth himself before God, exaltation will follow. He, the Son of Man, had humbled Himself and taken the lowest place. How great is His exaltation! Then He exhorts to seek recompense at the resurrection of the just. Here is a hint on the two resurrections, which are so clearly distinguished in Scripture. The first resurrection is the resurrection of the just and includes all the Saints of God. In that resurrection there will be a reward according to works, but no sinner can work to make himself worthy of that resurrection.

Verses 15-24

The parable of the great supper is distinct from the similar one in Matthew 22:1-14. They were spoken at different occasions. The parable in Matthew has clearly marked dispensational aspects, such as the twofold offer to Israel, before and after the cross, the judgment upon Jerusalem and the calling of the Gentiles, etc. The primary object of the parable in Luke is also to show the unbelief of the Jews, especially the self-righteous Pharisees and the call of the publicans and harlots. God has mercifully provided the feast. The Kingdom had come nigh. All things are now ready. The Son of God had come in their midst. But the parable also looks forward to the finished work of the Cross. That work has made all things ready. The self-righteous among the Jews refused and brought their excuses. Then exactly that came to pass of which the Lord had spoken (verses 12-14). The publicans and harlots, the poor, maimed, blind and lame came. They could not have the excuses of the self-righteous of the nation. The call of the Gentiles is also seen in this parable: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." The doom of the rejectors is seen in verse 24. The great multitude, which followed Him then hears from His lips the conditions of true discipleship. Let no one say, as it has been said, that they are not binding today.

CHAPTER 15

1. The Murmuring Pharisees. 1-2
2. The Parable of the Lost Sheep. 3-7
3. The Parable of the Lost Coin. 8-10
4. The Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Elder Brother. 11-32.

Verses 1-10

A blessed climax of the teaching of our Lord as the Saviour and the friend of sinners is reached with this chapter, a chapter which the Saints of God have always loved and will always love. Here we find the completest illustration of the key text of Luke "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." The tax-gatherers and sinners, after hearing His words and knowing the welcome which awaited them, drew near to Him in large numbers. The murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes and their words "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" is answered by the Lord with three parables. The parables of the lost sheep, of the lost coin and of the prodigal son belong together. The lost Coin parable and the parable of the prodigal are peculiar to Luke. The Trinity is revealed in these parables seeking that which is lost. The Son is seen in the Shepherd; the Holy Spirit in the parable of the lost coin and the Father in the parable of the prodigal.

In the study of these parables it must not be overlooked that the Lord answers in the first place the murmuring Pharisees.

This however does not exclude the wider application on Gospel lines. Bengel states that in the first parable the sinner is seen as stupid; in the second as totally ignorant of himself and in the third as the daring, wilful sinner. In the parable of the Shepherd the ninety and nine do not, represent the unfallen angels, nor, as it has been suggested, inhabitants of other worlds, but the self-righteous Pharisees, who think they need no repentance. The one sheep, lost and helpless, pictures the tax-gatherers and sinners, who owned their lost condition. All must first be applied on this ground. The Son of Man had come to seek and to save. He looked for the lost; He followed them and sought them out at their tables; He ate and drank with them, so that He was called a wine-bibber. The found sheep He puts on His own shoulders; He would not leave this to a servant. The care of the saved sheep is all His own. And there is joy in heaven over one repenting sinner. It was a severe rebuke to the Pharisees, who did not rejoice when the tax-gatherers and sinners came but murmured. The second parable is of much interest and has been interpreted in various ways. We quote here the exposition as given in the "Numerical Bible" as the most satisfactory one.

"The second parable is that of the woman, in the Scripture the figure of the Church, the instrument of the Spirit. The lamp of the Word is in her hand, and she needs it in the darkness of the night, while Christ is absent. The 'house' is the circle of natural ties and relationships; for it is not just a question of public preaching, but of that testimony upon which the success of the preacher after all so much depends, and for which the whole Church, and not any class or section of it, is responsible. Good it is to realize that every soul of man, covered with the dust of sin as he may be, and hidden in the darkness of the world, belongs of right to the King's treasury, and has the King's image stamped on him, though with sore disfigurement. Claim him we may, wherever we may find him, for God to whom he belongs. This general evangelism, we may learn from the parable here, is what is the mind of the Spirit for the Church indwelt of Him. Here too there must be friends and neighbors summoned to rejoice,--angelic onlookers who are in sympathy with Him who is always the glorious Seeker, and who sets in motion all the springs of love and pity that flow anywhere in unison with His own."

In the Parable of the prodigal son is brought out again the two classes of men before whom the Lord spoke these parables. The prodigal represents the publicans, the elder son the ritualistic Pharisees. The application in the Gospel, which this parable so blessedly reveals, the condition of man as a sinner, the true repentance, the Father's joy, the welcome the returning one receives, etc., all is so well known that we need to make no further annotations. The elder son's character clearly shows that the Pharisee, self-righteous and self-sufficient, is completely in view. He has never transgressed a commandment and therefore considers himself above the poor, lost wanderer, who has returned home; he was angry. Thus the Pharisees were angry, when the Lord received the outcasts. It is strange that this parable should have been explained to mean that our Lord endorses worldly amusements and that a Christian may dance and make merry. There is no reason whatever that He has done so. The parable has, no doubt, a national meaning as well. The elder son represents the Jews and their unwillingness to see the Gentiles converted. The prodigal then is a picture of the degradation of the Gentiles.

CHAPTER 16

1. The Unjust Steward. 1-12
2. The Impossible Service. 13
3. The Deriding Pharisees Answered. 14-17
4. Concerning Divorce. 18
5. The Rich Man and Lazarus. 19-31.

Verses 1-12

Let us notice that this story was spoken to the disciples. It contains a number of difficulties. It has well been said "there are knots in it which perhaps will never be untied, until the Lord comes again. We might reasonably expect that a book written by inspiration, as the Bible is, would contain things hard to be understood. The fault lies not in the book, but in ourselves." The story of the unjust steward is used to teach wisdom in the use of earthly things. What the steward did was an unjust thing, but he acted wisely. "The lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely." Then our Lord makes the statement that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." But what is the

application? "And I say unto you, Make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it (not ye) fails, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Pages could be filled with interpretations which have been given of this statement. Many of these have been made at the expense of the grace of God, which alone fits a sinner for glory. (Godet gives a novel interpretation: "May not the disciple who reaches heaven without having gained here below the degree of development which is the condition of full communion with God, receive the increase of spiritual life, which is yet wanting to him, by means of those grateful spirits with whom he shared his temporal goods here below?") Heaven cannot be bought by the rightful use of earthly things. Man as God's steward has failed and has wasted His goods. But the disciple is to use earthly things, the mammon of unrighteousness, to a wise and advantageous purpose. The Lord's word may be paraphrased in this wise: "Use the temporal things, the mammon of unrighteousness with an eye to the future, as the steward did his, so that it will be like friends you have made." "That they may receive you" is indefinite and must be regarded to signify rather "Ye may be received." We leave this difficult passage by quoting a valuable comment on it: "On the one hand let us beware of opposing that by any use of money we can purchase to ourselves God's favor and the pardon of our sins. Heaven is not to be bought. Any such interpretation of the verse is most unscriptural. On the other hand, let us beware of shutting our eyes against the doctrine which the verse unmistakably contains. That doctrine plainly is, that a right use of our money in this world, from right motive, will be for our benefit in the world to come. It will not justify us. It will not bear the severity of God's judgment, any more than other good works. But it shall be an evidence of our grace, which shall befriend our souls. There is such a thing as 'laying up treasure in heaven,' and 'laying up a good foundation against the time to come.' (Matthew 6:20; 1 Timothy 6:19.)"--Bishop Ryle. That the whole story has a meaning connected with the elder son the Pharisee in the preceding parable must not be overlooked. The Pharisees were avaricious. After the Lord had declared the impossible service, not alone then, but in all times, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," the Pharisees, who heard all these things and who were covetous, derided him.

Verses 19-31

A solemn paragraph closes the chapter. Avoid the use of the word "parable" in connection with these verses. The Lord said, "There was a certain rich man." It is history and not a parable. The derision of the Pharisees on account of the Lord's words about the unjust steward must have been based upon their trust in the law and the promise of the law, that temporal blessings and riches were in store for all who keep the law. The story our Lord relates is aimed once more at the sneering, unbelieving, self-righteous Pharisees.

The rich man had great riches. But his riches were not the evidences of divine favor and blessing. Lazarus, the poor man, had no earthly possessions. Was his poverty an evidence of divine displeasure? Then the Lord, the omniscient Lord, draws aside the veil and reveals what is hidden from the sight of man. Both die. Lazarus is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. He had no means to make friends for himself by using the mammon of unrighteousness, so as to be welcomed in the everlasting habitations. And yet he is there. God had in His infinite grace carried him so high. Lazarus' name means "God is Helper."

The rich man also died and is in Hades (not in hell; the lake of fire opens after the judgment). He is in torment and sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. He hears that there is no relief, no hope. An impassable gulf is fixed, which separates forever the lost and the saved. Not a ray of hope is given by the Lord, that there is the slightest possibility after death for another chance. Death fixes forever the eternal condition of every human being. Whoever meddles with this solemn truth, whether a Russellite, or Restorationist or whatever name he may bear, rejects the testimony of the Son of God and charges Him with not having spoken the truth. We cannot follow the solemn story in all its details. Future punishment of the wicked, the future conscious punishment of the wicked, the future conscious and eternal punishment of the wicked is denied and sneered at today by the majority of professing Christians. But the Lord Jesus, the friend of sinners, the One who came to seek and to save what is lost, teaches beyond controversy in this solemn story, the future, conscious and eternal punishment of the wicked.

Of late one hears much that the story is a parable, that the rich man typifies the Jew, his torment, their persecutions; the poor man is the Gentile. It is an invention. The story must be forced to mean this. The careful student will soon see how impossible such an application is. Nor is the view new. It was taught by many errorists of past generations.

CHAPTER 17

1. Concerning Offenses and Forgiveness. 1-4
2. Increase of Faith and Lowly Service. 5-10
3. The Ten Lepers. 11-19
4. Concerning the Kingdom and His Second Coming. 20-37

Verses 1-19

The story of the ten lepers is only found in Luke. All were cleansed by the power of God and the nine obeyed the Word of the Lord and went to the priests (Leviticus 13-14). But the tenth did not go but instead turned back and glorified God with a loud voice and fell on his face at the feet of the Lord. He took the attitude of a worshipper; and he was a Samaritan. He turned his back upon the ceremonial law and owned the Giver of the blessing he had received. We have in this healed, worshipping Samaritan, who does not worship in the mountain of Samaria, nor in the temple in Jerusalem, an earnest of the new dispensation to come. (John 4:22-24.)

Verses 20-37

The question "when the Kingdom of God should come" is answered by the statement "the Kingdom of God is within you." The translation is faulty. The "within" means "among"; so that we read "the Kingdom of God is among you." It had appeared in their midst in the Person of the King. Then He spoke of His second coming. He reminds them of the days of Noah and the days of Lot. His coming here is His visible coming at the end of the age and not His coming for His Saints, which is a subsequent revelation. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.) Then one will be taken (in judgment as the People perished in Noah's and Lot's day) and the other left (on earth to be in the Kingdom).

CHAPTER 18

1. The Unjust Judge and the Avenging of His Elect. 1-8
2. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. 9-14
3. The Little Children and the Required Lowliness. 15-17
4. The Rich Young Ruler. 18-27
5. Rewards Promised. 28-30
6. The Renewed Prediction of His Suffering, Death and Resurrection. 31-34
7. The Blind Man near Jericho Healed. 35-43.

Verses 1-8

The parable of the unjust judge is closely connected with the preceding announcement of His second coming. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Apostasy and darkness will rule the day. But a faithful remnant of His people, His elect, will suffer and cry day and night to Him for help and deliverance. His coming will avenge them. The resources in those days will be prayer, as prayer is always the resource of the Saints of God. In the Psalms the Spirit of God has recorded the prayers of the suffering Jewish Saints during the great tribulation.

Verses 9-14

This parable also is found only in Luke. It is a continuation of the great subject of this Gospel, that the lost are saved and the self-righteous rejected. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The self-righteous Pharisee trusted in himself; pride and self-conceit are expressed in his prayer. He speaks of a negative goodness "not as other men" and then he speaks of his good works, which are even more than God demanded in His law. God did not demand tithes of all possessions. The Publican did not lift his eyes to heaven. His prayer was more than asking for mercy. It means literally translated, "God be propitiated towards me, the sinner." He felt the need of a sacrifice. It is interesting to note that the Greek word "be merciful to" is found only once more in the New Testament. In Hebrews 2:17 it is applied to our Lord "making reconciliation."

CHAPTER 19:1-27

1. The Salvation of Zacchaeus. 1-10
2. The Parable of the Ten Pounds. 11-27.

Verses 1-10

When He drew near to Jericho the Lord healed the blind beggar. The reader will find hints on the meaning of this miracle in the annotations of the Gospel of Mark. (10:46-52.) The story of Zacchaeus is not found in the other Synoptics. The Lord is now in Jericho. Zacchaeus (meaning: clean) was the chief tax-gatherer and a rich man. "He sought to see Jesus"; his desire and faith overcame all hindrances which were in his way. The rich man climbing into a sycamore tree must have brought him ridicule. Little did he know that He, whom he sought, was seeking him. The Lord knew him and called him by name. And so Zacchaeus received Him joyfully into his house, while others murmured because He was to be a guest of a sinner. But Zacchaeus, though the chief publican, was an honest man. His confession shows that. He did not say what he intended to do, but what he had done already in his past life. It was not the result of having received the Lord in his house, but Zacchaeus answered by it the accusation of those who had murmured. He was a son of Abraham, yet destitute of salvation, which he knew not with all his honesty. But the Lord had brought now Salvation to his house. Zacchaeus was lost but the Son of Man had found him.

Verses 11-27

The parable of the ten pounds was occasioned because they that heard Him thought the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. He speaks of Himself in the parable as going to a far country to receive a Kingdom and to return. In the interval His servants are to be faithful with the entrusted pounds. "Occupy till I come." The ten servants represent Christendom in the same way as the ten virgins. The one who had hidden the pound in the sweat cloth (soudarion) is called a wicked servant and represents a mere professing believer, an unsaved person. The citizens mentioned in the parable, who hated the nobleman are the Jews. (Verse 14.) The parable teaches definitely that when the Lord returns He will reward His faithful servants for their faithfulness. May it be an incentive for us to occupy till He comes.

V. In Jerusalem -- Chapter 19:28-21:38

CHAPTER 19:28-48

1. The Triumphal Entry in Jerusalem. 28-40.
2. Weeping over Jerusalem. 41-44.
3. The Purification of the Temple. 45-48.

Verses 28-40

The triumphal entry of the Lord into Jerusalem has been before us already in Matthew and Mark. He is presented as King. Luke gives an interesting addition. The multitude of disciples rejoiced and praised God for all the mighty works they had

seen. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest." The angelic announcement was "peace on earth"; here the disciples say "peace in heaven." Such will be the ultimate and glorious effect of the work of Christ, when Satan will be cast out of heaven, the heavenly inheritance redeemed (Ephesians 1:13), and the reconciliation of things in heaven (Colossians 1:20) accomplished. All this and much more will surely come, when the King-Messiah comes again. Then there will be peace on earth, peace in heaven and glory in the highest. Verses 41-48. What a scene it must have been when He saw the great city and wept over it! Before He utters the great prophecy announcing the doom of the city, He weeps. What a glimpse it gives of the loving heart of the Saviour-King, the friend of sinners! And all came as He announced. The second cleansing of the temple took place after that. See annotations on Mark 11:15-18.

CHAPTER 20

1. His Authority Demanded and His Answer. 1-8
2. Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. 9-19
3. Question about Tribute to Caesar. 20-26
4. The Question Concerning Resurrection. 27-40
5. The Question Christ Asked. 41-44
6. Beware of the Scribes! 45-47.

The events in this chapter are found in both Matthew's and Mark's Gospels. The parable of the vineyard foretells His death. He is the son, the beloved son, whom the husbandman cast out of the vineyard and killed. The rejected stone, which becomes the head of the corner (Psalm 118:22) is likewise Christ. Verse 18 shows the judgment which came upon the Jews nationally. Rejecting Christ, stumbling and falling upon that stone they were broken. It also shows the future judgment which will strike the Gentile world-powers at the close of the times of the Gentiles, when the Stone shall fall out of heaven and smite the image, which represents Gentile dominion (Daniel 2). Inasmuch as we have followed the different questions in Matthew and Mark, put to the Lord by the chief priests, scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees, to ensnare Him, no further annotations are needed here.

CHAPTER 21

1. The Widow's Mite. 1-4
2. The Destruction of the Temple Predicted. 5-6
3. The Disciple's Question Concerning the Future. 7
4. Things to Come. 8-19
5. The Destruction of Jerusalem and the World-wide Dispersion of Israel. 20-24
6. The Return of the Lord with Power and Great Glory. 25-28
7. The Fig Tree and Warnings. 29-38.

This entire chapter with the exception of the incident of the widow's mite is prophetic. Luke's account however differs in many ways from the account given of the prophetic Olivet discourse in Matthew and also that in Mark. Matthew gives the Olivet discourse in its completest form. (See Matthew 24 and 25.) He reports what the Lord had to say concerning the end of the age, the great tribulation, which concerns the Jewish believers living at that time; then in three parables He revealed

the moral conditions existing in Christendom and how He will deal with them and finally He revealed, as reported by Matthew, the judgment of the Gentile nations.

The characteristic feature of Luke's report is that he has little to say about the details of the end of the age, such as the great tribulation and what will take place during that period of time (Matthew 24:4-42). Instead of this he was led by the Spirit of God to record in the fullest way what our Lord had said concerning the fall of Jerusalem, the fate of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the nation and the duration of all this. The Lord announced that Jerusalem would be compassed by armies and that days of vengeance would come. (Verses 20-23.) There would then be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

This great prophecy was fulfilled in the year 70 A.D., when the Romans besieged Jerusalem and a million perished, besides 100,000 who were made slaves. It is one of the most awful pages in human history. So has verse 24 been fulfilled. The Jewish nation has been scattered among all the nations; Jerusalem has been trodden down by the Gentiles and is still in that state. But the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled in the future and when that comes, deliverance and restoration for Jerusalem and the nation are promised. Luke significantly tells us about the fig tree, "and all the trees." (Verse 29.) They are to shoot forth and that would be a sign of His Return. The fig tree is Israel. Who are the other trees? Other nations, who are to see a revival before the Lord comes, such as the centers of the Roman empire, Italy, Greece and Egypt. Israel and these other nations indeed "shoot forth"; from this we are to learn that great events in connection with the Kingdom of God are at hand. May we also heed the warnings with which this chapter closes.

VI. His Rejection, Suffering and Death -- Chapter 22-23

CHAPTER 22

1. The Betrayer. 1-6.
2. Preparation for the Passover. 7-13.
3. The Last Passover. 14-18.
4. The Lord's Supper Instituted. 19-20
5. The Betrayal Announced. 21-23
6. Strife for Honor; True Greatness. 24-27
7. Rewards Promised. 28-30
8. Peter and the Disciples Warned. 31-38
9. The Agony in the Garden. 39-46
10. The Betrayal and the Arrest. 47-53
11. Peter's Denial. 54-62
12. The Son of Man Buffeted and Before the Council. 63-71.

And now we reach the story of His Rejection, Suffering and Death. What pen is able to describe it all! What mind can fathom it! We shall again confine ourselves to those things which are peculiar to Luke and not repeat annotations as given in Matthew and Mark. Notice the difference in the words of the institution of the Lord's supper. Matthew and Mark have "My blood shed for many." In Luke we find the words "My body which is given for you"; "My blood which is shed for you." His love shines out fully in these words. In Luke alone we have His loving request "this do in remembrance of Me."

Oh! that His people for whom He shed His blood may never forget this beautiful word and remember Him in this simple way.

And Luke shows us the contrast between Himself and His disciples. He was about descending into the deepest depths of humiliation; sorrow and shame were before the willing victim, yea the greatest agony and death. Among them was strife, who of them should be accounted the greatest. This was the second instance of contention for preeminence recorded by Luke. (See 9:46.) Then He announced the denial of Peter. Verses 31-32 are peculiar to Luke. Satan was to sift him as wheat, but the Lord knew all about it and had prayed for him and therefore Peter could not succumb and be lost. And the Lord is the same today. He knows His own and prays for them before Satan can ever come near with his temptations. The word "when thou art converted" does not mean that Peter was unconverted. It has the meaning "when thou hast returned back."

There is also a marked difference in the account Luke gives of Gethsemane from the accounts in Matthew and Mark. Luke tells us of an angel who strengthened Him. How could an angel strengthen Him, who is the Creator of the angels? He certainly could not strengthen His holy soul. That an angel strengthened Him must belong to His deep humiliation.

"But the body suffers, and presently the strain upon it is seen in the 'sweat, as it were great drops of blood,' that fall down upon the ground. Laborer for God and man as He is, His labor is a warfare also: the enemy is here, as He presently says to those who come to apprehend Him: 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' The Seed of the woman is planting His heel upon the head of the old serpent, but His heel is bruised in doing this. In the weakness of perfect Manhood He suffers, and conquers by suffering" (F.W. Grant).

Then follows the Betrayal with a kiss, the arrest of the Son of Man, Peter's Denial. Luke alone tells us that the Lord looked upon denying Peter; what look that must have been! The chapter ends with the cruel treatment of the Son of Man, the Friend of sinners, who had come to seek and to save that which is lost, received from man, His glorious self-witness and unjust condemnation by the council.

CHAPTER 23

1. The son of man before Pilate and Herod. 1-12
2. Pilate Yields to the People's Will; Barabbas Freed and the Son of man Condemned. 13-26
3. The Crucifixion of the Son Of Man. 27-38
4. The Penitent Thief. 39-43
5. The Death of the Son of Man. 44-46
6. The Testimony of the Centurion. 47-49
7. The Burial. 50-56.

Verses 1-12

Before Pilate the Son of Man is accused as a perverter of the nation and as an enemy of the Roman government. They had attempted to ensnare Him with the question of the tribute money and failed so miserably in it. Their motive stands now uncovered. Pilate asks Him concerning His Kingship, which the Lord answered affirmatively. Thus He witnessed to two facts, His Sonship and His Kingship. Luke tells us what Matthew and Mark omit, that Pilate sent Him to Herod. The silence of the Son of Man standing before that wicked king is very solemn. Then He is mocked by Herod and his soldiers. Herod and Pilate became united in rejecting Christ. See how this fact is used in the first prayer meeting after the church had been formed. Acts 4:23-30.

Verses 13-38

The weakling Pilate is helpless. Their voices prevail. "Away with this man!"; "Release unto us Barabbas!"--"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" These are the cries now heard. Pilate then gave the awful sentence, that it should be done to Him as they required. The lamenting women and the Lord's answer is peculiar to Luke. "Weep not for me!" Blessed words of His great love. He looked for no sympathy from man. Frail women were moved to pity. He is the green tree; they were the dry wood. The people's wrath fanned by Satan's power was spending itself upon Him, the green and fruitful tree. How awful it would be when the dry wood, the unsaved masses, would be exposed to the fires of wrath and persecution. Forty years later the "dry wood" burned fiercely in the siege of Jerusalem. When they reach the place called "Calvary" (the skull: Luke only gives the name "Calvary" because it is the Gentile Gospel), the Latin, Gentile name for Golgotha,* they crucified Him. Luke omits much which is more fully given in the other Synoptics; we read nothing of the cry of the forsaken One. But Luke tells us of the blessed prayer which Matthew and Mark omit, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And His last word, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit," is also given exclusively by Luke. All this is in blessed keeping with the character of this Gospel.

Verses 39-56

The story of the dying thief and his salvation is also characteristic to Luke. The great lesson of the three crosses is so familiar that it needs no lengthy annotations. The two classes, the saved and the unsaved, are represented by the two thieves. He, the Lamb of God paying the penalty of sinners, is in the midst. The way the penitent was saved is the only way in which man can be saved. He could do no good works; he could not get baptized or perform anything else. All he could do was to cast himself in faith as a lost sinner upon the Lord. Nor was his salvation a life-long, progressive work (as some teach on salvation); it was instantaneous. Nor was there any "purgatory" for him. He expected to be remembered in the Kingdom to come. Instead of that he hears, "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise." The attempt by soul-sleepers, restorationists and others to put the comma after "today" is a deceptive invention to bring the Word of God into line with their evil doctrines.

"This short prayer contained a very large and long creed, the articles whereof are these.

1. He believed that the soul died not with the body of man;--
2. That there is a world to come for rewarding the pious and penitent, and for punishing the impious and impenitent;--
3. That Christ, though now under crucifying and killing tortures, yet had right to a kingdom;--
4. That this kingdom was in a better world than the present evil world;--
5. That Christ would not keep this kingdom all to himself;--
6. That He would bestow a part and portion hereof on those that are truly penitent;--
7. That the key of this kingdom did hang at Christ's girdle, though He now hung dying on the cross;--
8. That he does roll his whole soul for eternal salvation upon a dying Saviour" (Ness).

Then the Son of Man cried with a loud voice ere He dismissed His spirit and the Centurion, in keeping with this Gospel, bears witness, that He was a righteous Man.

VII. His Resurrection and Ascension

CHAPTER 24

1. The Resurrection. 1-12

2. The Walk to Emmaus; the Appearance of the Risen Son of Man. 13-35
3. The Appearance to the Eleven. 36-45
4. The Commission. 46-48
5. The Ascension. 49-53.

The account of the Resurrection in Luke's Gospel has also its characteristic features. He alone reports the full account of the walk to Emmaus. It is a precious story showing forth the fact that the risen One is the same tender, loving, sympathizing friend of His own. He joined Himself to the two disciples, who had left Jerusalem. Their hearts were filled with Sadness and perplexity. He Himself drew near and their eyes were holden that they could not recognize Him. In a perfectly human way He joined Himself to them and asked them about their troubles. Then He reproved them for their unbelief and opened the Scriptures unto them. Constrained by them, He abides with them, as He always will with those who belong to Him. In the breaking of bread, their eyes were opened and they knew Him and He vanished from them. They returned to Jerusalem where they found abundant proof that the Lord is risen indeed.

The appearance to Simon is not fully made known. What took place between the Lord and the disciple who failed Him is a blessed secret between them. He then appeared again with His gracious "Peace be unto you." He showed them His hands and feet. He had a body of flesh and bones. He was not a phantom, but a real man. His body was real for He ate fish and honeycomb. All this belongs properly to the Gospel of the Manhood. It is the fullest demonstration of His physical resurrection. All the wicked "isms," including Russellism and Christian Science, which deny His physical resurrection stand here fully convicted.

It may be well to mention here the twelve distinct appearances of our Lord after His resurrection. He appeared:

1. To Mary Magdalene alone. Mark 16; John 20:14.
2. To the women returning from the sepulchre. Matthew 28:9-10
3. To Simon Peter alone. Luke 24:34
4. To the two disciples going to Emmaus. Luke 24:13, etc.
5. To the apostles at Jerusalem, except Thomas who was absent. John 20:19
6. To the apostles at Jerusalem, a second time, when Thomas was present. John 20:26-29. 7. At the sea of Tiberias, when seven disciples were fishing. John 21:1
8. To the eleven disciples, on a mountain in Galilee. Matthew 28:16
9. To above five hundred brethren at once. 1 Corinthians 15:6
10. To James only. 1 Corinthians 15:7
11. To all the apostles on Mount Olivet at His ascension. Luke 24:51. 12. To Paul as an untimely birth. 1 Corinthians 15:8-9.

Three times we are told that His disciples touched Him after He rose. Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:27. Twice we are told that He ate with them. Luke 24:42; John 21:12-13,

The Gospel of Luke ends with the commission given to His disciples and the ascension of the Lord "while He blest them."

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelien

Introduction

The fourth Gospel has always been ascribed to the beloved disciple, the Apostle John. He was one of the sons of Zebedee. His mother Salome was especially devoted to the Lord. (See Luke 8:3; 23:55 and Mark 16:1.) He knew Him from the beginning of His ministry and had followed Him with much love and faithfulness, and seems to have been the most beloved of the Lord. He never mentions himself in the Gospel by name, but nevertheless speaks of himself, as the disciple whom Jesus loved (Chapters 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24). With James and Peter he was singled out to witness the transfiguration and to go with the Lord to the garden of Gethsemane. The three also were present when the Lord raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:37). John was likewise an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ (19:26, 35).

The Johannine Authorship.

The Johannine Authorship of the fourth Gospel is proven by the testimony of the so-called church-fathers. Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, and above all, Irenaeus, all speak of this Gospel as the work of the Apostle John. Other ancient authorities might be added. Of great value is the testimony of the two most pronounced enemies of Christianity, Porphyry and Julian. Both speak of the Gospel of John and neither one doubted that the Apostle John wrote this last Gospel. Had there been any evidence against the Johannine authorship we may rest assured that these two prominent adversaries would have made good use of it to reject the authenticity of the Gospel which emphasizes the absolute Deity of Christ.

The most interesting and conclusive evidence for the Johannine authorship is furnished by Irenaeus and Polycarp. Polycarp had known the Apostle John personally and Irenaeus knew Polycarp. In a letter to his friend Florinus, Irenaeus wrote as follows:--

"I can describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and his manner of life, and his personal appearance, and the discourses which he held before the people, and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord, and about His miracles, and about His teaching, Polycarp as having received them from eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, would relate altogether in accordance with the Scriptures."

Now Irenaeus who had known Polycarp the friend and companion of the Apostle John, speaks of the Gospel of John as the work of the Apostle John; he treats the entire fourth Gospel as a well-known and long used book in the church. He does not mention what authority he had for doing this. There was no need for it in his day, for everybody knew that this Gospel had been written by John. "When Irenaeus who had conversed with Polycarp, the friend of the Apostle John, quotes this Gospel as the work of the Apostle, we may fairly presume that he had assured himself of this by the testimony of one so well capable of informing him" (Dean Alford, Greek N.T.) This strongest evidence for the Johannine authorship has been ably stated by R. W. Dale of Birmingham in the following words: "Irenaeus had heard Polycarp describe his intercourse with John and the rest who had seen the Lord; this must have been long after John's death, perhaps as late as A.D. 145, or even A.D. 150, for Irenaeus lived into the third century. Was the Fourth Gospel published before that time? Then Polycarp must have spoken of it; if John had not written it, Polycarp would have denied that it was genuine; and Irenaeus, who revered Polycarp, would never have received it. But if it was not published before that time, if it was unknown to John's friend and disciple forty or fifty years after John's death, then, again, it is incredible that Irenaeus should have received it.

"Polycarp's martyrdom was in the year A.D. 155 or A.D. 156. He had known John; and for more than fifty years after the death of John he was one of the trustees and guardians of John's memory. During a great part of that time he was the most conspicuous personage among the Churches of Asia Minor. Nor did he stand alone. He lived to such an advanced age, that he probably survived all the men who had listened with him to John's teaching; but for thirty or forty years after John's death there must have been a large number of other persons who would have associated themselves with him in rejecting a Gospel which falsely claimed John's authority. While these persons lived, such a Gospel would have had no chance of reception; and for thirty years after their death, their personal friends, who had heard them speak of their intercourse with John, would have raised a great controversy if they had been asked to receive as John's a Gospel of which the men who had listened to John himself had never heard, and which contained a different account of our Lord from that which John had given. But within thirty years after the martyrdom of Polycarp our fourth Gospel was universally regarded by the church as having a place among the Christian Scriptures, and as the work of the Apostle John. The conclusion seems irresistible; John must have written it."

The Defeat of the Critics.

The Johannine authorship of this Gospel was first doubted by an English clergyman by name of Evanson, who wrote on it in 1792. In 1820 Prof. Bretschneider followed in the history of the attack upon the authorship of this Gospel. Then came the Tübingen school, Strauss and Baur. Baur, the head of the Tübingen school gave the year 170 as the date when the Gospel of John was written; others put the date at 140; Keim, another critic, at 130; Renan between 117 and 138 A.D. But some of these rationalists were forced to modify their views. The Tübingen school was completely defeated and is now the dead thing of the past. We could fill many pages with the views and opinions of these critics and the answers, which able scholars who maintain the orthodox view, have given to them. This, we are sure, is not needed for true believers. The ripest and the best scholarship declares now that the fourth Gospel was written by John. Well said Neander, "this Gospel, if it be not the work of the Apostle John, is an insoluble enigma."

While the correct year in which the Gospel of John was written cannot be given, it seems quite evident that it was about the year 90 A.D.

The Purpose of the Gospel of John.

Modern critics of this Gospel have opposed the genuineness of it on the ground of the radical diversity between the views of the Person of Christ and His teachings as presented in the Gospel of John and the Synoptics. Such a diversity certainly exists, but it is far from being an evidence against the genuineness of this Gospel. It is an argument for it.

The synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, were already in existence for several decades and their contents known throughout the church. If an uninspired writer, some other one than John the Apostle, had undertaken to write another Gospel, such a writer would, in some way at least, have followed the story, which the Synoptics so closely follow. But the Gospel of John is, as already stated, radically different from the three preceding Gospels, and yet no critic can deny that the Gospel of John reveals the same wonderful Person who is the theme of the other Gospel records. As we have seen Matthew wrote the Jewish Gospel describing our Lord as the King; Mark makes Him known as the true Servant, and Luke pictures the Lord as the perfect Man. Thus the Synoptics emphasize His true humanity and show Him forth as the minister of the circumcision. The first two Gospels at least belong as much to the Old Testament as they belong to the New. True Christianity is not fully revealed in these Gospels. They move on Jewish ground. And what had taken place when finally the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle John to write his Gospel? The nation had completely rejected their Lord and King. The doom predicted by the Lord Jesus had fallen upon Jerusalem. The Roman army had burned the city and the temple. The Gentiles had come into the vineyard and the nation's dispersion among all the nations had begun. The facts are fully recognized by the Spirit of God in John's Gospel. This we find on the very threshold of this Gospel. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). That Judaism was now a thing of the past is learned from the peculiar way in which the Passover-feast is mentioned. "And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh" (6:4; also 2:13; 11:55). The Sabbath and the Feast of Tabernacles are spoken of in the same way (5:1; 7:2). Such statements, that the divinely given feasts were but "feasts of the Jews," are not found in the Synoptics. In John's Gospel these statements show that we are outside of Judaism. Hebrew names and titles are translated also and the Gentile meaning is given. (Messiah, which is interpreted Christ. 1:41. Rabbi, which is to say, being interpreted, Master. 1:38. The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. 19:17, etc.) This is another evidence that Judaism is no longer in view.

But something else had happened since the three first Gospels had been written. The enemy had come in perverting the truth. Wicked apostates and anti-Christian teachers asserted themselves. They denied the Person of the Lord, His essential Deity, the virgin birth, His finished work, His physical resurrection, in one word, "the doctrine of Christ." A flood of error swept over the church. (The Epistles of John, besides the early Christian literature, bear witness to this fact. See First John 2:18-23; 4:1-6. Men were scattering the anti-Christian doctrines everywhere so that the Spirit of God demanded the severest separation from such. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not in your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (Second John 10-11). An exhortation which is in force for all times.)

"Gnosticism" was corrupting the professing church everywhere. This system spoke of the Lord Jesus as occupying the highest rank in the order of spirits; they also denied the redemption by His blood and the gift of God to believing sinners, that is, eternal life. God in His infinite wisdom held back the pen of the Apostle John till these denials had matured and then he wrote under divine guidance the final Gospel in which the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-Begotten, the Second Person of the Godhead, is made known in the fullness of His Glory. Linked with this marvelous picture of Him, Who is the true God and the Eternal Life, is the other great truth made known in the fourth Gospel. Man is dead, destitute of life; he must be born again and receive life. And this eternal life is given by the Son of God to all who believe on Him. It is communicated as a present and abiding possession, dependent on Him, Who is the source and the Life as well. At the same time the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, is revealed in this Gospel as He is not revealed in the Synoptics. The Gospel which reveals the Eternal Life is necessarily the Gospel in which the Holy Spirit as the Communicator, Sustainer and Perfecter is fully made known. The Gospel of John is therefore the New Testament Gospel, the good news that Grace and Truth have come by Jesus Christ. It makes known what is more fully revealed in the doctrinal Epistles.

The last chapter in which we hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak, before His passion, is the seventeenth chapter. He speaks to the Father in the great prayer rightly called "the high-priestly prayer." In it He touches upon all the great truths concerning Himself and His own made known in this Gospel, and we shall also find that all the great redemption truths given in their fullness by the Holy Spirit in the Epistles, are clearly revealed in this prayer.

John's Own Testimony.

At the close of the twentieth chapter of this Gospel we find John's own testimony concerning the purpose of this Gospel. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through (in) His Name." Thus the twofold purpose of the fourth Gospel is given by the Apostle:--Christ the Son of God and the Life He gives to all who believe.

The characteristic features of this Gospel are too numerous to mention in this introductory word. We shall point them out in the annotations.

The Division of the Gospel of John

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (3:16). This verse may be given as the key-text of this Gospel, while the prominent words are: Life; Believe; Verily.

Different divisions of this Gospel have been suggested. In its structure it has been compared to the three divisions of the temple. The outer court (Chapter 1-12); the Holy Part (13-16); the Holiest (17-21). Others have used chapter 16:28 to divide the Gospel; "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." This is unquestionably the order of events in the Gospel of John. He came forth from the Father (1:1-18); He came into the world (1:19-12); He left the world and has returned to the Father (13-21). Keeping the great purpose of this Gospel in view we make a three-fold division.

I. The Only-begotten, the Eternal Word; His Glory and His Manifestation. Chapter 1:1-2:22.

II. Eternal Life Imparted; what it is and what it Includes. Chapter 2:23-17.

III. "I lay down My life, that I might take it again Chapter 18-21.

First then we behold Him, the Only Begotten, the Creator of all things, the Life and the Light of men, in His full glory. The Eternal Word was made flesh and manifested Himself among men. This is followed by the main section of the Gospel. It begins with the story of Nicodemus in which the absolute necessity of the new birth, the reception of eternal life by faith in the Son of God, is emphasized; it ends with the great summing up of all He taught concerning eternal life and salvation, in the great prayer of Chapter 17. Chapters 3-17 contain the progressive revelation concerning eternal life. The Reception and assurance of it, the Holy Spirit as the Communicator, the provisions for that life, the fruits of it, the goal of it, etc., we can trace in these chapters. In the third part we find the description of how He laid down His life and took it again in resurrection.

Analysis and Annotations

I. The Only-begotten, the Eternal Word; His Glory and His Manifestation -- Chapter 1:1-2:22

CHAPTER 1

1. The Word: the Creator, the Life and the Light. 1-4.
2. The Light and the Darkness. The Light not Known. 5-11.
3. The Word Made Flesh and Its Gracious Results. 12-18.
4. The Witness of John. 19-34.
5. Following Him and Dwelling With Him. 35-42.
6. The Next Day. Nathanael's Unbelief and Confession. 43-49.
7. The Promise of Greater Things. 50-51.

Majestic is the beginning of this Gospel. Hundreds of pages might be written on the opening verses and their meaning would not be exhausted. They are inexhaustible. The name of our Lord as "the Word" (Logos) is exclusively used by the Apostle John. The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the days of the Apostle John, also speaks of the Word. Critics have therefore claimed that the Apostle copied from Philo and reproduced his mystical Jewish philosophy. However, this theory has been exploded. Professor Harnack, the eminent German scholar, states "the Logos of John has little more in common with the Logos of Philo than the name." It is significant that the rabbinical paraphrases on the Old Testament (Targumim) speak hundreds of times of the Lord as "the Word" (Memra). These ancient Jewish paraphrases describe Jehovah, when He reveals Himself, by the term "Memra," which is the same as the Greek "Logos"--"the Word." Genesis 3:8 they paraphrased "they heard the Word walking in the garden." These Jewish comments ascribe the creation of the world to the Word. It was "the Word" which communed with the Patriarchs. According to them "the Word" redeemed Israel out of Egypt; "the Word" was dwelling in the tabernacle; "the Word" spake out of the fire of Horeb; "the Word" brought them into the promised land. All the relationship of the Lord with Israel is explained by them as having been through "the Word." In the light of the opening verses of the Gospel of John these Jewish statements appear more than interesting.* (These paraphrases in the form we possess them were written in Aramaic about 300 A.D. But long before they were written they must have existed as traditions among the Jewish people.) The Only Begotten is called "The Word" because He is the express image of God, as the invisible thought is expressed by the corresponding word. He is the revealer and interpreter of the mind and will of God.

"In (the) beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Three great facts are made

known concerning our Lord. 1. He is eternal. He did not begin to exist. He has no beginning, for "in the beginning was the Word." He ever was. Before time began and matter was created, He was. 2. He was and is a Person distinct from God the Father, yet one with Him. "The Word was with God." 3. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, for we read "The Word was God." He could therefore not be a being, a creature like the angels. The verses which follow add to this the fact that He is the Creator of all things and the Source of all light and life. Here is the most complete refutation of the wicked teachings concerning the Person of our Lord, which were current in the days of the Apostle, which have been in the world ever since and which will continue to exist till the Lord comes. Arianism, which makes our Lord a Being inferior to God, is answered. So is Socinianism, Unitarianism, Russellism, International Bible Student Association, which teach that Christ was not very God, but a man. Well has it been said in view of the revelation contained in the first verse: "to maintain in the face of such a text, as some so called 'Christians' do, that our Lord Jesus Christ was only a man, is a mournful proof of the perversity of the human heart." And in Him was life, which must be applied to spiritual life. Spiritual life and light is impossible apart from the second Person of the Godhead. The commentator Bengel makes a helpful statement on the opening verses of this chapter. "In the first and second verses of this chapter mention is made of a state before the creation of the world; in the third verse, the world's creation; in the fourth, the time of man's uprightness; in the fifth, the time of man's decline and fall."

John the forerunner is in this Gospel presented to bear witness of the Light. How this reveals the darkness which is in the world that He, Who is the Life and the Light, needed one to announce His coming! "The true light was that which, coming into the world, lighteth every man." (Verse 9; correct translation.) And when He came into the world He had made, the world knew Him not. Even His own, to whom He came, received Him not. This is His rejection by Israel, which in detail is described in the first three Gospels.

Verses 12 and 13 make known the gracious results for those, who receive Him, who believe on His name. The world had not known its Creator; Israel had rejected Him. After the great work of the Cross had been accomplished, the work done for guilty man, the good news is made known. As many as receive Him, to them He gives the right to be the children of God. The new birth is here mentioned for the first time; it is the communication of the divine nature by believing on His name. Believing on Him, receiving Him, we are begotten again and are therefore the children of God. Of this nothing is said in the preceding Gospels. The Gospel of John begins where the others end. The authorized version is incorrect in having "sons of God." (The same error appears in First John 3:2.) John always speaks of "children" not of "sons." The expression "children of God" denotes the fact that we are God's born ones, born by the new birth into the family of God. "Sons of God" we are called in view of our destiny in Christ and with Him. As sons of God we are also the heirs of God and fellow-heirs of Jesus Christ. Nowhere is it said that we are heirs of God because we are children of God. Our Lord is never called a child of God, for He is not born of God as we are; He is "Son." (Acts 4:30 is incorrect; not "holy child Jesus," but "holy servant.") Verse 14 gives the fact of His incarnation. Here then we read what the Word became. It is almost impossible to believe that men who claim scholarship, who deny the fact of the incarnation, can state as they do, that the Gospel of John has nothing to say on this great foundation truth of our faith. These apostates must be blinded. The great mystery is made known here as it is in Matthew and in Luke. The Eternal Word, the Word which ever was, the Word which is God, became flesh. He became so by the union of two perfect and distinct natures in one Person. His person however cannot be divided. And when He became flesh, took on the creature's form, He did not cease to be very God; He emptied Himself of His outward glory, but not of His Deity. He became truly man, but He was holy, sinless; not alone did He not sin, but He could not sin. There is an ancient Latin statement which is worth repeating. It represents "the Word having become flesh as saying: "I am what I was, that is God"--"I was not what I am, that is Man"--"I am now called both, God and Man." In Him they beheld His glory, the glory of the Only Begotten, full of grace and truth. Grace and truth came by Him. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declared Him, Whom no one hath seen at any time. These are great statements. The word "grace" is found here for the first time in the New Testament. And He, the Incarnate Word, and He alone is full of Grace and Truth. Out of His fullness have we all received, and grace upon grace. It is all grace, that those receive from Him who believe on His name.

The witness of John the forerunner is different from his witness and preaching as given by the Synoptics. They report mostly his testimony to the nation. Here we read when he saw Jesus coming to him, he saith, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." (Often Christians quote "sins of the world." If our Lord had taken away the sins of the world, the whole world would be saved. Our Lord only bore the sins of those who believe on Him. All who do not believe die in their sins and are lost.) He knew that He Who came to him was to be the Sin-bearer. He knew that He is the true Sacrifice for sin, the true Passover-Lamb, the Lamb which Isaiah predicted. And he testified that the Lamb of God

was to take away (not taking away then, or has taken away) the sin of the world. The Lamb of God had to die and the ultimate results of His death are announced in this testimony. They have not yet come, but will be realized in the new heaven and the new earth, when all things are made new.

Beginning with verse 35 we read what happened the next day after John had given his testimony concerning the Lamb of God. The results of that testimony now appear. Once more John points to Him: "Behold the Lamb of God." He, who was the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, directs his disciples to the Lord. The two disciples heard him speak and followed Jesus. These are the blessed steps: speaking the message, hearing (and in hearing believing) then following the Lord. And He knew them and their hearts' desire. His grace was drawing them to Himself. Their question, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" is answered by that most blessed invitation, "Come and see." These are the first words of our Lord besides His question, written in this Gospel. He wanted them to know Him, to be in communion with Himself. They abode with Him that day. It foreshadows the results of the Gospel of Grace. The unmentioned place where they dwelt with Him is typical of the heavenly place where He is now. In faith we see where He abides, and by faith we know we are there in Him. It is a beautiful picture of the gathering which takes place throughout this Gospel-age. He is the Center, and "Come and see" are still His gracious words to all who hear and believe. And how Andrew at once testified and brought his brother Simon to Jesus!

Verses 43-49 unfold another picture. Nathanael (gift of God) would not believe. Philip had testified to him "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael under the fig tree, where the Lord had seen him, is the type of the remnant of Israel. When the Lord spoke to him he owned Him as the Son of God, the King of Israel. So all Israel in a future day will confess Him. Notice the first day, when the first company is gathered to abide with Him (typical of this age and the gathering of a heavenly company); then the second day, when the Lord reveals Himself to unbelieving Nathanael (typical of the conversion of the remnant of Israel).

The last two verses of this marvelous chapter will find their fulfillment in that day when heaven is opened. Then greater things will take place. The angels of God will be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. It will take place when He comes the second time, when Israel acknowledges Him as their King and as the Son of God.

CHAPTER 2:1-22

1. The Marriage in Cana. 1-11.

2. The Temple Cleansed. 12-22.

The second chapter gives the record of the first miracle reported in this Gospel. He manifested His omniscience in the previous chapter and here, in turning water into wine, He reveals Himself as the omnipotent Creator. What harmony there is between the opening of the first two chapters of the Gospel of John. The first chapter speaks of Him as the Creator of all things and in the second chapter He manifests the power of the Creator. He needed no wine, no grapes, no mellowing process, to furnish the best wine. He but commanded and it was so. This is omnipotence. In verse 17 of the previous chapter there is a contrast between Moses representing the law dispensation and our Lord Jesus Christ through whom grace and truth have come. The first miracle Moses did, was turning water into blood, typical of the ministration of the law unto death; the first miracle of our Lord turns water into wine, which is typical of joy and the ministration of Grace which is unto life.

The many applications and lessons of the marriage in Cana and the changing of water into wine we have to omit. But we call attention to the dispensational aspect. The third day* mentioned connects with the preceding chapter. (The numbers 3 and 7 are prominent in this Gospel. Three times the Lord went into Galilee, three times into Judea; three passovers are mentioned, etc. There are seven signs or miracles, seven times the Lord speaks "I am"; seven times the phrase "These things have I spoken unto you, etc." is used.) On the first day the two disciples abode with the Lord. On the second day unbelieving Nathanael confessed Him as Son of God and King of Israel. On the third day there was a marriage. The third day clearly indicates the time of Israel's blessing and restoration. Beautiful is the predicted and still future confession of Israel: "After two days will He revive us, in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight." (Hosea 6:1-3). The marriage typifies the restored relationship of the Lord with Israel. That is why the mother of Jesus (type of Israel) and His disciples (those who come with Him to the marriage) are mentioned. And this miracle is spoken of as the "beginning

of miracles," when He manifested His glory. When He comes again and changes existing conditions, when Israel enters into the promised and blessed relationship, when He manifests His glory, then the wine of joy will not fail. Better things are promised and better things will come, when that blessed day appears. But "His hour is not yet come." It will surely come.

The words of rebuke to Mary clearly show that she erred and was as fallible as any other woman. The Lord rebuked her because He did not want her to interfere with Him and His work. "She erred here, perhaps from an affectionate desire to bring honor to her Son, as she erred on other occasions. The words before us were meant to remind her that she must henceforth leave our Lord to choose His own times and modes of acting. The season of subjection to her and Joseph was over. The season of His public ministry had at length begun. In carrying on that ministry, she must not presume to suggest to Him. The utter contrariety of this verse to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church about the Virgin Mary is too palpable to be explained away. She was not without error and sin, as Romish writers have dared to assert, and was not meant to be prayed to and adored. If our Lord would not allow His mother even to suggest to Him the working of a miracle, we may well suppose that all Roman Catholic prayers to the Virgin Mary, and especially prayers entreating her to 'command her Son,' are most offensive and blasphemous in His eyes." (J.C. Ryle.)

The purging of the temple is closely connected with the marriage and miracle of Cana. When He comes again the Father's house, the temple, will be cleansed. "Yea every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts ... and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite (which means translated: merchantman) in the house of the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 14:21). This is the first cleansing of the temple, mentioned exclusively by John. The synoptic Gospels report the cleansing which occurred at the close of His ministry. He manifested in it His authority as the Son of God, and Psalm 69:9 was fulfilled in His action. (The whole transaction is a remarkable one, as exhibiting our Lord using more physical exertion, and energetic bodily action, than we see Him using at any other period of His ministry. A word, a touch, or the reaching-forth of a hand, are the ordinary limits of His actions. Here we see Him doing no less than four things:-- (1) Making the scourge;--(2) Driving out the animals;--(3) Pouring out on the ground the changers' money;--(4) Overthrowing the tables. On no occasion do we find Him showing such strong outward marks of indignation, as at the sight of the profanation of the temple. Remembering that the whole transaction is a striking type of what Christ will do at His second coming, we may get some idea of the deep meaning of that remarkable expression, "The wrath of the Lamb." (Revelation 6:16)--Expository Thoughts on John.)

Then He spoke of His coming death and resurrection in a veiled form. The Jews and His disciples did not understand what temple He meant. He spoke of His own body. "In three days I will raise it up." His resurrection was both through the power of God and by Himself. God raised Him up and He raised Himself up. This statement properly belongs to this Gospel in which we behold Him as the Son of God. The same statement we find in chapter 10:18--"I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again."

II. Eternal Life Imparted: What it is and What it Includes -- Chapter 2:23-17

The second part of this Gospel contains the blessed teachings the Son of God gave concerning eternal life, how it is imparted and what it includes. Everything in these chapters is new. The story of Nicodemus, the woman at Sychar's well, the healing of the impotent man, the discourses of our Lord, etc., are not reported by the synoptic Gospels. There is not a word of the Sermon on the Mount reported by John; the many miracles, so significantly arranged in Matthew, are omitted (except the feeding of the 5000); nor do we find a single parable concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. The progressive revelation concerning eternal life will be brought out in the annotations. As already stated the teachings begin with the new birth, in which eternal life is imparted, and end with the destiny of those who are born again. This is revealed in His high priestly prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

CHAPTER 2:23-3:36

1. The Many Who Believed on Him. 2:23-25.

2. Nicodemus and the New Birth. 3:1-8.

3. How the New Birth is Accomplished. 9-21.

4. The Last Testimony of John. 22-36.

He worked many miracles in Jerusalem, which are unreported by John. Many therefore believed in His name, but the Omniscient One knew that they were only convinced, but their hearts had not been touched and so they did not receive Him as the Son of God. But there was one who was more deeply exercised, an earnest, seeking soul, Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night and addressed Him as Rabbi, acknowledging that He was a teacher come from God. The Lord did not permit him to go on with his address nor to state the object of his visit. The Lord treated him in an abrupt, almost discourteous, way and informed him at once of the absolute necessity of the new birth. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again (literally: born from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Not teaching, mere knowledge, was the need Nicodemus had to see the Kingdom, but to be born from above.

But what Kingdom does our Lord mean? It refers primarily to the Kingdom of the Old Testament, promised to Israel. When that Kingdom comes, with the Return of the Lord, only those of Israel will enter in who are born again. The unbelieving and apostate mass of Jews will be excluded from that earthly, millennial Kingdom. Only the believing remnant inherits that Kingdom to come. This may be learned from Ezekiel 36 and Isaiah 4:3, and other passages. That is why the Lord said to Nicodemus: "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

But the truth our Lord gave to Nicodemus has a wider application. Man is spiritually dead, destitute of spiritual life. In order to enter the Kingdom of God, to be in the presence of God, man must be born anew. Such a statement is nowhere found in the preceding Gospels. In the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Eternal Life, it is put into the foreground. Nicodemus is the only person to whom the Lord spoke of the absolute necessity of the new birth. He never made such a statement to the publicans and the harlots. And who was Nicodemus? A Pharisee, and therefore an extremely religious man. A ruler of the Jews, which necessitated a moral life. The teacher of Israel, one who possessed much learning. Religiousness, morality, education and culture are insufficient to save man and give him a place in the Kingdom of God. The new birth is the one thing needed. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The flesh is the old nature which every human being brings into the world; it is a fallen, a corrupt nature and can never be anything else. And "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:8). The natural man may do anything he pleases, become religious and philanthropic, but he cannot please God. What then is the new birth? It is not reformation. Nor is it, as so often stated, an action of the Holy Spirit to make an evil nature good. The flesh cannot be changed into something better. The new birth is the impartation of a new nature, the divine nature, by the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This new nature is absolutely holy, as the old nature is absolutely corrupt. This new nature is the only thing which fits man to be in the presence of God.

But what is the meaning of "water" in verse 5? "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." The water is claimed by ritualists to mean baptism. If a little water is put upon the head of an infant, they would have us believe, regeneration takes place. Others hold upon this statement of our Lord that the water is Christian baptism, and that therefore water-baptism is necessary to salvation. But the words of our Lord have nothing whatever to do with baptism. (Ezekiel 36:25-27 must be linked with John 3:5 and must be considered here as a national promise to Israel, how they will enter the Kingdom. But the verses in Ezekiel have absolutely nothing whatever to do with baptism. To apply them thus is ridiculous.) The water cannot mean Christian baptism. Christian baptism (an entirely different thing from the Jewish baptism of John) was not instituted till after His death and resurrection. If it meant Christian baptism, the Lord's rebuke to Nicodemus would be unjust. How could he know something that was still undivulged? Water in this passage is the figure of the Word of God, which the Spirit of God uses for the quickening of souls. The following passages will demonstrate this fact: Ephesians 5:25-26; 1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18. Begotten again by the Word of God, and water is the figure of that Word.

The Lord speaks next of revealing heavenly things (in distinction from earthly things relating to Israel). Then the Cross is revealed by which the heavenly things are realized, and how lost man is to be saved and receive eternal life (the new nature). The Son of Man must be lifted up. He Who knew no sin was made sin for us. "God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."--"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent His Only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9-10). Blessed words these! It is by believing on the Son of God, who died for our sins, that we are saved and are

born again.

John bears his final testimony in verses 23-26. He testifies of Christ as the bridegroom, who is to have the bride. John calls himself the friend of the bridegroom. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Note the three &(must's" in this chapter. "Ye must be born again"; the necessity of the new birth. "The Son of Man must be lifted up"; the necessity of the death of the Lord to make salvation possible. "He must increase, but I must decrease"; the result of salvation. The final testimony of John the Baptist takes us beyond the cross. (Verse 35-36). Blessed assurance! He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.--Solemn declaration! He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

CHAPTER 4

1. He Must Needs Pass Through Samaria. 1-5.
2. At Sychar's Well; Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. 6-26.
3. The Woman's Witness and the Believing Samaritans. 27-42.
4. His Return to Galilee. 43-45.
5. The Second Miracle, the Healing of the Nobleman's Son. 46-54.

In the Gospel of Matthew the Lord told His disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles and not to enter into any city of the Samaritans. (10:5). He sent them to preach the nearness of the Kingdom. Here He must needs go through Samaria. He had left Jerusalem and was on His way to Galilee and passing through Samaria He manifested His marvelous Grace. Tired on account of the way, an evidence of His true humanity, "He sat thus on the well." There He rested in unwearied love, waiting for the poor, fallen woman, whose sad story He knew so well.

To follow the beautiful account of His dealings with the Samaritan woman in all its blessed details is impossible in our brief annotations. What mercy and grace He exhibited in seeking such a one! What wisdom and patience in dealing with her, bearing with her ignorance! And what power in drawing her to Himself and making her a messenger to bring others to Him! How different He treated her in comparison with Nicodemus in the preceding chapter.

The Lord speaks to the Samaritan woman concerning the living water, which He can give to all that ask Him. The central verse of His teaching is the fourteenth, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The well or fountain of water in the believer is the indwelling Spirit. In chapter 7:37-39 the Lord speaks also of living water and there the interpretation of it is given. "This He spake of the Spirit, whom they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The believer has therefore not only eternal life, but also the gift of the Spirit, Who dwells in him as the spring of living water.

The new worship is next revealed in answer to the question of the woman. Verses 21-24. The Samaritans worshipped on a mountain (Gerizim); the Jews in the temple, but the hour was coming when the true worshippers would worship the Father in the Spirit. No longer would true believers worship God as the God of Israel, but as Father. It is to be a worship in the Spirit and not confined to a locality. Christian worship has for its foundation the possession of eternal life; the indwelling Spirit is the power of that worship. Only true believers, such who are born again and possess the gift of the Spirit, can be worshippers. "For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Philippians 3:3). And such worshippers the Father seeketh. In Old Testament times the Jews worshipped in an earthly place. In the coming, the millennial age, nations will go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord of hosts in the great millennial Temple. (Isaiah 2:1-4; Zechariah 14:16, etc.) This present dispensation is the dispensation of Grace, and the Father seeketh worshippers who worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. Thus we are brought in the Gospel of John altogether upon the ground of grace.

Then He revealed Himself to the woman. "Jesus saith to her, I that speak to thee am He." She was face to face with the

Messiah; she stood in the presence of Jehovah. She left her waterpot to tell others the good news of the living water. The earthly things were forgotten. And what a messenger she became! How her simple testimony was blessed in the conversion of souls! He abode there two days and is owned and proclaimed not alone as the promised Messiah but as the Saviour of the world. (Verse 42).

Once more we see Him at Cana of Galilee, and the nobleman's son, who was sick at Capernaum, is healed by the Lord. The nobleman represents typically Israel. The word the Lord addressed to him fits that nation. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." How different from Samaria, where He did no miracle and yet they believed. And as the nobleman and his whole house believed, so will Israel believe in a future day.

CHAPTER 5

1. The Healing of the Impotent Man. 1-9.
2. The Opposition of the Jews. 10-18.
3. His Unity with the Father. 19-23.
4. The Present Hour. Believers Delivered from Death and Judgment. 24-25.
5. The Future Hour. His Power to Raise the Dead. 26-29.
6. Witness Concerning Himself. 30-32.
7. The Witness of John. 33-35.
8. The Witness of His Works. 36.
9. The Witness of the Father. 37-38.
10. The Witness of the Scriptures, and the Unbelief of the Jews. 39-47.

The teachings contained in this chapter are closely linked with the third and fourth chapters. He went up to Jerusalem again. In the foreground stands the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda with its five porches. An angel troubled the water at certain seasons, so that some were healed. We believe that it was actually so, though we cannot explain it. Many critics attack this occurrence and reject its genuineness. ("After all there is no more real difficulty in the account before us, than in the history of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, the various cases of Satanic possession, or the release of Peter from prison by an angel. Once admit the existence of angels, their ministry on earth, and the possibility of their interposition to carry out God's designs, and there is nothing that ought to stumble us in the passage. The true secret of some of the objections to it, is the modern tendency to regard all miracles as useless lumber, which must be thrown overboard, if possible, and cast out of the Sacred Narrative on every occasion. Against this tendency we must watch and be on our guard.") But the impotent man could not avail himself of the opportunity for he was helpless. Such was Israel's condition under the law. The thirty-eight years point back to Israel's wandering in the wilderness. Furthermore the impotent man presents a striking picture of the utter helplessness of man as a sinner. By His word the Lord Jesus made him perfectly whole, so that he took up his bed and walked.

Opposition and objection from the Jews followed at once. They accused the healed man of breaking the Sabbath. He evidently did not know the Lord at all; only after He had spoken to him (Verse 14) did he find out that it was Jesus. Then he told the Jews. Their hatred was turned at once against the Lord. They persecuted Him and sought to slay Him because He had done this miracle on the Sabbath. The Lord's answer is most blessed. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." It is the first time in this Gospel that He speaks of God as "My Father." He, the Son, was in their midst to make the Father known. He told them that His Father works and that the Son works. Sin made this work necessary. He stood in their presence and claimed perfect and unbroken fellowship with His Father.

The Jews knew what He meant. Had He said "Our Father" instead of "My Father" no word of protest would have escaped their lips. They knew His words could mean but one thing, that He is equal with God, by saying that God was His Father. Augustine remarked on this verse: "Behold the Jews understood what the Arians (deniers of His Deity) would not understand." And He accepted the charge of the Jews as a correct one. "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." (Philippians 2:6). His words which follow declare His perfect unity with the Father in His work; He is the Beloved of the Father; the Father raiseth up the dead, so does He; judgment is committed unto the Son; He is to be honored as the Father is honored. "Whosoever does not honor the Son with equal honor to that which he pays to the Father, however he may imagine that he honors or approaches God, does not honor Him at all; because he can only be known by us as 'the Father who sent his Son.'" (Dean Alford.) Unitarianism, Russellism, the new theology and a host of other which deny the absolute Deity of our Lord, stand condemned and convicted in the presence of these wonderful words, "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father." All worship apart from the Son of God is idolatry. He claims the unity in Godhead; and such belongs to Him.

Verse 24 is a blessed Gospel text. Hearing and believing are the conditions to receive eternal life. There is no mention made of repentance. The word "repent" so prominent in the Gospel of Matthew in the Kingdom offer is not found once in the fourth Gospel. Faith and repentance, however, are inseparable. He that hears His words and believeth Him that sent the Son also repents. Again eternal life is spoken of as a present possession, "hath" not "shall have" or "shall receive later," but "hath eternal life." And with that gift comes deliverance from judgment. The reception of eternal life is a full acquittal; passed from death and all it means, into life.

"The coming hour" in verse 25 is the present dispensation. The dead are the spiritually dead. They that hear the voice of the Son of God shall live; they receive His life. Then He speaks of an hour which was to come and which has not yet come. Two resurrections are revealed by Him; the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment. This does not mean that these two resurrections are to take place the same time, in, what is termed, a general resurrection. Elsewhere we find the full revelation concerning these two resurrections. There is the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just, and a thousand years later the resurrection of the wicked dead. (Revelation 20.) All the wrong teachings concerning the wicked dead, such as Annihilation, Restitution, Restoration, Second Chance, etc., as taught by Seventh Day Adventism, Millennial Dawnism, (also called "International Bible Students' Association" and "Jehovah's Witnesses") Universalism and others, are completely refuted by the words of our Lord in verse 29.

The five witnesses who testify concerning Himself, that He is the Son of God, are of much importance and should be carefully studied.

CHAPTER 6

1. The Feeding of the Five Thousand Men. 1-14.
2. The Attempt to Make Him King, 15.
3. The Stormy Sea. "It is I, be not afraid." 16-21.
4. The Discourse on the Bread of Life. The Food of the Believer. 22-59.
5. The Falling Away of Disciples. 60-66
6. Peter's Confession. 67-71.

The events which are recorded in this chapter happened at the Sea of Galilee, the sea of Tiberias. John exclusively uses this name, an evidence that he wrote after the fall of Jerusalem. By this name the lake had become known to the Gentiles. The feeding of the five thousand is the same mentioned by the Synoptics. This great sign showed that Jehovah was in their midst, He Who had fed His Israel with manna in the wilderness and promised to satisfy the poor with bread. (Psalm 132:15.) When they had seen the great sign they acknowledged Him to be the promised Prophet who should come (Deuteronomy 18:15) and wanted to make Him King. But He departed into a mountain. He knew that all they meant by

making Him King was to become the leader of a carnal movement to overthrow the hated Roman government.

The storm on the sea and His coming across the stormy sea we have had in the other Gospels.

The great discourse on the Bread of Life follows. It is connected with the sign of the feeding of the multitude. When He speaks of being the Bread from Heaven He refers to His incarnation. "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth His life for the world." They rejected that Bread. Then He speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood both for the reception of life and for the sustenance of that life. These words have nothing whatever to do with the Lord's supper. Bishop Ryle, who was a leader in a ritualistic church, repudiated this wrong interpretation in the following words: "For one thing, a literal 'eating and drinking' of Christ's body and blood would have been an idea utterly revolting to all Jews, and flatly contradictory to an often-repeated precept of their law.--For another thing, to take a literal view of 'eating and drinking,' is to interpose a bodily act between the soul of man and salvation. This is a thing for which there is no precedent in Scripture. The only things without which we cannot be saved are repentance and faith.--Last, but not least, to take a literal view of 'eating and drinking,' would involve most blasphemous and profane consequences. It would shut out of heaven the penitent thief. He died long after these words were spoken, without any literal eating and drinking. Will any dare to say he had 'no life' in Him?--It would admit to heaven thousands of ignorant, godless communicants in the present day. They literally eat and drink, no doubt! But they have no eternal life, and will not be raised to glory. Let these reasons be carefully pondered.

"The plain truth is, there is a morbid anxiety in fallen man to put a carnal sense on Scriptural expressions, wherever he possibly can. He struggles hard to make religion a matter of forms and ceremonies,--of doing and performing,--of sacraments and ordinances,--of sense and of sight."

The Bread of God, He Himself, gave His life for the world. He gave His body and shed His blood on the cross. It is His sacrificial, atoning death. By faith we partake of it. Without it there is no life. Note the difference in verses 53 and 54. In verse 53 He speaks of those who have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood, apart from which there is no life. By faith the sinner appropriates Him, Who gave His body and shed His blood, and then receives eternal life. In verse 54 He speaks of a continuous eating and drinking. He is the Source of eternal life. The believer feeds on Him; the eternal life the believer has must be sustained, nourished and kept by Himself, by ever feeding on His dying love. "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20.) And the believer eating and drinking becomes one with Him. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth (literally: abideth) in Me and I in him." It is a wonderful discourse on His incarnation, His sacrificial, atoning death, and the blessed assurances given to those who believe on Him. Precious are the promises of this great chapter. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (Verse 35.) "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." (Verse 37.) "Every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* (Verse 40.) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (Verse 47.)

*"The last day" does not mean a day of a final and universal judgment followed by the end of the world. It is the end of the Jewish age to which our Lord refers (the age which is yet to be completed in great tribulation.--Matthew 24). The first resurrection includes Old Testament saints, New Testament saints and the Jewish believers, who are martyred during the great tribulation. The first resurrection will be completed at the close of the tribulation period and followed by the setting up of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER 7

1. My Time is not Yet Come. 1-9.
2. Departure from Galilee; Sought by the Jews. 10-13.
3. In the Temple Teaching. 14-29.
4. Opposition to Him. 30-36.

5. The Indwelling Spirit Promised. 37-39.
6. The Division Among the People Because of Him. 40-44.
7. The Returning Officers and the Defense of Nicodemus. 45-53.

The Lord tarried in Galilee. How He must have sought souls there as He walked in Galilee! He would not walk in Judea (not "Jewry," as in the Authorized Version) because the Jews, that is the leaders of the people, sought to kill Him. The Feast of Tabernacles was at hand and what we find written in this chapter happened during that Feast. His brethren, no doubt sons born to Mary after His own birth, urged Him to go to Judea. Their motives were selfish. They did not believe on Him. However, later they believed, for we find them among those who waited in Jerusalem for the promise of the father. (Acts 1:14.) The Feast of Tabernacles typifies the millennial blessings for Israel and the Gentiles, the great consummation. The world hated Him and He declared that His time had not yet come. We cannot follow at length the interesting account of His coming to Jerusalem, the words He spake, the answers He gave to those who hated Him. He taught and they marvelled. He declared that the doctrine He preached was of Him that sent Him. What a challenge He gave them! "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Then He told them that they tried to kill Him. "Thou hast a demon," was their reply, while others said: "Is not this He whom they seek to kill?" They sought to take Him and the Pharisees and Chief Priest sent officers to arrest Him. Thus the hatred against Him is manifested. His hour had not yet come; no one could touch Him. When the hour came He yielded Himself. The great center of this chapter is found in verses 37-39. The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles was the greatest. It was the eighth day, a day of rest and holy gathering together. During the seven days of the feast water was daily drawn from the pool of Siloam and then poured out. On the last day this ceremony did not take place. The seven days typified their wilderness journey; the eighth day the entrance into the land. For seven days they drew the water and poured it out, commemorating the water the Lord had supplied to Israel during the wilderness journey. On the eighth day they enjoyed the springs of the land itself an emblem of the living waters which the Lord had promised to His people. Israel has these promises. "And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." (Zechariah 14:8.) The same promise we find elsewhere. (See Ezekiel 47; Isaiah 12.) And He Who had given to His people these promises, Who had come to fulfill them, stood in their midst. They hate Him. They tell Him to His face, "Thou hast a demon." They seek to kill Him.

On the last day of the feast, typical of Israel's promised blessing and glory, He stood and cried: "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." He offers now upon the rejection of Himself something new to "any man who thirsts"; the national promises of living water pouring forth from Jerusalem cannot be fulfilled now. They will be fulfilled when He comes again. It is an individual invitation, an individual promise, He gives. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." We are then told that this means the gift of the Holy Spirit, which they were to receive who came to Him and believed on Him. The promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Then the Holy Spirit came to dwell in believers. The overflow, the streams of living water to flow from the believer, is the type of the Spirit, the Spirit of power manifesting Himself through the believer in bearing testimony for Christ. In the third chapter we saw the Holy Spirit communicating life; He is the Life-giving Spirit. In the fourth chapter the Lord spoke of the Spirit as the well of living water; He indwells the one who is born again to make communion and worship possible. Then followed His teaching in chapters 5 and 6, again concerning the life the believer hath in Him and how it is sustained. In the present chapter the indwelling Spirit, Who is the well of living water in the believer, is seen flowing forth to others, just as a spring will overflow.

CHAPTER 8

1. The Woman Taken in Adultery. 1-11.
2. The Light of the World. 12.
3. His Testimony Concerning Himself and the Father. 13-20.
4. His Solemn Declarations. 21-47.

5. Before Abraham Was, I Am. 48-59.

The first verse belongs to the preceding chapter. The officers returned without Him, bearing their testimony that "never man spake like this man." Nicodemus ventured his timid defense. Then every man went to his own house while the Lord went to the Mount of Olives.

The story of the woman taken in adultery has been rejected by many leading scholars. It is claimed that it is nothing less than a forgery. The chief arguments against it are the following: That the story is missing in some of the oldest manuscripts and earlier translations; that some of the Greek Fathers never refer to it; that it differs in style from the rest of the Gospel of John, and that the incident ought to be discredited on moral ground. However all these arguments have been proven invalid. Many old manuscripts have the story as well as some of the oldest translations. Others of the so-called church-fathers speak of it. There can be no question whatever of its genuineness. It was omitted on purpose in certain manuscripts. The Grace, which shines forth so marvelously in the Lord's dealing with the woman, was unpalatable to teachers who mixed Law and Grace. They left it out for a purpose.*

*"The argument from alleged discrepancies between the style and language of this passage, and the usual style of St. John's writing, is one which should be received with much caution. We are not dealing with an uninspired but with an inspired writer. Surely it is not too much to say that an inspired writer may occasionally use words and constructions and modes of expression which he generally does not use, and that it is no proof that he did not write a passage because he wrote it in a peculiar way."

It was a clever scheme from the side of the Scribes and Pharisees to tempt Him. The Law of Moses demanded her death by stoning. If He gave as an answer, "let her be stoned!" He would contradict His own testimony that He came not to judge, but to save. If He declared that the guilty woman was not to be stoned, then would He break the law. They appealed to Him as teacher, not as judge. He was silent and stooped down and wrote with His finger in the ground. (The words, "as though He heard them not" are in italics and must be omitted.) It is the only time we read of our Lord that He wrote. The finger which wrote in the ground was the same which had written the law in the tables of stone. What He wrote we do not know; but it was symbolical of the fact that the law against man is written in the dust, the dust of death. Not alone had the woman deserved death, but all were equally guilty. After His demand, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," the oldest in the company left first till the Lord was alone with the guilty woman. He did not set aside the law, and yet He manifested His marvelous Grace. The self-righteous accusers were condemned and sneaked into darkness, away from Him Who is the Light. The woman addressed Him as Lord, showing she believed on Him; and He told her to go and sin no more. The Grace He shows demands holiness.

The scene occurred in the Temple and the words He spoke following this incident were likewise spoken there. A great testimony again follows, which He gives concerning Himself. He is the Light of the world; it is not confined to Israel, but the light is to reach the Gentile nations. This is revealed in the Prophet Isaiah. After Messiah's complaint, "I have labored in vain," the rejected One is to be the light to the Gentiles. "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 59:1-6.) Then follows an individual promise. He that followeth Him walks not in darkness, but has the light of life. In Him is life as well as light; there is then fellowship with God for the child of life, fellowship one with another if we walk in the light. He then bore additional testimony concerning Himself. He knew where He came from and whither He went. The blind Pharisees did not. And when He spoke of the fellowship of Himself and the Father, they asked, "Where is thy Father?" They were blind and blinded, and knew neither Him nor the Father.

Very solemn are the declarations in verses 21-29. They are as solemn and as true today as when they were uttered by the lips of the Son of God. "I said therefore unto you that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." Rejecting Christ, not believing on Him, means to die in sin. When they ask Him again, "Who art thou?" He answered, "Absolutely* what I am also speaking to you." (*The rendering of the Authorized Version is incorrect.) He is the Word, the Truth, the Life, the Light. He is, in the principle of His being, what also He speaks. Essentially, precisely, what He is, He also speaks. The phrase "lifting up" means His crucifixion. (See 3:14 and 12:32.) After that event His vindication would come. He is the "I am." Many believed on Him. Were they true believers or the same class as we find at the close of the second chapter? Most likely they misunderstood His statement of being lifted up. They may have thought of Him becoming King; they certainly knew nothing of the Cross.

More teaching follows. To be a true disciple means to abide in His Word. By the Word and the Spirit we are begotten, and to live as a disciple needs abiding in His Word. The Son is the Deliverer Who makes free from the power of Satan and of Sin, of which He bears witness.

This interesting chapter ends with a startling self-revelation of His absolute Deity, that He is the Eternal Jehovah. Eleven times the name "Abraham" is found in the eighth chapter of John. At the close the Lord speaks of Abraham having seen His day and rejoiced. He saw it in faith. Then when the Jews expressed their astonishment He answered, "Before Abraham was, I AM!" It is the most positive, the clearest declaration of our Lord of His Eternity, that He is God. He is the "I AM"--Jehovah. Thus this great testimony has always been received. We let a few of the ancient teachers speak:

Chrysostom observes: "He said not before Abraham was, I was, but, I AM. As the Father useth this expression I AM, so also doth Christ, for it signifieth continuous being, irrespective of all time. On which account the expression seemed to the Jews blasphemous."

Augustine says: "In these words acknowledge the Creator and discern the creature. He that spake was made the Seed of Abraham; and that Abraham might be, He was before Abraham."

Gregory remarks: "Divinity has no past or future, but always the present; and therefore Jesus does not say before Abraham was I was, but I am."

The Unitarians try to explain this away by saying, "Jesus only meant that He existed as Messiah in God's counsels before Abraham." Astonishing! How do they know what He meant? It is a satanic invention. The Jews knew better. They understood what He meant. They took up stones to stone Him because they knew He claimed absolute Deity. A miracle followed. The Greek means literally "He was hid." Their eyes must have been holden as He went out of the Temple and passed by.

CHAPTER 9

1. The Man Born Blind, Healed. 1-7.
2. The Healed Man Questioned. 8-26.
3. Reviled and Cast Out. 27-34.
4. Jesus Reveals Himself to Him. 35-41.

The healing of the man born blind is a type and an illustration of how Christ, the Light, communicates light and how he who follows the Light walks no more in darkness, but has the light of life. (Chapter 8:12.) And before He healed the man He testified that His day of activity on earth as Man was rapidly drawing to its close. (Verses 4 and 5.) The clay and the spittle did not effect the opening of the eyes; it was the power of Christ. The blind man went and washed in the pool of Siloam and came seeing.

The conflict the blind man had is interesting and instructive, but too lengthy to follow in our annotations. The Pharisees exhibit their hatred against Him Who healed the blind man and they did all in their power to discredit the miracle and Him Who performed it. They questioned the man to confound him, but did not succeed. Then they questioned the parents, but they were afraid to say how their son had received his sight, for the Jews had agreed that if any man confessed Him as Christ he should be put out of the synagogue. Then they questioned the man again and he gave them an excellent testimony. "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." And when after repeated questionings the healed one expressed his firm belief that He Who gave him sight was of God, they cast him out.

But they only cast him into the arms of the loving Lord. He heard of what had been done to the man, and He sought for

him. Then He revealed Himself to him as the Son of God. The man believed and worshipped Him. He was thrust outside of Judaism and in that outside place Christ found him, and he believed on Christ. Like everything else in the Gospel of John this anticipates the position of true Christianity. It is outside of the camp of Judaism, outside of that which has rejected Christ. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Hebrews 13:13.)

CHAPTER 10

1. The Shepherd of the Sheep. 1-5.
2. The Good Shepherd, His Sheep and His Work. 6-21.
3. At the Feast of Dedication; the Repeated Testimony. 22-30.
4. Accused of Blasphemy and His Answer. 31-39.
5. Beyond Jordan; and Many Believed on Him. 40-42.

The teaching of this chapter is closely linked with the preceding event. It has become evident that the true sheep of Christ, belonging to His flock, would be cast out of the Jewish fold. The healed man cast out had become one of His sheep. Therefore He teaches now more fully concerning Himself as the Shepherd and about His sheep. The Old Testament speaks often of Israel as the sheep of Jehovah, and of Jehovah as the Shepherd. (psalm 80:1; 95:7; 23:1; Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 11:7-9; 13:7.) The true Shepherd had come through the appointed door into the sheepfold, that is among Israel. He is the only One, and the porter (the Holy Spirit) opened to Him. He came and called His own sheep by name to lead them out. And the sheep hear His voice and follow Him. All is Jewish. He came the true Shepherd, into the sheepfold to lead them out to become His flock. It was a parable He spoke in these opening verses, but they did not understand it. What follows is a fuller revelation of Himself as the good Shepherd, and the sheep who belong to His flock. Judaism was a fold out of which the Shepherd leads His flock. He is the Door of the sheep. He is the means of getting into the flock, as a door is the means of getting into a house. Through Him all His sheep must enter by faith into the flock. There is no other door and no other way. He came into the fold by God's appointed way and He is God's appointed way. "I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." A most blessed promise. He is the door. Any man, it does not matter who it is, any man may enter in by Him and then having entered in by Him, that is believed on Him, He promises salvation, liberty and food. These three things are bestowed upon all who believe on Him. Salvation is in Him and it is a present and a perfect salvation; liberty, freed from the bondage of the law which condemned the sinner, a perfect liberty; pasture, food, which He supplies; He Himself is the food, a perfect food. It is all found outside of the fold, the fold of Judaism, and in Christ. He came that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. The abundant life He speaks of here is the life which comes from His death and resurrection. The good Shepherd had to give His life for the sheep. How different from the hireling, who fleeth and careth not for the sheep. The hirelings were the faithless shepherds. (Ezekiel 34:1-6.) Again He said: "I lay down my life for the sheep."

"The expression, 'laying down the soul or life' for any one, does not occur anywhere else independently in the New Testament. It is never found in profane writers. It must be referred back to the Old Testament, and specially to Isaiah 53:10, where it is said of Messiah, 'He shall make, or place, His soul an offering for sin.'"--Hengstenberg

In verse 16 our Lord speaks of other sheep, which are not of this fold. These are the Gentiles. He leads out first from the Jewish fold His sheep; then there are the other sheep whom He will bring and who will hear His voice. The result will be one flock and one Shepherd. The Authorized Version is incorrect in using the word "fold." Judaism was a fold, the church is not. The ecclesiastical folds in which Christendom is divided have been brought about by the Judaizing of the church. The fold no longer exists. There is one flock as there is one Shepherd; one body, as there is one Lord. All who have heard His voice, believed on Him, entered in by Him, are members of the one flock.

At the Feast of Dedication, commemorating the cleansing of the Temple and rededication by Judas Maccabaeus after the desecration by Antiochus, (See Daniel 8:9-14) the Lord continued His blessed teaching, ending it once more with a great revelation of Himself. He makes a most blessed addition to His previous instructions concerning Himself and His sheep. "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which

gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Here we have the comforting assurance of the absolute security of every sheep of Christ. Eternal life is a present and personal possession, not something which comes after death. It is therefore an abiding possession and cannot be lost. Then He Who is the Life and the Light, the Way and the Truth, assures us that His sheep shall never perish. Some say that He said "no one can pluck them out of His hand" but we can do it ourselves by living in sin, etc. This is fully answered by the correct rendering of His words, "they shall never perish." It means literally: "they shall in no wise ever perish." This is absolute; it covers everything.

Then His great revelation: "I and the Father are one." Again the Jews understood what He meant, for they wanted to stone Him. After His answer they wanted to take Him, but He escaped out of their hands. His hour had not yet come.

CHAPTER 11

1. The Sickness of Lazarus Announced. 1-4.
2. The Delayed Departure and the Death of Lazarus. 5-16.
3. The Arrival at Bethany. 17-27.
4. Weeping with Them That Weep. 28-38.
5. The Resurrection of Lazarus. 39-46.
6. The Prophecy of Caiaphas. 47-52.
7. Seeking to Kill Him. 53-57.

The resurrection of Lazarus is the final great sign or miracle in this Gospel. It is the greatest Of all. Some critics have discredited it by saying that, if it had really taken place the Synoptics would have something to say about it. The Gospel of John is the Gospel in which this miracle properly belongs. As we have seen, the Gospel of John is the Gospel in which our Lord as Son of God is fully revealed. The resurrection of Lazarus proves Him the Son Of God, Who can raise the dead. The philosopher and skeptic Spinoza declared that if he could be persuaded of the historicity of this miracle he would embrace Christianity. The miracle is supported by the most incontrovertible evidence; it requires more credulity to deny it than to believe it.

A German Expositor (Dr. Tillman) put together the evidences of this great miracle in the following way:

"The whole story is of a nature calculated to exclude all suspicion of imposture, and to confirm the truth of the miracle. A well-known Person of Bethany, named Lazarus, falls sick in the absence of Jesus. His sisters send a message to Jesus, announcing it; but while He is yet absent Lazarus dies, is buried, and kept in the tomb for four days, during which Jesus is still absent. Martha, Mary, and all his friends are convinced of his death. Our Lord, while yet remaining in the place where He had been staying, tells His disciples in plain terms that He means to go to Bethany, to raise Lazarus from the dead, that the glory of God may be illustrated, and their faith confirmed. At our Lord's approach, Martha goes to meet Him, and announces her brother's death, laments the absence of Jesus before the event took place, and yet expresses a faint hope that by some means Jesus might yet render help. Our Lord declares that her brother shall be raised again, and assures her that He has the power of granting life to the dead. Mary approaches, accompanied by weeping friends from Jerusalem. Our Lord Himself is moved, and weeps, and goes to the sepulchre, attended by a crowd. The stone is removed. The stench of the corpse is perceived. Our Lord, after pouring forth audible prayer to His Father, calls forth Lazarus from the grave, in the hearing of all. The dead man obeys the call, comes forth to public view in the same dress that he was buried in, alive and well, and returns home without assistance. All persons present agree that Lazarus is raised to life, and that a great miracle has been worked, though not all believe the person who worked it to be the Messiah. Some go away and tell the rulers at Jerusalem what Jesus has done. Even these do not doubt the truth of the fact; on the contrary, they confess that our Lord by His works is becoming every day more famous, and that He would probably be soon received as Messiah by the whole nation. And therefore the rulers at once take counsel how they may put to death both Jesus and Lazarus. The people,

in the meantime hearing of this prodigious transaction, flock in multitudes to Bethany, partly to see Jesus, and partly to view Lazarus. And the consequence is that by and by, when our Lord comes to Jerusalem, the population goes forth in crowds to meet Him and show Him honor, and chiefly because of His work at Bethany. Now, if all these circumstances do not establish the truth of the miracle, there is no truth in history."

To follow the historical account in all its details would take many pages. It reveals the glory, the sympathy and the power of our Lord as perhaps no other Scripture does.

The heart of the chapter is found in His words to Martha: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (Verse 25-26.) In the first place these words anticipate His death and resurrection. He Who laid down His life and took it again, is the resurrection, and the life. He can raise the dead, the spiritually and physically dead. But these words take us also forward to His coming again, when they will find their great fulfillment, and when the crowning proof is given that He is the resurrection and the life. The Saints, who believed on Him and died in Christ, will be raised first. This truth is expressed in His words: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live." And all who live when He comes for His Saints, when His shout opens the graves, will be caught up in clouds, changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, passing into His presence without dying. Of this He speaks in His last statement: "He that liveth (when He comes) and believeth on Me shall never die." (1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.) Who is able to describe the scene as He goes to the cave where His friend Lazarus had been laid away four days previous! Mary sank weeping at His feet. When He saw her weeping, the Jews weeping, then He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. Jesus wept! Oh, precious words! Conscious of His Deity and of His power, He enters with deepest sympathy into the sorrows and afflictions of His people. Such He is still, our great High-priest, Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The cave was covered with a stone. When He commands that stone to be removed, Martha interrupted Him by saying, "By this time he stinketh, for he has been dead four days." It was unbelief. After He had lifted His eyes to heaven and had spoken to the Father, He uttered His majestic "Lazarus, come forth!" It was the word of omnipotence to manifest now fully that He is the Son of God, Who hath the power to raise the dead. Who can describe the solemn moment and what happened immediately! Perhaps there was a faint echo out of the cave, for He had cried His command with a loud voice. All eyes were looking towards the dark entrance of the cave, when lo, the dead man was seen struggling forward, bound by the grave clothes. Lazarus, who had been dead four days, whose body had already entered into decomposition, came forth a living man.

"A more plain, distinct, and unmistakable miracle it would be impossible for man to imagine. That a dead man should hear a voice, obey it, rise up, and move forth from his grave alive is utterly contrary to nature. God alone could cause such a thing. What first began life in him, how lungs and heart began to act again, suddenly and instantaneously, it would be waste of time to speculate. It was a miracle and there we must leave it"--C. Ryle.

"He came back, a challenge thrown in the face of Christ's would-be murderers, of the possibility of success against One to Whom death and grave are subject"--Numerical Bible.

A second word He spoke: "Loose him and let him go." Lazarus is the type of a sinner who hears His Word. We are dead in trespasses and sins. Spiritually man is in the grave, in death and in darkness. He is in corruption. The Lord of Life gives life. And besides this He gives with that life-- liberty. He looses from the bondage of the law and of sin. In the next chapter we read of Lazarus again. He is in fellowship with the Lord Who raised him from the dead. Life, Liberty and Fellowship are the three blessed things which he receives who hears and believes. Compare this great chapter with the teachings of the fifth chapter. And Lazarus is also a fit type of Israel and her coming national resurrection.

Then many believed on Him, while the Pharisees and chief priests, acknowledging the fact that He did many miracles, plan His death. Remarkable is the prophecy of Caiaphas. He was used as an instrument to utter a great truth. Christ was indeed to die for that nation, and also that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

CHAPTER 12

1. The Feast at Bethany. 1-8.

2. The Entrance into Jerusalem. 9-19.

3. The Inquiring Greeks and His Answer. 20-33.

4. His Final Words. 34-50.

From the close of the previous chapter we learn that the Lord had gone with His disciples to a city called Ephraim. Six days before the Passover He came to Bethany again. They made Him a feast. Lazarus is especially mentioned as well as Martha, who served; Mary also was present with others who were of His disciples. It is a beautiful type of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when He will have His own with Him. Lazarus represents the Saints risen from the dead, the others represent the Saints who never died, but are changed in a moment. Service is represented in Martha. Fellowship they had together in the feast with the Lord, and worship in Mary, who anointed His feet. The Synoptics record the fact that she also anointed His head; she did both and there is no discrepancy. She was deeply attached to Him and knew of the threatening danger which hung over Him as Man. She did not know the full meaning of her beautiful act, but the Lord knew and said: "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." And how He appreciated her love and devotion, though she had not the full intelligence of all it meant. It is devotion to Himself our Lord appreciates most in His people. Well has it been said, "She learned at His feet what she poured out there."

A large number of Jews came to Bethany to see Him, while others came out of curiosity to see Lazarus. Then the wicked chief priests held a consultation that they might put Lazarus also to death. We do not hear another word about Lazarus after this.

His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem followed. The account of it in John's Gospel is very brief. The people welcome Him with the Messianic welcome, "Hosanna! (Save now.) Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." That shout will be heard again in Jerusalem and then it will not be followed by the awful cry, "Crucify Him!" When He comes in power and glory as Israel's King the believing remnant of His people will welcome Him by the same word. (See Matthew 23:39.) Zechariah's prophecy (Zechariah 9:9) is quoted in part, and that which was unfulfilled is omitted. But the disciples did not understand it, nor did they know that they were fulfilling prophecy. Only after "Jesus was glorified" (John 12:16) did they remember these things. The resurrection of Lazarus played an important part in His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Those who stood by and saw the miracle done, bore witness, and others met Him because they heard of the miracle. The testimony of His enemies was: "Behold the world is gone after Him."

Then Greeks (Gentiles) inquired after Him, "Sir, we would see Jesus." How great was His triumph! There was no answer to those Greeks. Before the Gentiles could come to Him, He would have to die. The hour then had come when He, the Son of Man, should be glorified. He meant the Cross and that which follows the suffering, His resurrection and ascension. By His death as Son of Man He acquired Glory and receives ultimately the Kingdoms of this world, the nations and the uttermost parts of the earth for His inheritance. He, therefore, speaks of Himself as the grain of wheat. If there is to be fruit from the one grain of wheat it must fall in to the ground and die. The grain of wheat has life in itself and when it is put into the ground that life is carried through death, to be reproduced in the many grains of wheat. The Life had to pass through death so that it might be communicated to others. The fruit springs from His death and resurrection. What a wonderful sacrifice He brought in giving His life! Believers possess the life of the grain of wheat, which passed through death and therefore are to follow Him and manifest it in a practical way. That is why He adds: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." Giving up, self-denial, the path He went is our path. But how glorious the promised reward!

Then He looked forward to the Cross and His soul was troubled. "Father, save Me from this hour!" This was His prayer, much like that in Gethsemane. But He also adds at once, "for this cause came I unto this hour." He had come to die. The next request, "Father, glorify Thy Name," is at once answered by the voice from heaven. The Father's Name had been glorified by the Son, in a special manner the Father's Name was glorified in the resurrection of Lazarus. The glorification in the future, "and will glorify it," took place "when Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father." (Romans 6:4.)

The chapter closes with the final words of our Lord to the people. Many of the chief-rulers believed on Him without making an open confession. The last words He speaks before He gathers His own around Himself are concerning the

Father Who sent Him.

CHAPTER 13

1. The Washing of the Disciples' Feet. 1-11.
2. Instructions given; to Wash One Another's Feet. 12-17.
3. The Betrayal Foretold. 18-30.
4. His Own Departure and the New Commandment. 31-35.
5. The Denial of Peter Foretold. 36-38.

We reach with this chapter the most precious portion of this Gospel. The multitudes are left behind. Israel has completely rejected Him and now He gathered His own beloved disciples around Himself and gave them the sweet and blessed words of instruction, of comfort and cheer, His farewell. A little while and He would leave them to return to the Glory from which He came. "He is leaving upon earth the chosen companions of His path; those indeed that have hardly ever understood Him,--whose lack of sympathy has been itself one of the bitterest trials, of those that made Him the 'Man of Sorrows' that He was. Yet they are his hard-won spoils from the hand of the enemy,--the firstfruits of the spiritual harvest coming in. They are His own, the gift of His Father, the work of His Spirit, the purchase of His blood, by and by to tell out, and, for the ages to come, divine love and power to all His intelligent creation. Nor, spite of their feebleness, can He forget how their hearts awakened by His call, have clung to Him in the scene of His rejection, how they have left their little all to follow Him. Now He is going to leave them in that world whose enmity they must for His sake incur, and in which they would fill up that which was behind of His afflictions for His body's sake, which is the Church (Colossians 1:24). In human tenderness His heart overflows towards them, while in divine fullness; and this is what we find before us now. It is peculiar to John, and furnishes them for the way, and arms them for the impending conflict."--F.W. Grant.

Our brief annotations are not sufficient to cover all the blessed teachings of these chapters. What a great assurance is given in the first verse of this chapter! He knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world. He knew because He is the Son of God. Then follows the assurance of His love for His own; even unto the end. His love knows no change. His tender, loving words addressed to His own in these chapters fully manifest that love which passeth knowledge.

The washing of the disciples' feet was a great symbolical action to teach His own the gracious provision made for them during His absence. Some well meaning Christians have applied the words of our Lord, "ye also ought to wash one another's feet," in a literal way, and teach that the Lord meant this to be done literally. The words of our Lord to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (Verse 7), show that underneath the outward action of the Lord in washing the disciples' feet there is a deeper spiritual meaning. We see Him girded, with a basin of water in His blessed hands, to wash the disciples' feet. The water explains the spiritual meaning. We have seen that the water in the third chapter is the type of the Word of God. It has the same meaning in this chapter. Peter first refused to have his feet washed; then when the Lord had said unto him, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me," he asked Him to wash his hands and his head as well. "Jesus saith to him, He that hath been bathed * needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." (Verse 10 contains two different words for washing; the one is "bathed" and the other "wash." This difference is not made in the Authorized Version.) When the Lord spoke of His disciples being bathed and clean every whit, He had reference to the new birth by the water and the Spirit. They were all bathed, born again, except Judas, whom the Lord meant when He said "but not all." Titus 3:5 reads, literally translated: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the bath of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." This great work is done once for all and cannot be repeated, just as the natural birth cannot be repeated with the same individual.

The Lord washed the disciples' feet, not their hands. Hands are for work and the feet for walking. His action has a meaning in connection with our walk in the world. We contract defilement as we pass on through this world. And defilement severs communion with the Lord. We need therefore cleansing. All disciples need it. This He has graciously provided, and the washing of the disciples' feet typifies that needed cleansing. He uses His Word to bring this about. This is "the washing of

water by the Word." He is the Advocate with the Father to restore us to fellowship. We must come to Him with our failures, our stumbling, imperfect walk, our defilement, and place ourselves into His hands as the disciples placed their soiled feet in His loving hands. His own perfect light will then search our innermost beings and bring to light what has defiled us, so that, after cleansing, we can enjoy His fellowship and have part with Him. This necessitates confession and self-judgment from our side. If this blessed truth is not realized and enjoyed in faith, if we do not come to Him for this service of love, we are at a distance from Him.

And we are also to walk in the same spirit of serving and wash one another's feet. As He lovingly deals with us, so we are to deal with one another. The one that is overtaken in a fault is to be restored by him that is spiritual in the spirit of meekness. "He that would cleanse another's feet must be at his feet to cleanse them." How little of all this in a practical way is known among God's people.

The betrayal by Judas is announced, and he goes into the night. The Lord announces also His imminent departure and gives them the new commandment "love one another." The chapter closes with the prediction of Peter's denial.

CHAPTER 14

1. Let not Your Heart be Troubled! 1-7.
2. I Am in the Father and the Father in Me. 8-14.
3. The Other Comforter Promised. 15-27.
4. I Go unto the Father. 28-31.

There is no break between these two chapters. The Lord continues His discourse to the eleven disciples. "Let not your heart be troubled!" What precious words of comfort! How many hearts have been soothed by them and how many tears they have dried! And after His loving words He said again: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Verse 27.) He speaks first of all of the Father's house with its many abodes. The Father's house is no longer the temple, but the blessed home where the loving Father dwells and to which the Son of God was about to return in the form of man, after His death and resurrection. And the Father's house with its many abodes belongs to all who belong to Him; and all who are His, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren (John 20:17; Hebrews 2:11 and Psalm 22:22) belong to the Father's house. He has gone there to prepare a place. The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before Israel to search out a resting place for them (Numbers 11:33) and so He has gone before as our forerunner. What it all means "to prepare a place for you" we cannot fully know, but we know that His great work has removed every barrier for all who believe on Him, and in God's own time the full redemption of the purchased possession by the power of God will be accomplished. (Ephesians 1:14.) Then His unfulfilled promise, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also," will be fulfilled. He did not mean the death of His disciples. The death of the believer is not the coming of Himself to the child of God, but when the believer dies he goes to be with Christ. "I will come again" means His coming for those who belong to Him, His Saints. How He will redeem this gracious promise and lead His own into the blessed home, is not revealed here. But He gave it in the form of a special revelation to the Apostle of the Gentiles. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.) Thomas speaks first. He misunderstood the words of the Lord and was troubled with unbelief. Yet Thomas loved the Lord and was greatly attached to Him, as we learn from Chapter 11:16. Blessed answer he received. "I am the way";--He is the only way to God and to the Father's house; "the Truth";-- the revelation of the Father; and "the Life" as well.

His answer to Philip's question shows that He was grieved. Yet how gentle the rebuke, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is another great witness of His oneness with the Father. "I am in the Father and the Father in me." And His own belonging to Him, know the Father in Christ and are His. (Solemn truth it is: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." (1 John 2:23.) "And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." (1 Corinthians 3:23.) Verse 12 has been a difficulty to many. What did our Lord mean when He said: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father"? Christian Scientists and extreme faith-healers claim that He meant His actual works of healing and Christians should do now the same works and even greater works. But how could a believer do a greater work than the raising of Lazarus from the dead? The promise "the works that I do shall he do also" was fulfilled immediately

after the day of Pentecost. The sick were healed by Peter's shadow, the lame man was healed, demons were driven out, and the dead were raised. Were these miracles to continue to the end of the dispensation? There is nowhere a statement in Scripture that this should be the case. "If miracles were continually in the church, they would cease to be miracles. We never see them in the Bible except at some great crisis in the church's history"--(Thoughts on the Gospel of John.) The "greater works" are spiritual works. The thousands saved in the beginning of the dispensation, the preaching of the Gospel far hence among the Gentiles and the gracious results, are these greater works.

The promise of Prayer in His name follows. This is something new. It is to be addressed to the Father and the Son, and He promises, "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it." So far He had spoken of Himself and the Father. God the Father had been revealed in the Son, and now He speaks of the other Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. He is promised to come, not to the world, but to His own as the other Comforter. (In Greek "Parakletos," one who is alongside to help. The same word as in 1 John 2:1 "Advocate.") He would come to abide in them, dwell with them and be in them. Verse 18, "I will come to you," does not mean His second coming as in Verse 3. It is Christ Himself in Spirit. The result of the coming and abiding of the Comforter is a blessed knowledge for the believer. "Ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Love to Him in the power of the Spirit must be expressed in obedience. Then there is the blessed legacy: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." It is not peace with God, but the peace of Himself which He has left us. And that peace will ever be enjoyed if we believe and obey His words.

CHAPTER 15

1. The Vine and the Branch. 1-8.
2. Communion with Him and its Conditions. 9-16.
3. Love One Another! and the Hatred of the World. 17-27.

Israel is called a vine in the Old Testament (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1-8; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1) and Christ here in this parable takes the place of Israel and is the true vine. His disciples are the branches. Israel under the law covenant could not bear fruit for God, as the law cannot be the source of fruit-bearing. Fruit unto God can only spring from union with Christ. (See Romans 7:4.) He as the true vine on earth brought fruit unto God. The true believer is as closely united to Him as the branch is to the vine. The branch is in Him and He is in the branch. The life-sap of the vine circulates in the branch. And this life and nature in the believer produces the fruit. Our Lord said: "The Father who abideth in me, He doeth the works." And believers should confess: The Lord Jesus Christ Who abideth in me and I in Him, He produces the fruit. Apart from Him we can do nothing. This vital union with Christ, dependence on Him, the result--fruit unto God, is more fully revealed in the Epistles.

He told His disciples, "now ye are clean (literally: purged) through the word that I have spoken unto you." In Chapter 13 He said, "ye are clean, but not all." Judas was then present, but he had gone out to betray Him. But what does it mean: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away," and again, "if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned"? These words are often taken to teach that a believer's salvation and safety depends upon his fruit-bearing and his faithfulness. These two statements have been much perverted and misapplied as if they taught that a true branch in the vine, one who is really in Christ, may be cut off and be cast away to perish forever. If this were the meaning of these words our Lord would contradict His previous teachings. The branch in the vine which beareth not fruit is not a true believer at all, but one who by profession claims to be a branch in the vine. Note in verse 6 the change from "ye" to "a man." If our Lord had said "if ye abide not in me, ye shall be cast forth as a branch, etc.," it would mean a true believer. But the change makes it clear that no true disciple is meant, but one who makes a profession without being born again.

"These are awful words. They seem, however, to apply specially to backsliders and apostates, like Judas Iscariot. There must be about a man some appearance of professed faith in Christ, before he can come to the state described here. Doubtless there are those who seem to depart from grace, and to go back from union with Christ; but we need not doubt in such cases that the grace was not real, but seeming, and the union was not true, but fictitious. Once more we must remember that we are reading a parable.

After all, the final, miserable ruin and punishment of false professors, is the great lesson which the verse teaches. Abiding in Christ leads to fruitfulness in this life and everlasting happiness in the life to come. Departure from Christ leads to the everlasting fire of hell."--J.C. Ryle.

The secret of true fruit-bearing (the manifestation of the new nature in our life) is abiding in Christ and Christ in us. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk as He walked." The vine reproduces itself in the branch. And abiding in Christ means to walk in communion with Him and in utter dependence on Himself.

Then He declared: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love." Who is able to fathom the depths of these words! As the Father loved Him so He loveth us. Continue in my love means "abide in my love." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." A blessed and equally solemn contrast! When we walk in fellowship with Him, when we are obedient to Him, as He was obedient to His Father in His path down here, then we abide in His love. Obedience to His words proves our love to Him, and walking in obedience we abide in His love "and hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John 2:3.) Then He declares, "that my joy might remain in you" and "that your joy might be full." For the knowledge of His joy and the fullness of joy we need to walk in obedience.

Once more He mentions the new commandment (13:34) "love one another." The Holy Spirit in the first Epistle of John enlarges upon this. In the world there is no love, but hatred. It hates the true believers, as the world hated Him. The true disciple must expect the same treatment which He receives in this world. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." Israel is in view in Verse 24. They had seen and hated both Him and the Father.

Once more He announces the coming of the Paraclete, the Comforter. In Chapter 14 our Lord said, "I will pray the Father and He shall send you another Comforter." Here He promises to send Him from the Father. He is to testify of Himself, witnessing to Him as glorified in the presence of the Father. They were to be witnesses of Him.

CHAPTER 16

1. Persecutions Predicted. 1-6.
2. The Comforter and His Demonstration. 7-15.
3. Sorrow and joy. 16-22.
4. The Father Himself Loveth You. 23-27.
5. His Final Word before His Prayer. 28-33.

Again He announced coming persecutions. The world is the same today as then, and before this age ends these predictions of our Lord will be again fulfilled, during the great tribulation.

The coming of the Comforter is once more announced by Him. He could not come unless the Lord departed. He is to be sent to His own and when He comes He will make a great demonstration to the world. The word "reprove" in Verse 8 is incorrect; the Greek word is difficult to express in its full meaning. Some have translated it by "rebuke," others use the word "convince" or "convict." The word "demonstrate" seems to be the nearest to the original. "And when He is come He will bring demonstration to the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment." The presence of the Holy Spirit in believers is the proof to the world that the whole world is guilty of the death of Christ; the whole world is under sin and therefore not on probation but under condemnation. The Holy Spirit is also the demonstration to the world of righteousness. This does not mean that He brings righteousness to the world, or makes the world righteous, as so many erroneously believe. Our Lord adds: "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father and ye see me no more." The Holy One was rejected by the world, cast out as an unrighteous One. But He, Who owned and satisfied God's righteousness in dying as the substitute of sinners, is now exalted to the right hand of God; there He is the witness of righteousness. The presence of the Holy Spirit on earth demonstrates this fact. God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory; the world sees Him

no more as a Saviour personally on earth; but will see Him again as Judge, when He comes to judge the world in righteousness. Righteousness is fully displayed in the glory, where He is. The hope of righteousness is to be with Him there. (Galatians 5:5.) The Holy Spirit also brings demonstration to the world of judgment "because the prince of this world is judged." Sentence of judgment is pronounced against Satan, but not yet executed. He is the god of this age, but he was judged in His Cross. Judgment must come upon the world and its prince. The Holy Spirit now present upon the earth in the believers demonstrates this fact.

Many things He had to say unto His disciples, which they could not bear. The many things He mentioned were made known in due time by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. Of this He speaks in the verses which follow. Note the seven things spoken of the Spirit of Truth: 1. He will guide you into all truth. 2. He shall not speak of Himself. 3. Whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak. 4. He will show you things to come. 5. He shall glorify Me. 6. He shall receive of Mine. 7. He shall show it unto you. This is the work He does now among and in the Saints. In all His work His gracious aim is to glorify Christ. When we glorify Christ, exalt Him, obey Him, follow Him and are devoted to Him, the Holy Spirit fills and uses us.

Then He spoke of the little while; the little while when they would see Him not; the little while, when they would see Him again. His final words before His great prayer are full of comfort and assurance. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you."--"For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." These are words precious to faith. Once more He speaks of His leaving the world to go back to the Father. But before that homegoing takes place they all were to be scattered and leave Him alone. He added: "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Our Lord was never forsaken by His Father; He was forsaken of God, the Holy God, when He stood in the sinner's place.

The last utterance to His own is the assurance of peace in Him, the tribulation in the world, and the shout of victory: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." And then His prayer.

CHAPTER 17

1. The Finished Work. 1-5.
2. The Father's Name and the Father's Gift. 6-10.
3. Not of the World but Kept in it. 11-16.
4. Sanctification of Himself for His Own. 17-21.
5. The Glorification. 22-26.

His words were ended to the eleven disciples and next He spoke to the Father, and His disciples listened to all His blessed words. What moments these must have been! His words to the Father told them once more how he loved them, how He cared for them, what He had done and what He would do for them. Whenever we read this great Lord's prayer we can still hear Him pray for His beloved people. What a glimpse it gives of His loving heart! The prayer is His high-priestly prayer. He is in anticipation on the other side of the cross. He knows the work is finished, atonement is made; He is back with the Father and has received the glory. This anticipation is seen in His words, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do"; "and now I am no more in the world";--"the glory thou hast given me I have given to them." It is impossible to give an exposition of this great chapter. Blessed depths are here which we shall fathom when we are with Him. All He taught concerning Himself and eternal life, what believers are and have in Him, He mentions in His prayer. All the great redemption truths more fully revealed in the New Testament Epistles may be traced in this high-priestly prayer of our Lord. We mention seven of these great truths as made known by Him in addressing the Father.

1. Salvation. He has power to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." He glorified the Father in His life and He finished the work He came to do on the Cross. There alone is redemption and salvation.

2. Manifestation. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." (Verse 6.) The Name of God, He, the Son, has made known to those who believe on Him is His Name as "Father." Such a name and relationship of the believer to God was not known in the Old Testament. The Son of God had to come from heaven's glory and declared the Father. After He gave His life and rose from the dead He spoke of "My Father and your Father." The Spirit of Sonship was given by Whom we cry: "Abba-Father."

3. Representation. He is our Priest and Advocate. He appears in the presence of God for us. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." (Verse 9.) Like the High Priest He carries only the names of His people upon His shoulders and upon His heart. He prays now for His church, His body, for every member. When the church is complete and the body is united to Himself in glory, He will pray for the world. "Ask of Me," the Father has told Him, "and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance." (Psalm 2:6.) When He asks this, He will receive the Kingdoms of this world. What comfort it should be to all His people to know He prays for us individually! His love and His power are for us.

4. Identification. We are one with Him, and all His Saints are one. The church is His body, an organism and not an organization. He did not pray for a unity in organization, but for a spiritual unity, which exists. "That they also may be one in us" is not an unanswered petition. The Spirit Who has come unites believers to Him and baptizes them into one body. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me"--this looks on towards the blessed consummation, when the Saints will appear with Christ in glory; then the world will know.

5. Preservation. He prayed for the keeping of His own. He commits them into His Father's hands. The believers' keeping for eternal life and glory rests not in their own hands but in His hands. Judas is mentioned as the son of perdition; he was never born again.

6. Sanctification. (See Verses 17-19.) He is our Sanctification. In Him we are sanctified. We are sanctified by the Truth, by walking in obedience. Believers are constituted Saints in Christ and are called to walk in separation. The separating power is the Word and the Spirit.

7. Glorification. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one" --"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." This is His unanswered prayer. Some day it will be answered and all His Saints will be with Him and share His glory.

And oh! the wealth of Grace and Truth in His wonderful words we must pass by! May His own Spirit lead us deeper and fill our hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

III. "I Lay Down My Life, That I Might Take it Again." Chapters 18-21

CHAPTER 18

1. The Arrest in the Garden. 1-11.

2. Before Annas and Caiaphas; Peter's Denial. 12-27.

3. Before Pilate. 28-38.

4. Not this Man, But Barabbas. 39-40.

The hour of His suffering had now come. With His disciples He went across the brook Cedron into the garden. It is the Kidron mentioned frequently in Old Testament history. When David fled from his own son Absalom, he passed weeping over this brook. (2 Samuel 15:23.) See also 2 Chronicles 15:16 and 2 Kings 23:12. It is claimed that the way by which our Lord left the city was the way by which the scapegoat was yearly, on the great day of atonement, sent into the wilderness.

The garden, though not named here, is Gethsemane. Judas knew the place, and the Lord knowing that Judas would betray Him, went deliberately there to be delivered into the hands of man. Nothing is said at all by John about the agony, the deep soul-exercise, through which our Lord passed in that night; nor is there a word about His sweat, as it were great drops of blood. All these things are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, in which His perfect humanity is described, they are passed over in the Gospel of His Deity. But John describes a scene which the other Gospels omit. He manifests His power. When the band of men said that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, He said unto them, "I am He." Then the whole company went backward and fell to the ground. What a scene that must have been! Several hundred men with their lanterns, torches and weapons all prostrate on the ground before the One Man. They stood in the presence of Jehovah and His power and majesty was present so that the one word was sufficient to prostrate them all. It was a striking evidence that neither the treachery of Judas, nor the wicked hatred of the Jews, nor the power of Rome, could touch our Lord. But the hour had now arrived when He was ready to give Himself up. Augustine made the following comment: "What shall He do when He comes to judge, Who did this when He was about to be judged? What shall be His might when He comes to reign, Who had this might when He was about to die?" Then after His second answer He said, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." Willingly He allows Himself bound, on the condition that His own must be free. It is a blessed illustration of the Gospel. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. Substitution is fully revealed in this gracious statement. He gives Himself up that His people might be free.

Then Simon Peter drew the sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus. Peter had slept; had he been watching and praying it would not have occurred. And how beautiful the words of the Lord: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Perfect willingness and readiness to drink the bitter cup were thus expressed in the presence of His disciples and His enemies.

Then follows the account of Peter's denial, the questioning before Annas, which is only reported by John, and finally He was taken into the judgment hall before Pilate. The miserable character of the Roman Governor is brought fully to light in this Gospel. He was destitute of all moral courage; he acted against better knowledge; he knew the Lord was innocent, yet he dared not to acquit Him for fear of displeasing the Jews. Verse 32 refers to the Lord's death by crucifixion, from the hands of the Gentiles. Note the four questions of Pilate. "Art Thou the King of the Jews?"--"What hast Thou done?"--"Art Thou a King then?"--"What is truth?" The Roman historian Suetonius states that many rumors were then prevalent that a King was about to rise among the Jews who would have dominion over the whole world. No doubt Pilate knew of these rumors and therefore asked the Lord about His Kingship. The answer of our Lord, "My Kingdom is not of this world," has often been misconstrued to mean that the Lord never will have a Kingdom in this world in the sense of a literal Kingdom. Our post-millennial friends use it against a literal interpretation of the prophecies relating to the coming of an earthly Kingdom of Christ. What our Lord meant by saying "My Kingdom is not of this world" is, that His Kingdom has not its origin or nature from the world. He will receive the Kingdom promised unto Him from the Father's hands. (Daniel 7:14.)

CHAPTER 19

1. Behold the Man! 1-7. 2. The Last Question of Pilate and Christ's Last Word. 8-11.
3. Delivered up and Crucified. 12-18.
4. The Title upon the Cross. 19-22.
5. The Parted Garments. 23-24.
6. Behold Thy Son! Behold Thy Mother! 25-27.
7. It is Finished! 28-30.
8. His Legs not Broken. 31-33.
9. The Testimony of the Scriptures. 34-37.

10. The Burial in the Garden. 38-42.

The cruel scourging, such as cruel Rome had invented, then took place. It often was so severe that prisoners died under the awful blows. What pen can ever describe the suffering and the shame He endured! Perhaps Pilate thought this awful scourging would satisfy the Jews, so that the Lord would be released. Then the mockery followed. The crown of thorns, the emblem of the curse of sin, was put upon His holy brow. The sin-bearer wore that crown for us, that we might wear a crown of glory. When He comes again He comes with many crowns. (Revelation 19:12.) They put the robe of purple, the imperial color, upon Him; ridiculed and smote Him. Then Pilate led Him forth and said: "Behold the Man." Was it pity or contempt? Most likely both. But oh! the sight! To see Him, Who is the Life and the Light, the Holy One, the Creator, treated thus by the creature of the dust! Satan's power energized the chief priests and officers, and the answer they give as they behold "the Man of Sorrows" is "Crucify Him!" "He made Himself the Son of God" was their wicked accusation. He is the Son of God and because He had come in marvelous love to this poor lost world, He was condemned to die.

The last word the Lord Jesus spoke to Pilate is found in verse 11. The authority given from above is from God, Who spared not His own Son; but the Jews, who delivered Him up to Pilate, have the greater sin. Once more we hear Pilate's voice, "Behold your King!" They answer: "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" And then again: "Shall I crucify your King?" The answer of complete apostasy follows: "We have no King but Caesar." Pilate is lost; he delivered Him to be crucified. We see the Lord bearing His cross to the place of the skull, Golgotha. Who can describe His agony and His sufferings as He was lifted up! Two others were crucified with Him. "He was numbered with transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12.)

Above His cross was the title written by Pilate himself. It was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. There is no discrepancy between the different Gospels, because they give the inscriptions in different words. Pilate worded them differently in the three languages. Matthew and John report the Hebrew title; Mark gives the Latin and Luke the Greek inscription. (Matthew was guided to leave out "of Nazareth." This is in full accord with the purpose of his Gospel.)

The coat (robe) without seam, woven from the top throughout, is only mentioned by John. The German expositor Bengel calls attention to the fact that our Lord never "rent" His garments in sorrow like Job, Jacob, Joshua, Caleb, Jephthah, Hezekiah, Mordecai, Ezra, Paul and Barnabas. The seamless robe is typical of His perfect righteousness, which now was stripped from Him by man's hand and thus He received the place as the evildoer. Then the prophecy of Psalm 22:18 was literally fulfilled. Could there be anything else but a literal fulfillment of Prophecy?

"The importance of interpreting prophecy literally, and not figuratively, is strongly shown in this verse. The system of interpretation which unhappily prevails among many Christians--I mean the system of spiritualizing away all the plain statements of the prophets, and accommodating them to the Church of Christ-- can never be reconciled with such a verse as this. The plain, literal meaning of words should evidently be the meaning placed on all the statements of Old Testament prophecy. This remark of course does not apply to symbolical prophecies, such as those of the seals, trumpets, and vials in Revelation."

And then the loving tenderness He manifested towards His mother. (Here, with one exception in the first chapter of Acts, we part with Mary; she is not mentioned in the after-books. In all the doctrine of the epistles she has no place. Blessed among women as she is surely by her connection with the human nature of our Lord, the entire silence of Scripture as to her in that fullness of Christian truth which it was the office of the Spirit of truth to communicate is the decisive overthrow of the whole Babel-structure of Mariolatry which Romanism has built up upon a mere sand-foundation. She remains for us in the word of God, a simple woman rejoicing in God her Saviour,--a stone in the temple to His praise, and with no temple of her own. To use the grace of the Redeemer in taking flesh among us by her means to exalt the mother to the dishonor of Christ her Lord is truly a refined wickedness worthy of the arch-deceiver of mankind.--Numerical Bible.)

John has nothing to say of the darkness which enshrouded the Cross. Nor do we find here the cry of the forsaken One: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" The Father did not forsake the Son; this was His statement in Chapter 16:32. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." It is not so much the awful thirst connected with crucifixion which is viewed here, as it is His perfect obedience to do the Father's will and that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. "He bowed His head and gave up the spirit." In Luke's Gospel we read that He said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (23:46); John says nothing of Him commending His spirit, for as the Son of God He did not need to commend Himself to the Father. The final word preceding the giving up of His

spirit is the majestic "It is finished." In the Greek it is but one word, "tetelestai." Never before and never after was ever spoken one word which contains and means so much. It is the shout of the mighty Victor. And who can measure the depths of this one word!

Psalm 34:20 was fulfilled; "A bone of Him shall not be broken." Scripture had to be fulfilled. The spear, which pierced His blessed side, fully evidences that He had died. The blood and water have a most precious meaning. That it was a Supernatural thing we do not doubt. The blood stands for the atonement, which had been made; the water for cleansing. The Jews have a strange tradition that from the rock which was smitten by Moses in the wilderness there flowed, when first smitten, blood and water. (Shemoth Rabba.) John alone mentions this blessed fact. "It is a beautiful testimony of divine grace, answering the last insult man could heap upon Him. They drove Him outside the camp, put Him to death on the Cross, and then, to make His death doubly sure, the soldier pierced His side. Salvation was God's answer to man's insult, for the blood and water were the signs of it." John speaks of this never to be forgotten occurrence, in his first Epistle (5:6). There he mentions water first. It denotes purifying which man needs, and that has come with all its attending blessings by His precious blood. But notice John writes: "And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced." He does not say, another Scripture was fulfilled. Zechariah 12:10 was not fulfilled when He died, but will be fulfilled when He comes again and the believing remnant of Israel mourns for Him.

Nicodemus is mentioned for the third and last time in the Gospel. He came to Jesus by night and heard the Gospel

message from His lips. Later he ventured a weak and timid defense (7:48-53); here he comes out boldly honoring the body of Jesus. Surely he believed and therefore confessed the Lord.

CHAPTER 20

1. The Empty Sepulchre. 1-10.
2. The Risen One and Mary of Magdala. 11-18.
3. The Gathered Company and He in the midst. 19-23.
4. The Second Time. 24-29.
5. The Purpose of John's Record. 30-31.

"I lay down my life that I might take it up again." The sufferings were accomplished. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep and now we learn how He arose from the dead. Chapter 2:19 was fulfilled. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The stone is rolled away; the sepulchre is empty. Mary of Magdala carried the good news to Peter and John. Peter and John ran together to the sepulchre, and John outran Peter. In the sepulchre all is in order. If a thief had stolen the body he would have acted in fear and haste. A thief would not have gone about in such an orderly way. The linen clothes were lying in the proper place; the napkin (soudarion--sweatcloth) was folded inwards (this is the meaning of "entetuligmenon") in a place by itself. He had detached Himself in a miraculous way without disturbing them at all. It is an evidence of His resurrection in His own power as Son of God.

And how beautiful is the incident when Mary stood weeping and looking into the sepulchre! She beheld two angels there, yet she was not frightened when she beheld these mysterious Beings. Her heart was so occupied with her Lord that she did not even inquire of the angels. But they addressed her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" Then He came Himself. Her tears of ignorance and unbelief held her eyes that she did not recognize Him till He, Who in resurrection is the great Shepherd of the sheep, called her by name. What sound that one word "Mary" must have had in her ears and heart! She would fall at His feet and hold Him, as the other women held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. (Matthew 28:9.) But He told her: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." Matthew reports how they touched Him and held Him by the feet. He is presented in that Gospel as Israel's King. Not a word is said in the first Gospel of His ascension. He is presented in Matthew as if He were to remain on earth, in an earthly relationship with His people. This is why He permitted the holding

of His feet. It is symbolical of how the remnant of Israel will enjoy His presence on earth as King in the day of His Return. But John's Gospel reveals a new relationship. He is to ascend into heaven to His Father. She must not hold Him as to keep Him here. (The word "touch" really means: to fasten oneself to, to hang on, to lay hold of.) As true believers we are linked with the glorified Lord. This higher relationship He makes known and she becomes the bearer of the great message. The relationship centers in the word "brethren." Risen from the dead He calls His own "brethren" and speaks of "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." He is not ashamed to call us brethren, because He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. (Psalm 22:21-22; Hebrews 2:11-12.) Thus He, the Son of God, Who laid down His life and took it again, has brought us to God, His God and His Father. The Grain of Wheat has brought forth its blessed and gracious fruit in resurrection.

The evening scene of that wonderful day, when He stood in their midst, is very suggestive. In a measure the assembled disciples correspond to the two who, in the first chapter, on the first day abode with Him. Though John does not mention the church, here is a beautiful picture of what the church is. They are shut in and Judaism is shut out. He is in the midst. "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst." Here it is fulfilled for the first time. There is the message of Peace; the sending forth; the Holy Spirit, Who comes from Him, Who as the last Adam is the quickening Spirit. He communicates spiritual life, which is divine life. And the authority of the church in discipline on earth, representing Himself, is made known by Him in verse 23. This authority is not conferred upon a priestly class, a doctrine which has produced the most obnoxious corruption of Christianity, but upon believers, who constitute a church.

Thomas corresponds to Nathanael at the close of the first chapter. Both are unbelieving. Both see first and then believe. Both acknowledge Him as God. Thomas, like Nathanael, is the type of the unbelieving Jewish remnant. The Lord comes the second time and then the remnant of His earthly people will fall at His feet and say, "My Lord and my God."

CHAPTER 21

1. At the Sea of Tiberias. The Third Manifestation. 1-14.
2. Peter's Restoration and Ministry; the manner of His Death Predicted. 15-19.
3. Tarry Till I Come. 20-23.
4. Conclusion. 24-25.

This chapter has often been looked upon as an appendix to the Gospel of John. It is not. Quite true, John states in the last two verses of the preceding chapter the purpose of this Gospel, but that does not mean that the twenty-first chapter has no connection with the Gospel itself. Verse 14 shows that it belongs to the Gospel proper.

The third time that He showed Himself after His resurrection --The first time on the first day of the week (Chapter 20:19); this is typical of the present age, when He is in the midst of His people. The second time, when Thomas was present; typical of His second coming and manifestation to Israel. The third time on the Lake of Tiberias; typical of the future blessings through Israel, and corresponding to the third day in Chapter ii, when there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. The miraculous draught of fishes took place by His power, but the net did not go to pieces. It was different before His death and resurrection; then the net broke. The scene on the Lake of Tiberias foreshadows the ingathering of the nations into His Kingdom when He returns. The number of the fish caught is given, one hundred and fifty-three. The number of the nations of the world known at that time was exactly 153. How significant this is! Thus all the nations of the world will be gathered into His Kingdom.

But there are blessed spiritual lessons here. He is seen as Lord over His own. He can direct our service as He directed the disciples in casting the net at the right side of the ship. He provides for the need of His servants, as He did then in preparing a breakfast for them. (Verse 9.) He restores His servants who fail, as He so graciously restored Peter, and gives a higher and a better service. He also appoints the time and the manner of the servant's departure out of this life; He told Peter when and how he was to die. He said of John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" The Lord did not say that he should not die. John lived the longest of the disciples, and on the Isle of Patmos he beheld the events of the future and heard the voice, "Come up hither" and immediately he was in the Spirit and beheld heavenly things. The words

of our Lord find likewise an application in connection with John's writings.

"It is simple enough to say that John lives on in his writings. But then it might be urged, that is only what all the inspired writers will; still it cannot but come to mind that, in fact, John's writings not only predict circumstantially the Lord's return, but stretch over all the intervening time till then. While he does not take us up into heaven, as Paul does, and show us our place in the glorified Man up there, yet all the more he seems to abide with the people of God on earth until Christ's return, as a human presence watching and caring for them. John may be thus truly said to be waiting with those on earth for his absent Lord in a way in which we could not speak of any other inspired writer." (F.W. Grant.)

The last word John reports in His Gospel, coming from the lips of our Lord, is "Follow thou me." And thus He speaks to all of His people. Wonderful Gospel it is, this Gospel of the Son of God and the Eternal Life! How full and rich each portion of it! And oh! the Grace which has sought us, saved us, made us one with Him, keeps us and which will soon bring us home to the Father's house with its many mansions. May we follow Him in loving obedience, till He comes.

THE BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

Introduction

The book known by the name "The Acts of the Apostles" (The oldest manuscript, the Sinaiticus, dating from the 4th century, given the title simply as "The Acts," which is no doubt the better name for the book), follows the four Gospel records. This is its proper place. The books of the New Testament have been correctly divided into five sections, corresponding to the first five books, with which the Bible begins, that is the Pentateuch. The four Gospels are the Genesis of the New Testament. Here we have the great beginning, the foundation upon which the subsequently revealed Christian doctrines rest. The Book of Acts is the Exodus; God leads out from bondage a heavenly people and sets them free. It is the great historical book of the New Testament given by inspiration, the beginning of the church on earth. The Pauline Epistles are the Leviticus portion. Holiness unto the Lord, the believer's separation and standing in Christ; what the believer has and is in Christ, by whose blood redemption has been purchased, are the core truths of these Epistles. The Epistles of Peter, James, John and Jude, known by the name of the Catholic Epistles, are for the wilderness journey of God's people, telling us of trials and suffering; these correspond to the Book of Numbers. The Book of Revelation in which God's ways are rehearsed, and, so to speak, a review is given of the entire prophetic Word concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God has therefore the same character as Deuteronomy.

By Whom was this Book Written

There is no doubt that the writer of the third Gospel record is the one whom the Holy Spirit selected to write this account of the establishment of the Church on earth and the events connected with it. This becomes clear if we read the beginning of that Gospel and compare it with the beginning of Acts. The writer in the third Gospel says: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:3-4). The Acts of the Apostles begin: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." The former treatise known to Theophilus is the third Gospel, called the Gospel of Luke. The writer of that Gospel must therefore be the penman of the Book of Acts. Though we do not find Luke's name mentioned in the Gospel, nor in the second Book, he was entrusted to write by inspiration, there is no doubt that he wrote them both. We find his name mentioned a number of times in the Epistles, and these references give us the only reliable information we have. In Colossians 4:14 we read of him as "the beloved physician." In the Epistle of Philemon he is called a fellow laborer of the Apostle Paul, and from the last Epistle the great Apostle wrote, the second Epistle to Timothy, we learn that Luke was in Rome with Paul and was faithful to him, while others had forsaken the prisoner of the Lord. From Colossians 4 we also may gather that he was not a Jew, but a Gentile, for with the eleventh verse Paul had mentioned those of the circumcision. Epaphras was one of the Colossians, a Gentile, and then follow the names of Luke and Demas, both of them undoubtedly Gentiles. The reason that the Holy Spirit selected a Gentile to write the Gospel which pictures our Lord as the Man and the Saviour and the Book of Acts, is as obvious as it is interesting. Israel had rejected God's gift, and the glad news of salvation was now to go to the Gentiles. The Gospel of Luke addressed by a Gentile to a Gentile (Theophilus) is the Gospel for the Gentiles, and Luke the Gentile was chosen to give the history of the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem to the Gentiles.

Internal Evidences

There are numerous internal evidences which show likewise that the writer of the third Gospel is the instrument through whom the Book of Acts was given. For instance, there are about fifty peculiar phrases and words in both books which are rarely found elsewhere: they prove the same author.

Then we learn from the Book of Acts that Luke was an eyewitness of some of the events recorded by him in that book. He joined the Apostle during his second missionary journey to Troas (chapter 16:10). This evidence is found in the little word "we." The writer was now in company of the Apostle, whose fellow laborer he was. He went with Paul to Macedonia and remained some time in Philippi. He was Paul's fellow traveler to Asia and Jerusalem (chapter 21:17). He likewise was with him in his imprisonment in Caesarea, and then on to Rome. There is no doubt that Luke had completely written and sent forth the Book of the Acts of the Apostles at the end of the two years mentioned in Acts 28:30, though the critics claim a much later period.

The Contents and Scope of the Book

The first verse gives us an important hint. The former treatise, the Gospel of Luke, contains that Jesus began to do and teach. The Book of Acts contains therefore the continuation of the Lord's actions, no longer on earth, but from the Glory. The actions of the risen and glorified Christ can easily be traced through the entire Book. We give a few illustrations. In the first Chapter He acts in the selection of the twelfth Apostle who was to take the place of Judas. In the second chapter He himself poured forth the Holy Spirit, for Peter made the declaration "therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which ye behold and hear." And in the close of the second chapter we behold another action of the risen Lord, "the Lord added to the assembly daily those that were to be saved." In the third chapter He manifested His power in the healing of the lame man. Throughout this Book we behold Him acting from the Glory, guiding, directing, comforting and encouraging His servants. These beautiful and manifold evidences of Himself being with His own and manifesting His power in their behalf can easily be traced in the different chapters.

Then on the very threshold of the Book we have the historical account of the coming of that other Comforter, whom the Lord had promised, the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, came. His coming marks the birthday of the Church. After that event we see Him present with His people as well as in them. In connection with the Lord's servants in filling them, guiding them, fitting them, sustaining them in trials and persecutions, in the affairs of the church, we behold the actions of the Holy Spirit on earth. He is the great administrator in the church. Over fifty times we find Him mentioned, so that some have called this Book; "the Acts of the Holy Spirit." There are no doctrines about the Holy Spirit and His work in the Book of Acts. But we find the practical illustrations of the doctrines of the Holy Spirit found elsewhere in the New Testament.

In the third place another supernatural Being is seen acting in this Book. It is the enemy, Satan, the hinderer and the accuser of the brethren. We behold him coming upon the scene and acting through his different instruments, either as the roaring lion, or as the cunning deceiver with his wiles. Wherever he can, he attempts to hinder the progress of the Gospel. This is a most important aspect of this Book, and indeed very instructive. Aside from the human instruments prominent in this Book of Acts, we behold three supernatural Beings acting. The risen and glorified Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Satan.

Another hint about the contents of this Book and its scope we find at the close of the Gospel of Luke. There the risen Christ said "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem." In the first chapter of Acts the Spirit of God reports the commission of the Lord, about to ascend, in full. "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The Book of Acts shows us how this mission, beginning in Jerusalem, was carried out. The witness begins in the City where our Lord was crucified. Once more an offer was made to the nation Israel. Then we behold the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem and all Judea to Samaria. and after that to the Gentiles. and through the Apostle Paul it is heralded in the different countries of the Roman empire. The parable of our Lord in Matthew 22:1-10 gives us prophetically the history of these events. First the guests were called to the wedding and they would not come. This was the invitation given by the Lord to His earthly people when He moved among them. They received Him not. Then came a renewed offer with the assurance that all things are ready. This is exactly what we find in the beginning in the Book of the Acts. Once more to Jerusalem and to the Jewish nation is offered the kingdom, and signs and miracles take place to show that Jesus is the Christ risen from the dead. In the above parable our Lord predicted what the people would do with the servants, who bring the second offer. They would ignore the message and treat the servants spitefully and kill them. This we find fulfilled in the persecution which broke out in Jerusalem, when Apostles were imprisoned and others were killed. The Lord also predicted in His parable the fate of the wicked City. It was to be burned. Thus it happened to Jerusalem. And after the second offer had been rejected the servants were to go to the highways to invite the guests. And this shows that the invitation was to go out to the Gentiles.

Jerusalem is in the foreground in this Book, for the beginning was to be in Jerusalem "to the Jew first." The end of the Book takes us to Rome, and we see the great Apostle a prisoner there, a most significant, prophetic circumstance.

The Division of the Book of Acts

"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This verse in the beginning of the book is the key to the historical account it contains. The Holy Spirit came on the day of pentecost and the witness to Christ began. We make a threefold division.

I. The Witness to Jerusalem. The Advent of the Spirit and the Formation of the Church. The Offer to Israel and its Rejection. Chapter 1-7.

II. The Witness to Samaria. Saul's Conversion and Peter's Witness in Caesarea. Chapter 8-12.

III. The Witness to the Gentiles. The Apostle to the Gentiles, His Ministry and Captivity. Chapter 13-28.

While undoubtedly all witnessed, the book of Acts reports mostly the acts of Peter and Paul. The Apostle Peter is in the foreground in the first part of the book. After the twelfth chapter he is mentioned but once more. Then Paul comes upon the scene with His great testimony concerning "The Gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Jerusalem is prominent in the start. Antioch, the Gentile center of Christian activity, follows, and Rome is seen at the close of the book. The witness of which the risen Lord spoke was therefore given to Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria. Then to the uttermost part of the earth. Africa received a witness in the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Then followed the witness to Asia and Europe. The book of Acts ends, so to speak, in an unfinished way.

Analysis and Annotations

Part I

The Witness to Jerusalem.

The Advent of the Spirit and the Formation of the Church.

The Offer to Israel and its Rejection.

Chapters 1-7

CHAPTER 1

1. The Introduction (verses 1-3).
2. The final words of the risen Lord (verses 4- 8).
3. The ascension (verses 9-11).
4. The waiting company (verses 12-14).
5. Matthias chosen in the place of Judas (verses 15-26).

The introductory words prove that Luke is the writer. In the former treatise, Luke had addressed to Theophilus (the Gospel of Luke) the beginning of the teaching, and acts of our Lord were reported. The Book of Acts reveals the same wonderful person witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. Eight things are mentioned concerning our Lord in the beginning of this book. 1.

His earthly life of doing and teaching. 2. He gave them commandment. 3. He had suffered. 4. He had showed Himself after His passion by many infallible proofs. 5. He was seen by them for forty days. 6. He spoke of the things which concern the Kingdom of God. 7. He was taken up. 8. He will come again. Once more He gave to them the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. In verse 5 we read "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." John the Baptist had spoken also of a baptism with fire. The Lord omits the word fire, because the baptism with fire is a judgment act linked with His second coming (See Matthew 3:12). The question they asked of Him concerning the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel was perfectly in order. This is the Hope of Israel; the Hope of the church is not an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly glory; not to be subjects in the kingdom on earth, but to reign and rule with the King. The answer they received assured them that the kingdom was to be restored to Israel; the times and seasons for that, however, rested with the Father.

Then they saw Him ascending. What a sight it must have been! Their Lord was "received into Glory." Gradually in majestic silence He must have been lifted out of their midst. Lovingly His eyes must have rested upon them, while their eyes saw only Him. Then a cloud received Him out of their sight. "And then a cloud took Him in (literal rendering) out of their sight." The cloud was not a common cloud of vapor, but the glory-cloud. It was the cloud of glory which had filled Solomon's temple, which so often in Israel's past history had appeared as an outward sign of Jehovah's presence. Then angels announced His coming in like manner. And thus He will come, even back to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

However, we must beware of confounding this event given here with that blessed Hope, which is the Hope of the church. The Coming of the Lord here is His visible Coming as described in the prophetic books of the Old Testament; it is His coming to establish His rule upon the earth. it is the event spoken of in Daniel 7:14 and Revelation 1:7. When He comes in like manner as He went up, His Saints come with Him (Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:13). The Hope of the church is to meet Him in the air, and not to see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. The coming here "in like manner" is His Coming for Israel and the nations. The Coming of the Lord for His Church, before His visible and glorious manifestation, is revealed in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. It is well to keep these important truths in mind. Confusion between these is disastrous. He left them to enter into the Holy of Holies, to exercise the priesthood which Aaron exercised on the day of atonement, though our Lord is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. And when this promise of the two men in white garments is fulfilled, He will come forth to be a priest upon His throne.

Then we see them as a waiting company. They are not the church. Their waiting for the Coming of the Holy Spirit ended ten days after, when the Holy Spirit came. Since then He is here. To wait for another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as so often done by well meaning people, is unscriptural. Among the waiting ones were "Mary the mother of Jesus and His brethren." The one chosen by God's grace to be the mother of our Lord; Mary, who had conceived by the Holy Spirit, is waiting with the other disciples. This proves that she has no place of superiority among God's people. When the Holy Spirit came she too was baptized by the Spirit into the one body of which, through the Grace of God, she is a member like any other believer in our Lord. After this she is not mentioned again in the Word of God. Mary, the mother of Jesus, has absolutely no relation with the redemption work of the Son of God. His brethren, according to John 7:5, were unbelieving. Since then they had also believed on Him.

The action of Peter in proposing to place another in Judas' place was not a mistake as some claim. Peter acted upon the Scriptures and was guided by the Lord. Some hold that Paul was meant to be the twelfth apostle. This is incorrect. Paul's apostleship was of an entirely different nature than that of the twelve. Not till Israel's complete failure had been demonstrated in the stoning of Stephen was he called, and then not of men, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. There is positive proof that the Holy Spirit sanctioned this action of the disciples. See 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. Furthermore, twelve apostles were needed as a body of witnesses to the entire nation. How strange it would have been if Peter and the ten, eleven men in all, instead of twelve, had stood up on the day of Pentecost to witness to Christ in the presence of the assembled multitude.

CHAPTER 2

1. The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (verses 1-4).
2. The Immediate Effect of His Presence (verses 5-13).
3. Peter's Address (verses 14-36).

4. The Result of the Witness (verses 37-41).

5. The Gathered Company in Fellowship (verses 42-47).

This is an important chapter. The Promise of the Father was fulfilled, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity came down to earth, to be the other Comforter. He came on that blessed day.

Two things are at once apparent. He came upon the assembled believers individually, and also did a work in a corporate way. Each believer on that day was filled with the Holy Spirit. He came as the indweller to each. But He also was present as the mighty rushing wind which filled all the house. He did not only come upon each, but all were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and united into a body. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the more complete revelation is given concerning this fact. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The One Spirit is the Holy Spirit as He came on the day of Pentecost, the One Body is the church. All believers were on that day united by the Spirit into the one body, and since then, whenever and wherever a sinner believes in the finished work of Christ, he shares in that baptism and is joined by the same Spirit to that one body. A believer may be in dense ignorance about all this, as indeed a great many are; but this does not alter the gracious fact of what God has done. The believing company was then formed on the day of Pentecost into one body. It was the birthday of the church.

There is an interesting correspondence between the second chapter of Luke and the second chapter of Acts which we cannot pass by. In the first chapter of Luke we have the announcement of the birth of the Saviour. In the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke we read of the accomplishment of that Promise given to the Virgin. And so the second chapter of Acts contains the fulfillment of a similar promise. The Holy Spirit came and the church, the mystical body of Christ, began.

But the truth concerning the church was not revealed on the day of Pentecost. The twelve apostles were ignorant of what had taken place, and that the church formed would be composed of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews; nor did they know anything of the different relationships of the church. Through the Apostle Paul the full truth concerning the church was made known.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied with visible signs. A new dispensation was inaugurated with outward signs, just as the giving of the law for that dispensation was accompanied with similar signs. (Hebrews 12:18-19.) The rushing mighty wind filled the house, "and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them." The filling of the house indicated the fact that His abode would be the house; the church and the parted tongues upon each head testified to the fact that each had received Him. The Person, not a power or influence given by measure, had filled each believer. He came as the gift of God.

Then they spoke in different languages. The speaking in other languages was a miracle produced by the Holy Spirit, who had come upon them in mighty power. These Galileans spoke in different tongues, sixteen at least, if not more. "By a sudden and powerful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these disciples uttered, not of their own minds, but as mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit, the praises of God in various languages hitherto, and possibly at the time itself, unknown to them" (Dean Alford in Greek Testament).

The significance of this miracle speaking in other tongues is not hard to discover. It was the oral manifestation of the parted tongues of fire, which had come upon each. Besides this it proclaimed the great fact that the Holy Spirit had come to make known the blessed Gospel to all nations under heaven, and though no Gentiles were present when this took place, the languages of the Gentiles were heard, and that from Jewish lips, showing that the Gospel should go forth unto the uttermost part of the earth. But did they utter all an orderly discourse, preaching the truth concerning Christ, or was their speech of an ecstatic nature, in the form of praising God? We believe the latter was the case. We look in vain through this book for the evidences that these believers continued speaking these different languages.

Now, while it is true that there was such a gift as speaking in an unknown tongue in the apostolic age, and no Christian believer would doubt the power of God to impart to a person the gift to preach the Gospel in a foreign tongue, we do not believe that this gift of speaking in an unknown tongue was to abide in the church. Repeatedly claims were made in years

gone by that it had been restored (for instance during the Irvingite delusion in England), but in every case it was found to be spurious or emanating from the enemy. The present day "apostolic or pentecostal movement" with its high pretensions and false doctrines, lacking true scriptural knowledge and wisdom, creating new schisms in the body, with its women leaders and teachers, has all the marks of the same great counterfeiter upon it. (For a closer examination of the speaking in tongues see our larger work on Acts.)

Then Peter stood up with the eleven and gave his great testimony. What boldness he manifested! What a change from the Peter before Pentecost! It was the result of the Holy Spirit he had received. His address dealt with the great historical facts of the Gospel, bearing witness to the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus. In its scope and pointedness it is a remarkable production. It has three parts. 1. He reputes the charge of drunkenness and quotes from Joel, avoiding, however, the statement that Joel's prophecy was fulfilled (verses 14-22). (Joel's Prophecy will be fulfilled in connection with the second Coming of Christ. Then the Holy Spirit, after the predicted judgments are passed, will be poured out upon all flesh. To put the fulfillment in our day is erroneous. See our Exposition of Joel.)

2. Next he gives a brief testimony of the life and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He quotes from the sixteenth Psalm (verses 23-28). 3. The last part of his address shows that the Holy Spirit had come as the result of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The briefest but deepest Messianic Psalm is quoted in this section (Psalm 110). The address as reported closes with the significant word: "Let the whole house of Israel, therefore, assuredly know that God has made Him, this Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (verses 29-36). Notice how the Holy Spirit uses through Peter the Word of God. The Holy Spirit testifies in and through the written Word. The aim of Peter's address was to prove to the house of Israel that the crucified One is raised from the dead and that God made Him Lord and Christ, witnessed to by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Person of Christ and His work is still the great theme. Whenever He is preached the power of God will accompany the message.

Wonderful results followed. The Word had been preached and the power of the Holy Spirit brought the great truths to the hearts and consciences of the hearers. Their guilt in having crucified Jesus had been fully demonstrated, and now they asked, "Now, brethren, what shall we do?" Peter gives the needed answer. Repentance and baptism are the conditions. If these are fulfilled remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are promised to follow. Peter's words wrongly interpreted have led to much confusion. Upon these words doctrines, especially concerning water baptism, have been built, which are not alone nowhere else taught in the Bible, but which are opposed to the Gospel. The words of Peter to his Jewish brethren have been used to make water baptism a saving ordinance, that only by submission to water baptism, with repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, can remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit be obtained. We do not enlarge upon these unscriptural conceptions nor answer the utterly false doctrine of "baptismal regeneration", but rather point out briefly what these words of Peter mean. We must bear in mind that Peter addressed those who had openly rejected Jesus. They had, therefore, also openly to acknowledge their wrong and thus openly own Him as Messiah, whom they had disowned by delivering Him into the hands of lawless men. Repentance meant for them to own their guilt in having opposed and rejected Jesus. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (in which it differs from the baptism of John) was the outward expression of that repentance. It was for these Jews, therefore, a preliminary necessity. And here we must not forget that Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost had it still to do with the kingdom, as we shall more fully learn from his second address in the third chapter. Another offer of the kingdom was made to the nation. The great fact that the Holy Spirit had begun to form the body of Christ, the church, as stated before, was not revealed then. In this national testimony the word "repent" stands in the foreground, and their baptism in the name of Him whom they had crucified was a witness that they owned Him now and believed on Him.

About three thousand souls were added, who repented and were baptized. Then we behold them in blessed fellowship. Doctrine stands first. It is the prominent thing. They continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine. In the doctrine of the Apostles they were in fellowship together, and that fellowship was expressed in "the breaking of bread." It was not a common meal, but the carrying out of the request the Lord had made in the night He was betrayed, when He instituted what we call "the Lord's supper." Prayer is also mentioned. They had all things in common. They were like a great family, which in reality they were through the Grace of God.

And how happy they were! They had Christ, and that was enough. No system of theology, creeds, set of forms or any such thing, with which historical Christianity abounds--"Nothing but Christ." They received their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. Joy and singleness of heart are two great

characteristics of the true believer.

CHAPTER 3

1. The Healing of the lame Man (verses 1-11).
2. Peter's address and appeal (verses 12-26).

The lame man, forty years old, at the gate called Beautiful is the type of the moral condition of the nation, like the impotent man whom the Lord healed (John 5). Israel with all its beautiful religious ceremonies was helpless, laying outside with no strength to enter in. Peter commands the lame man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to rise up and to walk. He is instantly healed. He then walked and leaped and entered through the gate as a worshipper into the temple, praising God. This great miracle was wrought as another evidence to the unbelieving nation that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected and crucified, is their Messiah and King. It was a proof that the rejected One, who had died on a cross and had been buried, is living in Glory, and that God's omnipotent power had been revealed in answer to that name. The miracle also denoted that the promised kingdom was once more offered to the nation. Concerning that kingdom, when it comes, it is written that "the lame man shall leap as an hart." (Isaiah 35:6.) But the lame man, so wonderfully healed, leaping and praising God, is likewise a picture of what the nation will be in a future day, when they will look upon Him whom they have pierced (See Zechariah 12:10; Ezekiel 36:27; Isaiah 12:1-6; 35:10). Peter delivers his second address. Interesting and of much importance are verses 19-21. They can only be understood in the right way if we do not lose sight of the fact to whom they were addressed, that is to Jews, and not to Gentiles. They are the heart of this discourse, and as such a God-given appeal and promise to the nation. If this is lost sight of, the words must lose their right meaning. The repentance which is demanded of them is an acknowledgment of the wrong they had done in denying the Holy and righteous One, a confession of their blood-guiltiness in having slain the author of life. This, of course, would result in their conversion and the blotting out of their sins as a nation. This God had promised before to the nation (Isaiah 44:22-23).

The "times of refreshing" and "restitution of all things" are expressions in which the Holy Spirit gathers together the hundreds of promises He gave through the different prophets of God concerning a time of great blessing for His people, and through them for the nations of the world. It would be impossible to mention all these promises and in what the times of refreshing and restoration of all things consist. These days of a coming age, the kingdom age, or as we call it because its duration will be a thousand years, the Millennium, are fully described on the pages of Old Testament prophecy. Not alone will the nation be blessed, but Jerusalem will be a great city; the land will be restored and become the great center for blessing; the nations of the earth will receive blessings, and groaning creation will be delivered from its groans and the curse which rests upon it. If we interpret the Word of Prophecy literally and cease spiritualizing it, we shall have no difficulty to behold the full meaning of the times of refreshing and the restitution of all things. The latter word does not include a restoration of the wicked dead, a second chance for those who passed out of this life in an unsaved condition. And these glorious times cannot come till the Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

CHAPTER 4

1. Their Arrest (verses 1-3).
2. The Result of the Testimony (verse 4).
3. Peter and John before the Rulers and Elders (verses 5-7).
4. Peter's bold witness (verses 8-12).
5. The astonished Sanhedrin and their Release (verses 13-22).
6. With their own company (verses 23:31).
7. The saved multitude (verses 32-37).

The enemy begins now his acts, and the first indication is given that the offer God's mercy was making to the nation would not be accepted. The Holy Spirit was acting mightily through the spoken Word, but these ecclesiastical leaders were hardening their hearts against the Word and the Spirit of God. The hate against that blessed Name broke out anew under the satanic power to which they had yielded. And the Sadducees came too. Though not much had been said on the resurrection, yet these rationalists, or as we would call them today, "higher critics," were much distressed because they preached Jesus and the resurrection. The next step is the arrest and imprisonment of the two apostles. Rough hands seize them. Of the Apostles we read nothing else. They submitted. The power of the Holy Spirit now manifested itself in a new way with them. They could suffer, and perhaps with great joy; in perfect peace they allowed themselves to be taken away.

We have here also the first fulfillment of the many predictions given by our Lord that His own were to suffer persecution (Matthew 10:16-17; Mark 13:9; John 20:20). In Peter's witness we see the effect of the filling with the Spirit. What holy boldness he exhibited! He quotes the same Scripture passage to the assembled Sanhedrin, which the Lord had mentioned in their presence (See Matthew 22:23-41).

They knew that the Lord meant them when He quoted that verse, that they were the builders, who were to reject Him. They had done so in fulfillment of that prophecy. Peter's words are directed straight at them, "He is the stone which has been set at naught by you, the builders."

The rejected stone had become the corner stone. The One whom they had delivered up and cast out had been given the prominent place of the corner stone upon whom, as the foundation stone, everything rests, and who unites the building.

Peter closes with the statement that salvation is only in Him whom they had set at naught. There is no other Name given to men by which man can be saved, and that is the Name of Him who had made this lame man whole. Salvation they all needed. They, too, rulers, elders, chief priests must be saved. But only in Him God had procured salvation free and complete for all who will have it by believing on Him. This salvation was offered to these rulers, the builders who had rejected the Lord.

They were then threatened by the astonished rulers and elders and set at liberty. We find them in their own company and after praise and prayer new manifestations of the Holy Spirit follow. In the closing verses we have another glimpse of the assembly in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 5

1. Ananias and Sapphira (verses 1-10).
2. Signs and wonders by the Apostles (verses 11-16).
3. The second arrest of the Apostles and their Deliverance (verses 17-25).
4. Before the Council (verses 26-33).
5. Gamaliel's Advice (verses 34-39).
6. The Apostles beaten and dismissed (verses 40-42).

With this chapter the scene changes. Beautiful is the ending of the previous chapter, Barnabas having sold his land, laid the money at the feet of the Apostles. He gave by it a striking testimony how he realized as a believing Jew his heavenly portion, by giving up that which is promised to the Jew, earthly possessions.

Our chapter begins with the significant word "But." It is the word of failure and decline. All was evidently perfect; nothing marred the precious scenes of fellowship--"but," and with this little word the story of evil begins. The enemy seeing himself so completely defeated by his attacks from the outside now enters among the flock and begins his work within.

Ananias and Sapphira were lying to the Holy Spirit. Swift judgment followed as to their earthly existence. They were cut off by death. The sin they had done was "a sin unto death" and the sentence, physical death, was immediately carried out. Peter is still in the foreground. We must remember here the words of the Lord which He spake to Peter, after this disciple had confessed Him as Son of God. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The same words concerning binding and loosing the Lord addressed to all the disciples (Matthew 18:18). The binding and loosing refers to discipline on earth. It has nothing whatever to do with forgiveness of sins or eternal salvation. Peter here exercises this authority, it was the first discipline. We must likewise remember that these events happened on Jewish, on kingdom ground. The witness was still to the nation. The sudden judgment which came upon Ananias and Sapphira was a strong witness to the nation that the Holy One of Israel, Jehovah, dwelt in the midst of this remnant, who believed in the One whom the nation had rejected. When the kingdom is established on earth and the Lord Jesus Christ rules in righteousness, then, no doubt, every sin will be swiftly judged by death.

Great things followed. Their habitual place seems to have been in Solomon's porch. No one dared to join them. They held the position of authority. Though they had been forbidden the public ministry they are back in a prominent place. The people magnified them too. Then another result was that more believers were added. Added to what? The First Hebrew Christian Church of Jerusalem? The First Jewish Christian Society? No. They were added to the Lord. The sinner believing is saved, receives the Holy Spirit, is joined to the Lord, becomes one spirit with the Lord, a member of the body of which He is the Head. Signs and wonders were done by the Apostles. The sick were healed, unclean spirits were driven out. Multitudes of people from the surrounding country flocked to Jerusalem, bringing their sick, and they were all healed. They waited even in the streets for the time when Peter walked along so that his shadow might fall on some of them. These were great manifestations of the power of God. The words spoken by the Lord were then fulfilled. They did the works He did. These signs and wonders, however, are nowhere mentioned as to their permanency throughout this age. They were only for the beginning of this age; after the Gospel of Grace and the mystery hidden in former ages had been fully made known they disappeared.

All the Apostles were then arrested and Put into the common prison. During the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison door and led them out. Such a manifestation was perfectly in order at that time, and fully corresponds with the other kingdom characteristics in the beginning of this book. But these supernatural manifestations have ceased. Peter once more with the other Apostles bears witness to the resurrection and exaltation of the rejected Christ. On the advice of Gamaliel they were released after they had been beaten. With rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name, they departed and continued in their great ministry.

CHAPTER 6

1. The Murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews (verses 1-7).
2. Stephen; His Ministry and Arrest (verses 8-15).

Another failure is brought before us. The enemy acts again. From without and from within Satan pressed upon that which was of God. While the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit acted in Grace and power, the enemy came in to disturb. It is still so. Whenever there is a door opened there are also many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9).

The flesh manifested itself in murmuring. The assembly took care of the poor; widows being specially helpless, were the objects of daily ministrations. The Jews themselves in connection with the synagogue had special funds for them. They must have also formed a recognized group in the early church (1 Timothy 5:9-10). The ministration is the distribution mentioned in Chapter 4:35, and as the multitude was very great, including, perhaps, hundreds of widows, this work was quite a task. Murmurings arose and these were born of jealousy, the result of unbelief. It is the first indication of weakness and failure. This reminds us of the murmurings of Israel as recorded in the book of Exodus. The same old thing, the changeless flesh, shows itself among the saved and united company of believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The murmurings were on the side of the Grecians. Their complaint was against the Hebrews that the Grecian widows were being overlooked. The Grecians were not, as some teach, Gentiles, but they were Greek-speaking Jews, born in countries outside of Palestine, and therefore called Hellenists, or Grecians.

The murmuring is at once arrested. Seven men are chosen under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles declared "we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." The Holy Spirit thus separated the gifts called to minister in spiritual things from those in temporal matters. Note how prayer is put before the ministry of the Word. There can be no effectual ministry, no successful preaching and teaching of the Word, unless it is preceded by prayer.

The seven chosen ones are then named. While we know little of these men and the service they rendered, with the exception of Stephen and Philip, it is an interesting fact that their names are all Greek. In this the grace of God is beautifully exhibited. The Grecians were the murmurers, and no doubt they were fewer in number than the Hebrews. A modern day church meeting would have proposed to elect a committee composed of equal numbers of the two parties. But not so here.

Grace and wisdom from above are manifested in this action. The entire seven were chosen from those who had complained. This was the blessed rebuke of Grace.

The seven were then set before the Apostles, and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them. As this "laying on of hands" is so much misunderstood, and has been made an act by which authority, power and blessing is claimed to be conferred, we must say a brief word on it. It is always proper in reading and interpreting the Word of God, to see if not elsewhere in the Bible the terms or things to be interpreted are used, so that through them the right meaning can be ascertained. The laying on of hands is first mentioned in the Book of Leviticus. In the opening chapters of that book we read how the offerer was to lay his hand upon the head of the offering. Thus we read of the Peace offering: "He shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering" (Leviticus 3:2). This meant the identification of the Israelite with the offering itself. And this is the meaning of the laying on of hands from the side of the Apostles. They identified themselves and the assembly with them in their work for which they had been chosen. It was a very simple and appropriate act to show their fellowship with them. All else which has been made of the laying on of hands is an invention. There is no Scripture for the present day usage in Christendom, that a man in order to preach the Gospel or teach the Word of God must be "ordained."

miracles among the people. Certain of the synagogue of the Libertines and others disputed with Stephen. (It is wrong to call these "Libertines" free thinkers. Jews had been taken to Rome as slaves. Their descendants who had been liberated were called Libertines, that is freedmen. They were known as such in Jerusalem and hence the name "synagogue of the Libertines.") And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Stephen is accused of blasphemy. The charge is "blasphemy against Moses and against God." They succeeded in their satanic work by stirring up the people, the elders and the scribes. Three things are mentioned by them. He ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, against the law, and that he should have said: "This Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." And then they looked upon him, and behold his face was like the face of an angel. All eyes were attracted to this wonderful sight. Steadfastly they looked upon a face of Glory; a face

reflecting heaven's light, heaven's Glory; a face reflecting the Glory of Him into whose presence he soon would be called. And may not that young man named Saul also have been there and seen that face? And that dark countenance of that young Pharisee of Tarsus was soon to behold that same Glory-light, and then tell the world of the Gospel of the Glory and that "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory unto glory."

CHAPTER 7

1. The Address of Stephen (verses 1-53).
2. The Martyrdom of Stephen (verses 54-60).

This is the largest chapter in this book and concludes the first section. Stephen is the chosen instrument to deliver the final testimony to the nation. He was not permitted to finish it.

We notice at once a marked difference between the previous preaching by the Apostle Peter and the address of Stephen.

The testimony of Peter was marked on the day of Pentecost and at the other occasions by great brevity. Stephen's address is the longest discourse reported in the New Testament. The name of Jesus is prominent in all the addresses of Peter. The fact that He was rejected by the people, crucified and that He rose from the dead, and the call to repentance, were the leading features of Peter's preaching. Stephen does not mention the Name of Jesus at all, though he has the person of Christ and His rejection as the theme of his testimony. (The name "Jesus" appears in the A.V. in verse 45; but it should be "Joshua" instead.) At the close of his address he speaks of the Just One of whom they had become betrayers and murderers.

Stephen had been accused of speaking against Moses and against God, also against the temple and the law. These accusations he is asked to answer. What he declared before the council shows plainly that the accusations are utterly false. His speech is, therefore, partly apologetic; but it is also teaching, in that it shows certain truths from the historic events he cites. And before he finishes his testimony the accused becomes the accuser of the nation; the one to be judged becomes the judge. Indeed his whole testimony as he rapidly speaks of past history in his great and divinely arranged retrospect, is a most powerful testimony to the nation as well as against the nation.

The great address falls into the following sections: 1. Abraham's History (verses 2-8). 2. Joseph and his brethren (verses 9-16). 3. The Rejection of Moses. The rejected one became their Deliverer and Ruler (verses 17-38). 4. The Story of the nation's apostasy and shame (verses 39-50). Then Stephen ceased his historical retrospect, he addressed them directly. The accused witness becomes the mouthpiece of the Judge, who pronounces the sentence upon the nation. This is found in verses 51-53. His martyrdom followed.

Three things are mentioned of this first martyr. He was full of the Holy Spirit; he looked steadfastly into heaven, seeing the glory of God; he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

This is the first manifestation of the glorified Christ, which we have on record. There are three of them only. He appeared here to Stephen. Then He appeared unto Saul, who consented unto Stephen's death. Saul beheld Him in that Glory, brighter than the noon-day sun, and heard His voice. The last time the glorified Christ manifested Himself was to John in the island of Patmos. These three appearances of the glorified Christ present to our view the three aspects of His Second Coming. First He comes to welcome His own into His presence. He will arise and come into the air to meet His beloved co-heirs there. This is represented by the first appearing to Stephen, standing to receive him. Then Israel will behold Him, they who pierced Him will see Him, as Saul of Tarsus beheld the Lord. Then He will appear as John saw Him, the One who judges the earth in righteousness.

And now after this great and glorious vision, Stephen bears testimony to it. "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." He speaks of the Lord as "Son of Man." This is the only time outside of the Gospel records that we find this title of the Lord (aside from the old Testament reference in Hebrews 2).

They stoned him and Stephen, the mighty witness and mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, fell asleep.

God's gracious offer and Christ had now been fully rejected by the nation. Stephen, who bore this last witness, is a striking evidence of the transforming power of Christ. How much like the Lord he was!

He was filled with the Spirit, full of faith and power, and like the Lord he did great wonders and miracles among the people. Like Christ, he was falsely accused of speaking against Moses, the law and the temple, and of being a blasphemer. They brought him before the same council and did what they did with the Lord, bringing false witnesses against him. He gave witness to the truth of the confession the Lord had given before the council, that He was to sit at the right hand of God. He beheld Him there. The Lord Jesus committed His spirit in the Father's hands, and Stephen prayed that the Lord Jesus receive his spirit; and like the Lord he prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies. May the same power transform us all into the same image.

Part II

The Witness to Samaria.

Saul's Conversion and Peter's Witness in Caesarea.

Chapters 8-12

CHAPTER 8

1. The first great persecution (verses 1-3).
2. The preaching of the scattered believers. Philip in Samaria (verses 4-8).
3. Events in Samaria (verses 9-24).
4. The Gospel in many villages of Samaria (verse 25).
5. Philip and the Eunuch (verses 26-40).

The final testimony to the rulers of the people had been given. It was rejected, and the Spirit filled messenger killed. The last offer had therefore been completely rejected. The Gospel is now to be sent to the Gentiles. The eighth chapter gives the record how Samaria heard the Gospel.

Saul, the young Pharisee, was consenting unto Stephen's death. Later he refers to the scene, which must have been impossible for him to erase from his memory. "When the blood of Stephen was shed, I was standing by and keeping the garments of them that slew him" (Acts 22:20). Concerning Saul the Lord said to Ananias, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (9:16). What was done unto Stephen was done unto Saul. The Jews and Saul with them, as we believe, disputed and resisted Stephen in the synagogue. The Jews disputed with Paul, resisted him, and rejected his testimony. Stephen was accused of blasphemy; so was Paul (Acts 19:37). Stephen was accused of speaking against Moses, the holy place and the customs; so was Paul (Acts 21:28; 24:6; 25:8; 28:17). They rushed upon Stephen with one accord and seized him. The same happened to Paul (Acts 19:29). Stephen was dragged out of the city. So was Paul (Acts 14:19). Stephen was tried before the Sanhedrin; so did Paul appear before the Sanhedrin. Stephen was stoned and Paul was stoned at Lystra. Stephen suffered martyrdom; so did Paul in Rome. And yet, with all the sufferings that Paul had to undergo, he rejoiced. His eyes rested constantly upon that glorious One, whom Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, beheld in Glory. Later we hear him crying out from the prison in Rome, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Philippians 3:10).

The first great persecution then broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Saul was evidently the leader (Acts 26:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13). But "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." God permitted this persecution that His Word might now be scattered abroad by the suffering saints. Philip, the Grecian Jew, one of the chosen seven, not an Apostle, is mightily used in preaching the Gospel in Samaria. The first missionary move to extend the Gospel was, therefore, not brought about under apostolic leadership, nor by the decree of an apostolic council, but by the Lord Himself. He led Philip to Samaria, where He Himself had been, yea to the very city of Samaria, Sychar (John 4). Great results followed the preaching of the Gospel. Miracles took place. Unclean spirits were driven out, many taken with palsies, and those who were lame were healed, so that there was great joy in that city. Simon Magus was a sinister instrument of Satan. He bewitched the people of Samaria, claiming to be some great one.

The hour of deliverance came for the Samaritans when Philip preached the Word, concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Signs and great miracles followed, and the Samaritans believed and were baptized. The miracles were done to show the power of God, to attest the preaching of the Gospel by Philip, and to expose the counterfeit powers of Simon. And he, like the sorcerers of Egypt, had to own that this was the power of God. He was amazed when he beheld the great miracles. But more than that, he also believed, was baptized, and then continued with Philip. But his faith was not through the Word of God. God's Word alone can produce faith in man, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Simon was captivated by the miracles he had seen. Philip was deceived by him, but not Peter, who uncovered his Wickedness.

That the Holy Spirit had not been given to the Samaritans and that He was received by them after Peter and John had come from Jerusalem and laid hands on them, has puzzled many earnest students of the Word. It has also led to erroneous teachings, as if the Holy Spirit must be received in a special manner after conversion.

The Samaritan believers had to be identified with those in Jerusalem, so much the more because there was a schism between Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria had denied both the city of Jerusalem and the temple. This had to be ended and could no longer be tolerated. It was therefore divinely ordered that the gift of the Spirit in their case should be withheld till the two apostles came from Jerusalem. This meant an acknowledgment of Jerusalem; if the Holy Spirit had been imparted unto them at once it might have resulted in a continuance of the existing rivalry. And Peter is in the foreground and uses the keys of the kingdom of heaven here with the Samaritans as he did on the day of Pentecost with the Jews, and later with the Gentiles. Nowhere in the church epistles, in which the great salvation truths and blessings in Christ Jesus are revealed, is there a word said about receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, or that one who has trusted in Christ and is born again should seek the gift of the Holy Spirit afterward.

The conversion of the Eunuch is full of blessed lessons. Philip was obedient to the call of the Lord and the Eunuch, the prominent Ethiopian, Queen Candace's treasurer, who had returned from Jerusalem, an unsatisfied seeker, believed on the Lord Jesus and went on his way rejoicing. Verse 37 is an interpolation and should be omitted. Philip was caught away and was found some twenty miles north of Gaza, at Azotus. From there he started out anew preaching the Gospel. In many cities his voice was heard. These coast cities were inhabited by many Gentiles and included larger places like Jamnia, Lydda, Joppa and Antipatris. The day of Christ will make known the labors and also the reward of this great Evangelist. Then he came to Caesarea. But did he stop with that? We do not know. Twenty years later we find him there and Paul was then his guest.

CHAPTER 9

1. The vision of Glory on the road to Damascus (verses 1-9).
2. Instructions given to Ananias (verses 10-16).
3. Saul filled with the Spirit, is baptized and preaches that Jesus is the Son of God (verses 17-22).
4. Saul persecuted and back in Jerusalem (verses 23-31).
5. Further Acts of Peter (verses 32-43).

The previous chapter must be looked upon in its main part as a parenthesis. The record now leads us back to the close of the seventh, and the person who was connected with the great tragedy enacted there is prominently brought now before us. The witnesses of the wicked deed had laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. This is the first time this remarkable man is mentioned. We also learned that he was consenting unto Stephen's death; he made havoc of the church and committed men and women to prison. While the scattered believers had carried the Gospel throughout Judea, Philip had gone down to Samaria and with great results preached the Gospel, and during the same time Peter and John preached in the Samaritan villages, Saul carried on his work of persecution. This we learn from the opening verse of the present chapter. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest." The conversion of this great persecutor and his call by the risen and glorified lord to be the Apostle to the Gentiles is the event which is next described. It is the greatest event recorded in Acts next to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Saul was from Tarsus in Cilicia, where he had become acquainted with Greek life, literature, art and philosophy. The chief industry of Tarsus was tent making. This trade the young Saul learned. He had a married sister living in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). He also was a Roman citizen.

Saul received his religious education in Jerusalem. We find this from his own words, "I am verily a man, a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect

manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye are all this day" (Acts 22:3).

That Saul was highly respected in Jerusalem and close to the leaders of the people, is seen by the letters entrusted to him and the commission to Damascus. He may have been even a member of the council, for "he voted." "When they (Christians) were put to death, I gave my voice (literally, my vote) against them" (Acts 26:10).

And now God's marvelous Grace and Power in salvation is to be manifested. Israel as a nation had rejected the offer and Stephen's death marked the end of that gracious offer. But God can manifest even greater riches of His Grace and display His great Love. Saul not alone belonged to the nation, which had rejected Christ, but shared in that rejection, but he was, so to speak, the heading up of all the hatred and malignity against the Christ of God. He personified the blindness, unbelief and hatred of the whole nation. He was indeed an enemy, the greatest enemy, the chief of sinners. Surely only Grace could save such a one, and Grace it is, which is now to be manifested in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the Grace which he was to know first by the vision of the glorified Christ, and which he, ever after, was to proclaim and make known to others.

The vision itself which burst upon Saul on the road to Damascus is one of the greatest in the whole Bible. It has baffled unbelief. Infidels of all descriptions, French rationalists like Renan, reformed rationalistic Jews, and the worst of all, the advocates of the destructive Bible Criticism, have tried to explain the occurrence in some natural way.

Renan said that it was an uneasy conscience with unstrung nerves, fatigue of the journey, eyes inflamed by the hot sun, a sudden stroke of fever, which produced the hallucination. And this nonsense is repeated to this day. Others of the critics have stated that it was a thunderstorm which overtook him, and that a flash of lightning blinded him. In that lightning flash he imagined that he saw Christ. Again, others have tried to explain his vision by some physical disease. Jews and others have declared that he suffered from Epilepsy, which the Greeks called "the holy disease." This disease, they say, put him into a state of ecstasy, which may have greatly impressed his Gentile hearers. In such an attack he imagined to have seen a vision and heard a voice. All these and other opinions are puerile inventions. The fact is, the conversion of Saul is one of the great miracles and evidences of Christianity.

The ninth chapter does not contain the full record of what happened on the road to Damascus. The Apostle Paul himself relates twice his own experience in chapter 22:5-16 and in chapter 26:12-18. He also mentions his conversion briefly in 1 Corinthians 15:8; Galatians 1:15-16 and 1 Timothy 1:12-13. The three accounts of Saul's conversion are not without meaning. The one before us in the ninth chapter is the briefest, and is simply the historical account of the event as it had to be embodied in the Book of the Acts, as history. The account in the twenty-second chapter was given by Paul in the Hebrew tongue; it is the longest statement and was addressed to the Jews. The account in the twenty-sixth chapter was given in presence of the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa, therefore addressed to both Jews and Gentiles. But are there not discrepancies and disagreements in these three accounts? Such has been the claim from the side of men who reject the inspiration of the Bible. There are differences, but no disagreements. These differences in themselves are the evidences of inspiration. The differences, however, are simply in the manner in which the facts of the event are presented.

He saw then the glorified One and heard His voice. This great vision became the great turning point of his life. He received perfect knowledge and assurance, that the rejected Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. The great event is prophetic. It will be repeated on a larger scale when the Lord Jesus comes again and the remnant of Israel sees Him coming in the clouds of heaven.

The words which the Lord addressed to Saul:--"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" contain the blessed Gospel he was soon to proclaim. He did not persecute Christ, but those who had believed on Him.

Every believing sinner is a member of the body of Christ. Christ in Glory, the Lord, who spoke to Saul in the way, is the Head of that body, the church. Christ is in each member of His body, His life is there; and every believer is in Christ. "Ye in Me and I in you." And this great hidden mystery flashes forth in this wonderful event for the first time "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me." "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The poor, hated, despised Nazarenes, whom the mad, Jewish zealot Saul of Tarsus had driven out of Jerusalem, put into prison and delivered unto death, were one with the Lord in Glory. They were identified with Him and He with them. Their persecution meant His persecution, in their affliction He was afflicted. They were members of His body and that body was in existence.

Soon after we see the erstwhile persecutor preaching Jesus, that He is the Son of God. Persecution soon followed. He also spent a time in Arabia and then paid a visit to Jerusalem for fifteen days (Galatians 1:17-24). Further Acts of Peter by divine power conclude this chapter.

CHAPTER 10

1. Cornelius of Caesarea and his Preparation (verses 1-8).
2. The Trance-vision of Peter (verses 9-16).
3. Peter with Cornelius at Caesarea (verses 17-33).
4. Peter Preaching to the Gentiles (verses 34-43).
5. The Interrupted Message (verses 44-48).

The ending of the preceding chapter tells us that Peter tarried in Joppa in the house of Simon the tanner. Was he breaking with his Jewish law and customs? Tanning as a trade was considered unclean by the Jews.

In Ephesians 2:11-18 we read of the Grace of God to the Gentiles. Up to this time in the Book of Acts we have seen nothing of this gracious purpose, the blessed result of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Jerusalem heard the Gospel first. Once more the good news of the Kingdom was preached with a full offer of forgiveness to the Jews. God was willing to blot out their transgressions and to make good all He had promised to the nation. Many signs and miracles had been done in Jerusalem in demonstration of the resurrection from the dead of the Prince of Life, whom they had crucified. We have seen how the seventh chapter in this book marks the close of that special offer to Jerusalem. Immediately after the death of Stephen, the Gospel was carried into Judea and Samaria. In Samaria a people heard and accepted the glad tidings. They were a mixed race and practiced circumcision and obeyed parts of the law. In the ninth chapter the conversion of Paul is recorded and the Lord makes known that the persecutor of the church is to be the chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles. Paul, however, was not chosen to open first the door to the Gentiles as such, but Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision. A new work is given him to do, which was indeed a strange work for a Jew. He was to go to the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered unclean. It was unlawful for a Jew to join himself to any Gentile; an insurmountable barrier divided them. For this reason the Jews considered the Gentiles as unclean, common, spoke of them as dogs, and had no intercourse with them. It is of interest to notice that Peter tarried in Joppa; from this old city he is to be sent forth to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his household. Centuries ago another Jew had come to Joppa with a solemn message from his God, which he was commissioned to bear far hence to the Gentiles. Jonah, the prophet, took a ship from Joppa and refused obedience to the divine call.

But here is one who is obedient to the heavenly vision and who is to bring a higher message to the Gentiles, the good news of a free and full salvation. That Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision, was chosen for this great errand, was all important hint that the middle wall of partition had been broken down and that believing Jews and Gentiles were to form one new man.

Cornelius belonged to that class of Gentiles who, illumined by the Holy Spirit, had turned to God from idols, to serve the true and the living God. He was therefore a converted man, for God acknowledged him as such. Of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessed assurance of that salvation he knew nothing. His prayers had been heard. The angel who appeared gave Cornelius the full directions where Peter was to be found. While the messengers were hastening to Joppa, Peter had his vision.

And what is the meaning of the vision? The vessel is the type of the church. The four corners represent the four corners of the earth. The clean animals it contained, the Jews; the unclean, the Gentiles. But all in that vessel are cleansed. The Grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed those who are in Christ. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Jew and Gentile believing,

redeemed by blood, saved by Grace, washed and sanctified, are to be put into one body.

Then Peter reached Caesarea and preached to Cornelius and those who were gathered together. How different this message from those he delivered in Jerusalem. There are a few introductory remarks followed by a declaration of the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Then he pressed the message home to their hearts. "To Him give all the Prophets witness that through His Name whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins." This was his last word to the assembled company. It is the first time we find the word "whosoever" in this book. He had nothing to say to this Gentile company about repentance and baptism. His message was interrupted. They believed and the Holy Spirit fell on them.

Something new had taken place. On Pentecost it meant water baptism as a condition of receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and the remission of sins; in Samaria the Apostles Peter and John, according to the wisdom of God, had to lay on hands, but here without water baptism and laying on of hands the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles. Nor was there any process of seeking, surrendering, examining themselves, giving up, praying for it, but by hearing of faith, in believing the message of the Gospel the Holy Spirit fell on them. And to show that every barrier between Jew and Gentile had been removed, that nothing inferior had been bestowed upon Gentiles, than that which came upon the believing Jews on the day of Pentecost, Cornelius, his kinsmen and friends spoke with tongues and magnified God. It was the conclusive evidence that Gentiles, uncircumcised and unbaptized, received the Holy Spirit like the Jews.

Water baptism follows. Up to this chapter water baptism preceded the gift of the Holy Spirit. This shows the place water baptism holds on the ground of grace. Water baptism has no place in the proclamation of the Gospel of Grace. It is not a means of grace, nor a sacrament. Peter, however, does not slight nor ignore baptism. "Can any man forbid water?" Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER 11

1. Peter's Defense in Jerusalem (verses 1-18).
2. The Beginning of the Church in Antioch (verses 19-21).
3. Barnabas sent to Antioch (verses 22-26).
4. The Prophecy of Agabus (verses 27-30).

Peter silenced the objections of his brethren in Jerusalem by a rehearsal of his experience. Verse 19 connects with Chapter 8:4. Antioch comes now into prominence as the great Gentile center of Christianity. A great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Then Barnabas was sent to Antioch to inspect the great work. They wanted to know in Jerusalem if the reports were true, and if true the assembly had to be recognized as such. This shows that the Oneness of the church, though not yet fully made known by revelation, was nevertheless realized through the Holy Spirit. And that a blessed relationship existed between the assembly in Jerusalem and the one in Antioch, is seen by Peter's visit in that city, when in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, he ate with these believing Gentiles and enjoyed fellowship with them (Galatians 2:11-12).

The movement also attracted the attention of the outsiders. They called them "Christians." The Jews, it is certain, did not give this name, but the Gentiles invented it. Antioch was famous for its readiness to jeer and call names; it was known by its witty epigrams. So they coined a new word, "Christianoi"--Christians. It is used exclusively by outsiders, as seen in the case of Agrippa, also see 1 Peter 4:16. Jews and Gentiles alike were called by this name, "Christians," so that it bears testimony to the oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ.

CHAPTER 12

1. The great Persecution by Herod Agrippa I (verses 1-5).
2. The miraculous deliverance of Peter (verses 6-17).

3. The Presumption and Judgment of Herod (verses 18-23).

4. Barnabas and Saul returning to Jerusalem (verses 24-25).

With this chapter we reach the conclusion of the second part of this book. Jerusalem had heard the second offer concerning the Kingdom, and mercy was ready even for the murderers of the Prince of Life. But that offer was rejected. Stephen's testimony followed by his martyrdom marked the close of that second offer to the city where our Lord had been crucified. Then broke out a great persecution, and they were scattered abroad except the Apostles. From our last chapter we learned that others who were driven out of Jerusalem preached the Word in Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch. The twelfth chapter, with which this part of Acts closes, is an interesting one. It is not only interesting on account of the historical information it contains, but also because of its dispensational foreshadowing. Once more we are introduced to Jerusalem and see another great persecution. The wicked King is reigning over the city. James is killed with the sword, while Peter is imprisoned but wonderfully delivered; the evil King, who claimed divine power and worship, is suddenly smitten by the judgment of the Lord. Then the Word grew and multiplied, Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, from where the great missionary operations were soon to be conducted. The events in Jerusalem, James' martyrdom under King Herod, Peter's imprisonment and deliverance, as well as the fate of the persecuting King, foreshadow the events with which this present age will close. After the true church is taken from the earth, that is when 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is fulfilled, the great tribulation will take place. While great tribulation and judgment will come upon the whole world, the great tribulation will come upon the Jewish people who have returned in part to their own land. In the midst of the masses of unbelieving Jews, there will be found a remnant of God-fearing Jews, who are converted and bear testimony to the truth. A wicked King, the man of sin, the false Messiah, will then be in power in Jerusalem. Part of that Jewish remnant will suffer martyrdom; these are represented by James, whom Herod, the type of the Antichrist, slew. Another part will be delivered as Peter was delivered. Herod's presumption and fate clearly points to that of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8). All this may well be kept in mind in the study of this chapter in detail.

Interesting is the account of the prayer meeting held in behalf of Peter. When God had answered their prayers they were reluctant to believe it. Not one of the company believed that Peter had been released. Rhoda was the one who believed that it was Peter. And this is undoubtedly the reason why her name is mentioned in this book. The poor maid, perhaps a slave girl, pleased God because she had faith. While there was great earnestness in that prayer meeting, when the prayer was answered, unbelief manifested itself.

Part III

The Witness to the Gentiles.

The Apostle to the Gentiles; his Ministry and Captivity.

Chapters 13-28

CHAPTER 13

1. The Divine Choice. Barnabas and Saul separated unto the work (verses 1-3).

2. The Beginning of the Journey and the events in Cyprus (verses 4-12).

3. The Gospel in Galatia. Paul's Address (verses 13-41).

4. The Gospel rejected by the Jews (verses 42-52).

The thirteenth chapter is the beginning of the third part of this book. The second great center of Christianity comes to the front. It is no longer Jerusalem, but the city of Antioch. The gospel which had been preached in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, which Cornelius and his house had heard and accepted, is now in a special manner to go far hence to the

Gentiles. The city in which the first great Gentile church had been established is the starting point. Peter, so prominent in the first twelve chapters of our book, is no longer the leading actor. He is mentioned only once in this second part of the Book of Acts. In the fifteenth chapter, in connection with the council in Jerusalem, his voice is heard once more. The special work in connection with the kingdom of heaven, in opening the door to the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2 and chapter 10) had been accomplished by him. Now he disappears from our view, though he continued to exercise his apostleship in connection with the circumcision (Galatians 2:7). Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, instead appears upon the scene, and his wonderful activity is described in the remaining part of the book. The opposition and blindness of the Jews in a continued rejection of the gospel becomes fully evident throughout this section, and the book itself closes with the testimony against them: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (Acts 28:28). Besides this we shall find in these chapters the acts of the Holy Spirit in the call and sending forth of the chosen instruments in the way He guided them, how He filled them, opened doors, and manifested His gracious power in the salvation of sinners.

The beginning of the great movement to send now the Gospel far hence to the Gentiles was inaugurated by the Holy Spirit. The assembled prophets and teachers ministered to the Lord in praise and prayer, when the Holy Spirit's voice was heard demanding the separation of Barnabas and Saul unto a work He had called them. The personality of the Holy Spirit is here fully demonstrated. They were thus sent forth not by the church, nor by a missionary society or committee, but by the Holy Spirit.

Accompanied by John Mark as a helper they sailed to Cyprus. Here at Paphos they found a Jew, a sorcerer and false prophet by name of Bar-Jesus (Son Jesus). Such evil persons, special instruments of Satan, appear repeatedly in this book, and generally when the Gospel was carried into some new regions. In Samaria it was Simon Magus; in Macedonia the damsel with the familiar spirit, and here this demon-possessed Jew. He was an enemy of all righteousness. He tried to keep the Word from the Roman Sergius Paulus. Thus the Jews tried to keep the Gospel from reaching the Gentiles. The judgment which fell upon this wicked Jew is typical of the judicial blindness which has come upon the Jews. But as this sorcerer who opposed the Gospel was not to see the sun for a season, even so, the blindness of the Jews is not permanent.

For the first time, and that in connection with this incident, the name of Paul is mentioned. Some have suggested that he took the name in honor of Sergius Paulus, but that is incorrect. Paul is a Roman name, and means "little." Later he writes of himself as "less than the least of all saints." He took the lowest place, and the name which signifies this comes now into prominence. Barnabas is taking the second place; not Barnabas and Saul, but Paul and Barnabas is now the order.

John Mark left them when they had come to Perga in Pamphylia. It was on account of the work (chapter 15:38). It was a failure and for a time he was unprofitable. See 2 Timothy 4:11 where we read of his restoration. He is the one who wrote the Gospel of the obedient servant, the Gospel of Mark.

In verses 16-41 Paul's great address in Antioch of Pisidia is reported. Then the Jews rejected the Gospel, and when they preached to the Gentiles they contradicted and blasphemed.

CHAPTER 14

1. The work in Iconium and the persecution of the Apostles (verses 1-6).
2. In Derbe and Lystra; the Impotent Man healed (verses 7-18).
3. The Stoning of Paul and further ministries (verses 19-24).
4. The Return to Antioch (verses 25-28).

Iconium was a Phrygian town, bordering on Lycaonia. Here again the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles. They abode there a long time, and in spite of opposition and persecution they spoke with much boldness the Word of God. Signs and wonders were also done by their hands. When their lives were threatened by the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, they fled to Lystra and Derbe.

Derbe was the home of a pious Jewess by name of Eunice. She had married a Greek, who had died. Her son was Timotheus and she lived with her mother Lois (Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:5). In Lystra another lame man is healed by the power of God. The ignorant heathen, seeing the miracle, thought the two apostles were gods and attempted to worship them. They abhorred their proceedings and refused the honor of men.

The enemy lurked behind this, no doubt, but the grace of God gave to the apostles the power to act as they did. How much of such idolizing is going on in modern days; how men, professedly the servants of the Lord, seek and love the honor and praise of men, is too evident to be mentioned. Seeking honor from men and having delight in the applause of the "religious world" is a deadly thing, for it dishonors Christ, to whom all honor and glory is due. And how much of all this there is in the present day! It is but the result of not giving the Lord Jesus Christ the preeminence.

Jews then appeared coming from Iconium and Antioch and stirred up the people against them. The mass of people who were ready to worship Barnabas and Paul changed quickly and stoned Paul. Most likely the fury turned against him because he had been instrumental in healing the crippled man. As the stones fell upon him, must he not have remembered Stephen? And may he not have prayed as Stephen did? And after they thought him dead, they dragged his body out of the city. But the Lord, who had announced such suffering for him, had watched over his servant. He was in His own hands, as every child of God is in His care. The enemy who stood behind the furious mob, as he stood behind the attempt to sacrifice unto them, would have killed Paul. But he could not touch Paul's life, as he was not Permitted to touch the life of another servant of God, Job (Job 2:6). His sudden recovery was supernatural. He refers in 2 Corinthians 11:25 to this stoning, "Once I was stoned." Another reference to Lystra we find in his second Epistle to Timothy: "Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2 Timothy 3:11). Blessed be His name, He is the same Lord still and Will deliver them that trust in Him.

Then after additional testimony in Lystra and a visit to Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia, to build up the disciples and to strengthen them, they terminate this first great journey by returning to the place from which they had started.

CHAPTER 15

1. The false teachers from Judea. Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem (verses 1-5).
2. The Council in Jerusalem (verses 6-21).
3. The Result made known (verses 22-29).
4. The Consolation brought to Antioch (verses 30-35).
5. Paul and Barnabas separate (verses 36-41).

A very critical time had now arrived for the church. An important question had to be settled. That Gentiles can be saved and salvation must be extended to the Gentiles had been fully demonstrated. The Apostle of the circumcision, Peter, had been used to preach the Gospel to a company of God-fearing Gentiles. Evangelists had gone to Antioch and the great Gentile center had there been founded. Paul and Barnabas had completed their great missionary journey and numerous assemblies of Gentiles, saved by Grace, were formed. The question of the salvation of Gentiles could no longer be raised. But we remember from the eleventh chapter of this book, that when Peter returned to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him. They objected to Peter going to men uncircumcised and eating with them. But those of the circumcision had not been fully satisfied with the status of the believing Gentiles. What about circumcision in their case? Should they not also keep the Law? In other words, the question of the relation of the believing Gentile to the Law and to circumcision had to be determined.

These teachers which taught that Gentiles, in order to be saved, had to be circumcised after the manner of Moses, disturbed greatly the church in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas with others were therefore delegated to go with this question to Jerusalem. Galatians 2:1-10 must be carefully read for interesting and additional information. The question was settled in favor of the Gospel Paul had preached. James declared: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from

among the Gentiles are turned to God." They were to abstain from pollution of idols, from fornication, from things strangled and from blood. Of great importance are the words which James uttered by inspiration at this occasion. It was the first church-council, and here the Holy Spirit revealed God's gracious purposes concerning the age that is and the age to come.

Note in verses 14-18 the four important steps: 1. God visits the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name. This is the purpose of the present age. The called people constitute the church, the body of Christ. 2. After this I will return. This means the second Coming of Christ. When the Church is completed and all the members added to that body, Christ comes again, first, as subsequently revealed, for His saints and then with them. 3. The Restoration of Israel follows after His Return. The Tabernacle of David will be built again and will be set up. 4. Then all the Gentiles will seek after the Lord. This is the world-conversion. How strange that this divinely revealed program should be entirely ignored by all church-councils at the present time.

Then after the results of the council and the decision concerning the Gentiles had been made known by a letter, Antioch received consolation.

The beginning of the second missionary journey of Paul is described in the closing paragraph of this chapter. We read nothing of prayer or waiting on God for guidance. Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go again." He wanted to go over the same territory. This was not the plan of the Spirit. Failure follows on account of self-will and self-choosing. Paul and Barnabas separate on account of John Mark. Barnabas took Mark and Paul chose Silas.

CHAPTER 16

1. In Derbe and Lystra again. Timotheus (verses 1-,5).
2. The Preaching forbidden in Asia (verses 6-8).
3. The Vision of the Man from Macedonia (verses 9-12).
4. The Gospel in Europe (verses 13-40).

Read in connection with the first verses of this chapter 1 Timothy 1:18, 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:5-6, 3:15. The circumcision of Timothy, the offspring of a mixed marriage, was not demanded by the law. Paul in circumcising Timothy manifested his liberty; he acted graciously, not wishing to put a stumbling block in the way of the Jews (see 1 Corinthians 9:20).

They travel on through Phrygia and Galatia but were forbidden to preach in Asia. This was at that time a large province in Asia Minor with many flourishing cities. It was not God's purpose to have work done at that time. They followed divine guidance obediently. Later Paul spent three years in Ephesus, the capital of that province, and all Asia heard the Word. They also wanted to visit Bithynia, but were not allowed to do so. Bithynia heard the Word at another time perhaps through Peter (1 Peter 1:1-2). All this shows clearly how the Holy Spirit is an infallible guide in Christian service. He must point out the way and the places as well as the time when and where the Word is to be spoken. Then follows the vision of the Man from Macedonia. This Macedonian cry is answered at once. From the tenth verse we learn that Luke, the author of this record, joined the party. This is seen by the changed pronoun from "they" to "we." Then they reached Philippi. On the small river Gangites the first opportunity to minister is given. We wonder if Paul looked for the man he had seen in his vision. There was no man present. A company of women had gathered in the place "where prayer was wont to be made." Lydia of Thyatira is the first convert of Europe. She was a true worshipper of God like Cornelius. And it was the Lord who opened her heart. Satan's opposition is seen once more in the demon-possessed damsel. Satan is a cunning being full of wisdom. He tried through this damsel to establish a friendly relation with the servants of the Lord. But the Gospel does not need such support. After her conversion Satan changed his tactics. They were beaten with many stripes and cast into prison, their feet held in the stocks. What followed is familiar to all. God had worked in mighty power delivering His servants and saving the jailer and his household.

CHAPTER 17

1. The Gospel in Thessalonica (verses 1-9).
2. The Gospel in Beroea (verses 10-14).
3. Paul in Athens (verses 15-34).

Three cities in which the Gospel is next preached are before us in this chapter. But there is a marked difference between these three places. In Thessalonica there was much hostility, the result of the success of the Gospel. In Beroea a more noble class of Jews were found. Their nobility consisted in submission to the Scriptures, the oracles of God, and in a ready mind. There was a still greater blessing among the Jews and the Gentiles. In Athens the Apostle Paul met idolatry, indifference and ridicule.

An interesting fact is learned concerning the activity of the apostle in Thessalonica from the two Epistles, which he addressed some time after to the Thessalonians. These were the first Epistles Paul wrote. From these we learn that the Apostle not only preached the Gospel, but also taught the Thessalonian believers prophetic Truths and emphasized the Second Coming of Christ and the events connected with it. In the Second Epistle he reminds them of his oral teaching (2 Thessalonians 2:5).

The address Paul gave in Athens has three sections: 1. The Introduction (verses 22-23) in which he refers to the altar with the strange inscription "to the unknown God." Then he uttered the words, "Him I declare unto you." 2. Who the unknown God is (verses 24-29). He is a personal God who made the world and all that is in it. He answered the Epicurean and Stoic schools of philosophy. Materialism and Pantheism were thus swept aside. 3. He closes with the message from God (verses 30-31).

He aims at their conscience to awaken them to the sense of need to turn away from idols to the true God. God sends to all One message, be they Jew or Gentiles, Greeks or Barbarians, to repent. And then he states the reason. A day is appointed in which He will judge the world in righteousness. The one through whom God will judge is a Man ordained by Him; then follows the declaration of the resurrection of this Man. The day of judgment here does not mean a universal judgment (a term not known in Scripture) nor the great white throne judgment. The judgment here does not concern the dead at all, but it is the judgment of the habitable world. It is the judgment which will take place when the Man whom God raised from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, comes the second time. His resurrection is the assurance of it.

CHAPTER 18

1. In Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla. His Testimony and Separation from the Jews (verses 1-8).
2. Encouragement from the Lord in a vision (verses 9-11).
3. Paul and Gallio (verses 12-17).
4. From Corinth to Ephesus and Antioch. The second journey ended (verses 18-22).
5. Establishing disciples in Galatia and Phrygia (verse 23).
6. Apollos, the Alexandrian (verses 24-28).

Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned here for the first time. This interesting couple had established themselves in Corinth, and what a joy it must have been to the Apostle when he was led to their home. How sweet their fellowship must have been as they toiled together in their trade as tent makers and spoke one to another about the Lord. From the same chapter we learn that after Paul's ministry had terminated they went to Ephesus (verse 19). From 1 Corinthians 16:19 we learn that they were still there when that epistle was written. But in writing to the Romans Paul says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3), so that they had wandered back to Rome and were in happy fellowship with the Roman assembly. 2 Timothy 4:19 tells us that once more they were back in Ephesus where Timothy had his abode. "Salute

Prisca (an abbreviation of Priscilla) and Aquila." They were indeed strangers and pilgrims, but blessed to know that their wanderings were by the Lord. Priscilla is mostly mentioned before Aquila, from which we may learn that she, like other notable women of apostolic days, "labored for the Gospel."

It seems that Paul followed the same method of work as he did in Thessalonica. First, he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks (verse 4). This must have been altogether on Old Testament ground, showing the divine predictions concerning Christ. When Silas and Timotheus arrived, then he was greatly pressed in spirit and testified to the Jews more fully that Jesus is the Christ. That there was blessed fruit we learn from his epistles to the Corinthians. He himself baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). And he was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. His speech was far different from the one he had used in addressing the philosophers of Athens. "My speech was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:3-4). His presence was base unto them "Who in presence am base among you" (2 Corinthians 10:1). His bodily presence, these Corinthians said, is weak, and his speech contemptible (2. Corinthians 10:10).

The Lord encouraged His servant in a vision. The Jews' attempt to harm Paul through Gallio failed. Sosthenes the chief ruler received a beating instead of the apostle.

If the Sosthenes who is mentioned in the opening verse of the first Epistle of the Corinthians is the same, then he profited immensely by his experience. Paul addresses him as a brother. We believe he is the same person, for the Grace of God delights to take up such characters and show in them what Grace can do.

From Corinth he went to Ephesus, then to Jerusalem and back to Antioch. Thus ended the second missionary journey. After this he established the disciples in Galatia and Phrygia. An extremely beautiful incident closes this chapter. A new preacher appeared among the Jews in Ephesus, Apollos the Alexandrian. He is described as an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. In Alexandria, Philo, the great Hellenistic Jewish Philosopher, had flourished. He was born about 20 B.C. and died after the year 40 A.D. He introduced Platonism into Judaism. In all probability Apollos was one of his disciples, but he accepted that which Philo did not believe. He had come most likely in touch with disciples of John the Baptist, and had been baptized with John's baptism unto repentance. He knew that Jesus is the Messiah, knew the facts of His earthly life and the miracles He did. Of the meaning of His death and resurrection Apollos knew nothing, nor had he any knowledge of the Holy Spirit. The entire truth of the Gospel of Grace was unknown to Him. The text in the authorized version that he "taught diligently the things of the Lord" is incorrect. The correct translation is "he taught diligently the things concerning Jesus."

Aquila and Priscilla were then used to expound unto him the way of God more perfectly.

CHAPTER 19

1. The second visit of Paul to Ephesus. The twelve disciples of John (verses 1-7).
2. The Apostle's continued labors. The separation of the disciples. The Province Asia evangelized (verses 8-10).
3. The Power of God and the Power of Satan (verses 11-20).
4. Paul plans to go to Jerusalem and to visit Rome (verses 21-22).
5. The opposition and riot at Ephesus (verses 23-41).

The disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus were disciples of John. The question the Apostle asked them has often been made the foundation of wrong teaching concerning the Holy Spirit. It is claimed that the Holy Spirit must be received in a special manner after conversion. The little word "since" in Paul's question must be changed into "when," for it is mistranslated. "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"

Paul makes the gift of the Spirit a test of true discipleship. If they were true believers they received the Holy Spirit when

they believed, that is when they accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. If they did not receive the Holy Spirit then it is an evidence that they did not believe. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9).

They heard next the full truth of the Gospel and believed, therefore they received the gift of the Spirit. Ephesus was the stronghold of Satan. When the power of God was manifested in the special miracles of Paul and the demons were driven out, then Satan also began to work. A great victory over the power of darkness followed.

Then Paul purposed in the spirit (verse 21) to go to Jerusalem. This verse marks an important change, which introduces us to the last stage of the recorded acts of Paul in this historical account. Rome is the goal which looms up before him. "I must also see Rome." And he saw Rome, but not in the way as he purposed in his spirit, but as the prisoner of the Lord. His journey begins now towards that great city, and at the close of the book we find him there a prisoner. The story of his journey to Jerusalem, a journey in which he perseveres though repeatedly warned by the Spirit of God, his arrest in Jerusalem, his trials and addresses before the Jews, before Felix, Festus and King Agrippa, his voyage to Rome and shipwreck and arrival in Rome, are the contents of the remaining part of our book.

The question has often been raised how the purposing of Paul in the spirit to go again to Jerusalem is to be understood. Is the word "spirit" to be written with a capital "S" or not? In other words, did he purpose in the Spirit of God, after prolonged prayer, to go up to Jerusalem? Did the Holy Spirit guide him to take up to the city of his fathers the contributions from Achaia and Macedonia for the poor saints? (Romans 15:25-26). It could not have been the Spirit of God who prompted him to go once more to Jerusalem, for we find that during the journey the Holy Spirit warned him a number of times not to go to Jerusalem.

He was called to evangelize; to continue to preach the glorious Gospel, and it was a turning aside from the great ministry committed unto him. But behind his burning desire to go up to Jerusalem stood the mighty constraint of love for his own beloved brethren. How he did love them and how his heart, filled with the love of God, yearned over them! This love is so fully expressed in his epistle to the Romans. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed (or separated) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-2). "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). This holy love and courage prompted him to say, when once more his brethren had besought him by the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem, "What mean ye to weep and break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

In the close of this chapter we read of the great opposition and riot in Ephesus and the Apostle's persecution.

CHAPTER 20

1. Paul in Macedonia (verses 1-2).
2. His abode in Greece, the visit to Troas and what transpired there (verses 3-12).
3. The journey from Troas to Miletus (verses 13-16).
4. The farewell to the Ephesian Elders (verses 17-38).

The record before us is very brief. Some have thought the reason is the fact that the Apostle had turned aside from His given ministry, and therefore the Holy Spirit had nothing to report. We believe that this is correct. The object of the Spirit of God is now to lead us rapidly forward to the last visit of the Apostle to Jerusalem, therefore much is passed over in the untiring service and labors of the great Man of God. After the uproar was over in Ephesus Paul embraced the disciples and departed to go into Macedonia. It is the first farewell scene on this memorable journey. He must have visited Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea and perhaps other cities. Besides giving them much exhortation, he received their fellowship for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Then there is the record of the blessed scene on the first day of the week in Troas. They remembered the Lord in the breaking of bread (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The company then took ship to sail to Assos, but Paul made the journey of over twenty miles on foot. He wanted to be alone like Elijah as well as others. What thoughts must have passed through his mind! What burdens must have been upon his heart! what anxieties in connection with that coming visit to Jerusalem!

From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. The remaining part of this chapter contains his great farewell address to the Ephesian elders and through them to the church located there. Two great speeches by the Apostle have so far been reported in this book. The first was addressed to the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16-41). The second was addressed to the Gentiles in Athens (chapter 17). The address here in our chapter is to the church. It is of very great and unusual interest and importance. He speaks of himself, his own integrity and recalls to them his ministry. He declares his own coming sufferings and his determination not to count his life dear, but to finish his course with joy. He warns the church concerning the future apostasy and the appearance in their midst of false teachers.

CHAPTER 21

1. The journey from Miletus to Tyre and Ptolemais (verses 1-7).
2. In Caesarea (verses 8-14).
3. The Apostle's Arrival in Jerusalem and his visit to the Temple (verses 15-26).
4. The Uproar in the Temple. Paul taken prisoner (verses 27-40).

Coos, Rhodes and Patara are mentioned. Then they sailed over to Phenicia and landed in Tyre. Here they found disciples.

And the Holy Spirit through these disciples warned the Apostle at once that he should not go to Jerusalem. This, indeed, was very solemn. If these disciples had spoken of themselves, if it said that they were in anxiety over Paul's journey to that city, one might say that they were simply speaking as men; but the record makes it clear that the Holy Spirit spoke through them. Could then the Apostle Paul have been under the guidance of that same Spirit in going to Jerusalem? As stated before, the great love for his brethren, his kinsmen, burned in his heart, and so great was his desire to be in Jerusalem that he ignored the voice of the Spirit.

In Caesarea they were the guests of Philip the evangelist. Here Agabus, who had given a prediction of a great dearth years ago (11:28) comes once more upon the scene. When he had come he took Paul's girdle and with it bound his own hands and feet, and then he said: "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Here then another warning was given. It was the last and by far the strongest. Did Agabus really speak by the Spirit? The literal fulfillment of his predictive action furnishes the answer. The whole company, both his fellow travelers and the believers in Caesarea, began to beseech him not to go up to Jerusalem.

Then they reached Jerusalem. On the next day the company paid a visit to James, in whose house all the elders had assembled for the purpose of meeting with Paul and his friends. And now once more the Apostle relates what no doubt was dearest to the hearts of James and the elders, what God had wrought through His God-given ministry among the Gentiles. It must have been a very lengthy account; for he rehearsed particularly, "or one by one," the things which had happened in His great activity. After Paul had spoken, "they glorified God."

All had progressed nicely up to this point. But now the great crisis is rapidly reached. The meeting had been called in the house of James, and only the elders had been invited for a very good reason. Reports had reached Jerusalem that Paul had taught the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and even to deny children the covenant sign, circumcision. Most likely the Judaizing element in the assembly of Jerusalem, the men who were so successfully overcome by the bold arguments of the Apostle at the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15. Galatians 2), the men who so strenuously taught, that unless the Gentiles became circumcised, they could not be saved--these men were responsible for the rumors. What could be

done to convince the multitude that all this was incorrect, that Paul after all was a good Jew?

The elders suggest to him that there were four men who had a vow on them. These he should take and purify himself with them as well as pay the charges. This action, they reasoned, would not only demonstrate that the reports were untrue, but that he, the Apostle of Gentiles, "walketh orderly and keepeth the law." To make this temptation stronger, they restated that which had been agreed concerning the status of the believing Gentiles, according to the decision of the church council years ago. All was a most subtle snare. He was by that action to show that, with all his preaching to the Gentiles, he was still a good Jew, faithful to all the traditions of the fathers, and attached to the temple.

And a strange sight it is to see the Apostle Paul back in the temple, going through these dead ceremonies, which had been ended by the death of the cross. A strange sight to see him, who disclaimed all earthly authority and taught deliverance from the Law and a union with an unseen Christ, submitting once more to the elementary things, as he calls them in his Epistle to the Galatians, "the beggarly elements!" And has not the whole professing church fallen into the same snare?

His arrest followed and he is taken prisoner. A great tumult followed. They would have killed him if the chief captain had not rescued him. He then was bound with two chains. Agabus' prophecy is fulfilled.

Paul gives the Roman officer his pedigree. "I am a man, a Jew of Tarsus," and then requests the privilege of addressing the furious mob. This was permitted, and taking a prominent place on the stairs, where he could be seen by all below, and when after beckoning to the people, silence had been secured, he addressed them in Hebrew. The break of the chapter at this point is unfortunate. The next chapter contains the first address of defense of the prisoner Paul.

CHAPTER 22

1. The Address of the Apostle (verses 1-21).
2. The Answer from the Mob, and Paul's Appeal to His Roman citizenship (verses 22-30).

What a scene it was! On the stairs, midway between the temple-court and the fortress, stood the Apostle in chains, his person showing the effects of the beating he had received. Around him were the well-armed Roman soldiers, and below the multitude, with up-turned faces, still wildly gesticulating and only becoming more silent when they heard the first words from Paul's lips in the Hebrew tongue.

He relates his great experience. They were impatient listeners; the storm broke with the word "Gentiles." Another great tumult resulted and the many voices demanded that such a fellow should not live. It was a scene of utmost confusion.

The chief captain seems to have been ignorant of the Aramaic dialect. He gave orders that Paul be now removed into the castle itself, and be examined by scourging so that he might find out why they cried so against him. He was led away, and everything made ready for the cruel treatment, when the prisoner spoke: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" The centurion reported this to the chiliarch, the chief officer, who at once appeared on the scene. When he discovered that Paul was indeed a Roman by birth, they left their hands off of his person, and even the chiliarch was afraid. It was a highly illegal act to bind a Roman.

Not a few had pointed to this as a prominent failure in the career of the Apostle. According to these critics he made a grave mistake when he pleaded his Roman citizenship; he should have been silent and taken the unjust and cruel treatment without a murmur. If some of these harsh critics of the beloved Apostle were placed in the same condition, what would they do? As one has truly said: "It is easy to be a martyr in theory, and such are seldom martyrs in practice." He had a perfect right to tell the ignorant officers of the law who he was, and thus prevent a flagrant and cruel transgression of the law. And yet his conduct in Philippi was far different. Why did he not announce his Roman citizenship there? The power of the Spirit rested then upon him; it is different here.

CHAPTER 23

1. Paul before the Sanhedrin (verses 1-10).
2. The vision of the Lord (verse 11).
3. The Conspiracy against Paul (verses 12-22).
4. Paul taken to Caesarea (verses 23-35).

And now we find him addressing the Sanhedrin. For the last time the Jewish council is mentioned in this book. Three times before the Sanhedrin had been called together in connection with those who believed in the Lord Jesus (4:5, 5:21 and 6:12-15). Looking straight at the council, Paul did not wait for the formalities connected with the proceedings, but addressed the gathered Sanhedrin as men and brethren. And strange are the words with which he opened his defense: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." In this he made a public declaration of his righteousness, which reminds us of his confession as a Pharisee (Philippians 3:4-6). This self-justification shows that he was not acting under the leading of the Holy Spirit. This bold language resulted in stirring up the anger of the high priest Ananias, who commanded that the bystanders should smite the Apostle on the mouth. And Paul was not slow to reply with a harsh word, calling the high priest "a whited wall" and demanding of God to smite him. No doubt the high priest was indeed a "whited wall" and fully deserved the judgment from God. But did Paul in speaking thus show the meekness of Him, whose servant he was?

In a clever way he tries to bring in dissension by his statement of being a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. A big commotion followed. Some of the scribes belonging to the Pharisees cried loudly in defense of the prisoner--"We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." The latter sentence was a faint echo of the advice given by Gamaliel. The scene which followed beggars description. The shouting must have been terrific and Paul was in danger of being pulled to pieces by the council mob. Lysias, the chief captain, was obliged to interfere. The soldiers, at his command, came down and rescued Paul and brought him into the castle. The cleverness of Paul had been the means of liberating him from the hands of the Sanhedrin.

The night following the Lord appeared unto him and comforted him. No doubt he had sought before His face in confession and self-judgment. He is in the Lord's hands. Forty men had made a conspiracy not to eat and to drink till they had killed him.

The prisoner of the Lord is now delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. A large force of soldiers accompanied Paul for his protection. The danger was great, hence the great precaution the chief officer, whose name is now mentioned, Claudius Lysias, had taken. Could we have read in Paul's own heart we would have seen there the peace of Christ; the words of His Lord still resounded in that faithful and devoted heart--"Be of good cheer."

The letter of Claudius Lysias to the governor Felix is interesting. It shows how Lysias claims the full credit of having rescued Paul, because he was a Roman. He declares him innocent, yet delivers him into the hands of the governor.

One would also like to know what had become of the forty conspirators. If they were true to their vow not to eat nor to drink till Paul had been killed, they must have starved to death, which, we are sure, did not happen. Caesarea is reached in safety and Paul is delivered into the hands of the governor, who promised him a hearing as soon as the accusers would arrive. Jerusalem now laid forever behind him. Rome was before him.

CHAPTER 24

1. The indictment of Paul (verses 1-9).
2. The defense of the Apostle (verses 10-21).
3. How Felix disposed of the case (verses 22-23).

4. Paul addresses Felix (verses 24-27).

If the Jews, after Paul's removal from Jerusalem, had not pressed the case against him, he would have been liberated. As he had gone years ago to Damascus to persecute the Christians there, so now the Jews follow him to Caesarea to accuse him before the Roman governor. They evidently did not lose any time. Only a few days had elapsed when a strong deputation from Jerusalem appeared in Caesarea. The high priest filled with much hatred against Paul had taken it upon himself to come in person. This must have been an unusual occurrence for a person of Ananias' standing to leave Jerusalem.

They brought along a certain orator named Tertullus, who accused Paul in the presence of Felix. The words Tertullus used against the great man of God are extremely vile and manifest the hiss of the serpent. He calls him a pestilent fellow," a person whom Society may well be rid of. The indictment contains three counts. First stands a Political accusation. This, in presence of the high Roman officer, was of the greatest importance. Any conspiracy against the Roman government was a capital offense. The charge of sedition or treason was thus at once laid at the door of the Apostle. The second offense Tertullus brought against Paul was of a religious nature. As ringleader of the Nazarenes, presented by him as a sect of the Jews, he had abetted that which was against the peace of Judaism and introduced not alone a disturbing element, but had transgressed another Roman law, which forbade the introduction of an unrecognized religion. The third charge was the profanation of the temple. Paul answers the indictment in a masterly way. His address contains a denial of the first charge; a confession and admission concerning the second, and a complete vindication of the accusation of the temple profanation.

Felix knew the accusations were not true, but he refused decision. Paul should have been set at liberty. Felix defers it till Lysias the chief-captain came to Caesarea. But he never came, and Paul was kept a prisoner. Felix and his wife, Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, a wicked woman, heard Paul and Felix trembled. Later Felix left Paul behind a prisoner, when Porcius Festus became governor.

CHAPTER 25

1. Festus and the Jews. Paul appeals to Caesar (verses 1-12).

2. King Agrippa visits Festus (verses 13-29).

3. Paul brought before the King (verses 23-27).

The new governor, Festus, had arrived at Caesarea, and then went up to Jerusalem, the capital of the province. The Jews had not forgotten Paul, though they had not attempted another accusation before Felix, knowing that the case was hopeless. But they made at once an effort with the new governor. No sooner had this official made his appearance in Jerusalem than the high priest and the chief of the Jews made a report about Paul. Most likely Festus had not even heard of Paul up to that time. What really took place in Jerusalem, Festus later relates to Agrippa. When Paul was presented to Agrippa, Festus introduced him by saying, "Ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me both at Jerusalem and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer" (verse 24). A scene of tumult must have been enacted in Jerusalem when Festus showed himself. The mob clamored for the life of Paul. When they noticed the reluctance of the governor, they concocted another plan. They requested that Paul should be brought to Jerusalem. On the way there they intended to murder him.

But Festus was divinely guided in it all, and when he asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem, Paul appealed to Caesar. This settled his journey to Rome.

King Agrippa and Bernice paid a visit to the new governor. The father of this king was known as Herod Agrippa, and died under awful circumstances (chapter 12) in the year 44. When his father died Agrippa was in Rome. He was too young to receive the kingdom of his father Herod. Eight years later, Herod, King of Chalcis, the uncle of Agrippa, died. He had married Agrippa's sister Bernice, and Caesar gave Chalcis to Agrippa. Later Agrippa received the title as king. Agrippa I had left three daughters besides this son--Bernice, Marianne and Drusilla, the wife of Felix. Bernice, who was the wife of her uncle, after his death joined her brother Agrippa in Rome. She married a Celician ruler, but deserted him and joined again her brother, in whose company she paid this visit to Caesarea. And Paul appeared before the King. A great audience had gathered and much pomp was displayed. Then the prisoner was brought in. What a contrast! Perhaps they looked upon

him with pity as they saw the chain. But more pity must have filled the heart of the great servant of Christ as he saw the poor lost souls bedecked with the miserable tinsel of earth. Festus addressed the King and the whole company. He frankly states what troubled him and that he expects the King to furnish the material for the statements he had, as governor, to send to Rome.

CHAPTER 26

1. The Address of the Apostle Paul (verses 2-23).
2. The Interruption by Festus and the Appeal to the King (verses 24-29).
3. The Verdict (verses 30-32).

The opening words of the Apostle are indeed gracious. Even as he stands in chains the great Apostle counts himself happy. His happiness consisted in the knowledge that he was now privileged to bear witness of His Lord and the Gospel committed to him before such an audience. What an opportunity it was to him, and how he rejoiced that he could speak of Him, whom he served. He also honored the King by a brief remark in which he expressed his delight in speaking before one who was so well acquainted with Jewish customs and questions. Then he restates his life as a Pharisee.

At once he touches upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? The whole history of Israel bears witness to the fact that God can bring life from the dead. The very origin of the nation demonstrates this, for Sarah's womb was a grave, and God brought life out of that grave. Many promises of the past vouched for God's power to raise the dead. The nation had this promise that spiritual and national death is to give way to spiritual and national life (Ezekiel 37:1-15; Hosea 6:1-3). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ proved Him to be the Holy One and the Hope of Israel. In this sense Peter speaks of His resurrection. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). The grave of the Lord Jesus was for the disciples the grave of their national hope, but His resurrection from the dead the revival of that hope. Once more he also relates the sad story of how he persecuted the saints. Upon that dark background he can now flash forth again the story of his conversion.

Then the proper moment had arrived to state the Gospel message before this company. It is a terse statement of the message which the Lord had committed unto him. All the elements of the Gospel are contained in the eighteenth verse. There is first the condition of man by nature. Eyes, which are blind, in darkness, under the power of Satan. The eyes are to be opened and through the Gospel man is turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. In Colossians 1:12 the same is stated. Then the blessings of conversion. Forgiveness of sins and an inheritance. Faith is the means of all this; sanctification, that is separation, in conversion "by faith that is in me." One wonders if the Holy Spirit even then did not bless the message to some heart, and the Grace of God bestowed these blessings upon some believing sinners. It may have been so. The day will make it known.

Festus interrupted him, and when Paul addressed the King directly, he answered him by saying: "Almost persuadest thou me to become a Christian." The meaning is rather "by a little more persuasion you might make me a Christian." No doubt conviction had taken hold on him. In this half mocking way he answers the Apostle. How many after him have acted in the same way and rejected the Grace, which stood ready to save.

The verdict of a private consultation is "This Man doeth nothing worthy of death." Herod Agrippa said unto Festus "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar." If Paul had not made his appeal to Caesar he might have then been freed. We have seen before that his appeal to Rome was according to the will of the Lord. To Rome then he goes. All is ordered by a gracious Lord.

CHAPTER 27

1. From Caesarea to Fair Havens (verses 1-8).

2. The Unheeded Warning. The Storm. Paul's Vision and Assurance of Safety (verses 9-26).

3. The Shipwreck (verses 27-44).

Much has been written on this Chapter. The voyage of the Apostle Paul to Rome and the shipwreck is often explained as being typical of the stormy voyage of the professing church, her adversities and shipwreck.

However, such an application needs caution. It is easy to make fanciful and far-fetched allegorical applications. Besides church history other lessons have been drawn from this narrative. A recent commentator claims that the keynote to the interpretation is given in verse 34 in the word salvation. "This and cognate words occur seven times in the chapter: Hope to be saved; ye cannot be saved; to be completely saved. While the contrary fate is no less richly depicted--injury, loss, throwing away, perish, kill and to be cast away. The history, then, is a parable of the great salvation, by which man is brought through death to life." We shall not attempt to seek for an outline of church history in the events of this chapter. The central figure, the prisoner of the Lord, must occupy us more than anything else. It is said that in all the classical literature there is nothing found which gives so much information of the working of an ancient ship as this chapter does. Even the critics have acknowledged that this chapter "bears the most indisputable marks of authenticity." "Historical research and inscriptions have confirmed the facts given in this chapter, while the accuracy of Luke's nautical observations is shown by the great help he has given to our understanding of ancient seamanship. None have impugned the correctness of his phrases; on the contrary, from his description contained in a few sentences, the scene of the wreck has been identified."

The Apostle is courteously treated by the Centurion Julius. Paul may have been in a physically weakened condition. The Lord's gracious and loving care for His faithful servant shines out in this. How clearly the whole narrative shows that all is in His hands: Officers, winds and waves, all circumstances, are under His control. So far all seemed to go well; but contrary winds now trouble the voyagers. The ship is tossed to and fro. If we look upon the ship as a type of the professing church and the little company, headed by Paul, as the true church, then there is no difficulty in seeing the issue. Winds which drive hither and thither trouble those who hold the truth and live in fellowship with the Lord, while the professing church is cast about. Then Myra was reached. Here they took a ship of Alexandria. Danger then threatened. Most likely a consultation of the commander of the ship and the owner, who was on board, and the centurion, was held, and Paul was present. He gives them a solemn warning and cautions them to beware. This shows his close fellowship with the Lord. In prayer, no doubt, he had laid the whole matter before the Lord and received the answer, which he communicates to the persons in authority. They looked upon it as a mere guess, and the centurion rather trusted in the judgment of the captain and the owner.

And here we can think of other warnings given through the great Apostle. Warnings concerning the spiritual dangers, the apostasy of the last days, the perilous times, warnings against the seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. The professing church has forgotten these divinely-given predictions. The world does not heed them. Like these mariners, who believed in their own wisdom and disregarded the warning given, Christendom has paid no attention to these warnings. For this reason the ship is drifting, cast about by every wind of doctrine and rapidly nearing the long predicted shipwreck. Then there came the terrific tempest. Sun and stars were hidden for many days.

When despair had reached its heights, Paul appears once more upon the scene. When all was hopeless the prisoner of the Lord spoke the words of hope and cheer. He reminds them first of their refusal and disobedience. What had come upon them was the result of having not heeded the warning. He then assures them that an angel of God had assured him once more that he would have to stand before Caesar; but God had given to him all that sail with him. Only the ship is to go down, the lives of all who sail with him will be preserved. "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me." And now they were willing to listen to him. They had to acknowledge their disobedience and believe the message of cheer as it came from the divinely instructed messenger, assuring them of their ultimate salvation.

And so, at least in part, drifting Christendom can listen to the Apostle Paul, and if the mistake, the wrong course, is acknowledged, the heavenly-sent message is accepted, salvation is assured.

How calm the Apostle and his companions must have been after this assurance of their safety. The dreadful winds might

continue and the ship drift still further. They knew they were safe, for God had spoken. Different it was with the crew of the ship. In great distress they feared the coming disaster and cast out four anchors. The shipmen attempted flight by a clever scheme. Paul discovered their plan and said to the centurion and soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye (not we) cannot be saved." God had given him all who were in the ship. The work of the sailors was needed when the daybreak came. And the soldiers believed the word of Paul, for they cut the ropes, which set the boat adrift the sailors tried to use. Then Paul exhorted them to eat. Once more he assured them that not a hair should fall from the head of any one. Before the whole company, two hundred and seventy-six persons, Paul took bread and gave thanks to God. The Lord had exalted the prisoner, and he really stands out as the leader of the distressed company. They all became encouraged by the words and action. All has its lessons. However the meal has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper. It tells us typically how necessary it is that we must feed on the bread of life in the days of danger, the times when everything breaks up. "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."

CHAPTER 28

1. In the Island of Melita (verses 1-10).
2. The arrival in Rome (verses 11-16).
3. Paul calling the chief of the Jews and his message (verses 17-29).

Melita, which means "honey," is the island of Malta. It was even then a prominent place for navigation where many vessels wintered. Luke calls the inhabitants Barbarians, a term used by the Greeks for all peoples who did not use their language. The wrecked company was not plundered by the people of the island, but instead received much kindness and were made comfortable in the cold rain which fell.

It was God who moved the hearts of these islanders to show such hospitality to the shipwrecked company for the sake of His servants. Paul is active even then. The shipwreck and privations must have told on the great man of God physically, yet we see him going about gathering a bundle of sticks for the fire. This labor must have been difficult, since as a prisoner he wore a chain on his hands. A viper, which had been benumbed by the cold and revived by the heat of the fire, fastened on his hand. We doubt not it was a poisonous viper. This is denied by some critics on the plea that poisonous snakes are not found in the island of Malta. However, that is no proof that such did not exist at that time. The inhabitants of the island expected Paul to fall dead. If it had been a harmless snake, why such an expectation? God's power was manifested in his behalf. It was a fulfillment of the promise in Mark 16:18: "they shall take up serpents and it shall not hurt them." The viper also reminds us of Satan and his fate. As Paul cast the viper into the fire, so Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. Then there was a manifestation of the gracious power of the Lord towards the inhabitants of the island.

And then they reached Rome at last. What joy must have filled his heart and the hearts of the believers in Rome! How often they must have read his words, in the beginning of his letter: "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now, I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I proposed to come unto you (but was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as the rest of the Gentiles" (Romans 1:11-13). He had never been in Rome. The Roman assembly was not founded by Paul and certainly not by Peter. The origin of that church is obscure, and the Holy Spirit has not given us a history of the beginning of the church of Rome. And now he whom they all loved, whose face they longed to see, was actually on the way to visit Rome. But in a far different way did he come than he expected when he wrote his Epistle. He came as the prisoner of the Lord. What a meeting it must have been!

And now it is for the very last time in this book, "to the Jew first." The first service the great Apostle rendered in Rome was not in the assembly, but he called the chief of the Jews together. He knew no bitterness in his heart against the Jews. In writing the letter to the Romans he had written, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also testifying with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-2). "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is, that they might be saved" (10:1). And now, after all the sad experience he had made, the treatment he had received from his kinsmen, after he had found out their malice and deep hatred, the same love burns in his heart and the same yearning for their salvation possesses him. In Rome he manifests first of all his loving interest in his

Jewish brethren. To these leading Jews he testified once more that he was innocent of any wrong doing. Briefly, he rehearsed his whole case and why he had been compelled to appeal to Caesar. For this purpose--to talk to them about this matter--he had called them. Then most likely he must have lifted his hands, from which the prisoner's chain dangled, and said, "because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." The Jews, however, wanted to hear more from his lips of--"what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." They knew he believed in Christ.

A great meeting took place a short time later. Many Jews assembled in Paul's lodging. The meeting lasted from morning till evening. Once more he testified the Kingdom of God to a large company of Jews. He also persuaded them concerning Jesus both out of the laws of Moses and out of the Prophets. What a wonderful message must have come from his lips as he unfolded the prophetic testimony concerning the Messiah in the power of the Spirit of God! But what was the result? Some believed and some believed not. They did not agree amongst themselves. The end of God's gracious way with the Jews is reached. We repeat, for the last time, it was to the Jew first. The final crisis is reached. Judgment must now be executed upon the nation and the blindness is now to come, which has lasted so long and will continue till the fullness of the Gentiles is come in (Romans 11:25). Stephen, whose death young Saul had witnessed and approved (8:1), had pronounced judgment upon the nation, in Jerusalem. God's mercy had still waited. Marvelous Grace, which took up the young Pharisee, Saul, and made him the Apostle to the Gentiles! Through him, the chosen instrument, the Lord still sought his beloved Israel, even after Jerusalem had so completely rejected the offered mercy. We have seen how the Apostle's intense love for his brethren had led him back to Jerusalem, though warned repeatedly by the Holy Spirit. And now he is used to give the very last message to the Jews and speak the final word of condemnation.

The salvation of God is now to go far hence to the Gentiles. A prisoner in Rome and yet active. He preached the Kingdom of God (not of heaven, the Jewish, earthly aspect of it), and ever speaking of that worthy name, that blessed and adorable Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. The ending of the book is sad and it is joyous. Sad to see the great Apostle a prisoner, shut up in Rome with his God-given Gospel. Joyous because the last verse mentions the Lord Jesus Christ and an unhindered ministry of the Gospel. The Book begins with Jerusalem and ends with Rome. It is a prophecy of the course of the professing church. The book closes in an unfinished way, because the acts of Christ, the Spirit of God, and Satan, recorded in this book, are not finished. We hear nothing more of Paul, though we know that from the prison the Holy Spirit of God sent forth through him the blessed Epistles, in which He has been pleased to give us the highest revelation. And how much more might be written on all this!

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

Introduction

The Epistle to the Romans is not the first Epistle which the Apostle Paul wrote. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written six years prior to the Epistle to the Romans, that is in 52 A.D. and the Second Thessalonian Epistle a few months later. The place given to this great document, immediately after the Book of Acts, is the right place, for the Epistle to the Romans has for its leading theme the Gospel of God, and that needs to be unfolded first of all.

This Epistle was written by Paul in the year 58. Paul was staying in the house of Gaius (Romans 16:23). He was a wealthy Corinthian whom Paul had baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14). His amanuensis was Tertius, who makes the statement himself, "I Tertius, who wrote this Epistle, salute you in the Lord" (16:22). It was during the brief visit to Corinth (Acts 20:3) when the Apostle wrote the Epistle. He was on his way to Jerusalem, with the great desire in his heart "I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21). Of this he speaks in the Epistle. "But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you, for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the Saints." (15:23-25). And in the beginning of the Epistle he expressed the same wish. "Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you that I may impart some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established" (1:10-11).

When a Greek Christian woman, Phoebe, was about to visit Rome, he was constrained to write this letter and she was undoubtedly the bearer of this Epistle. This we learn from Chapter 16:1-2. "I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea (the port of Corinth); that ye receive her in the Lord, as becomes the Saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you; for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also." The genuineness of this Epistle has never been doubted. The critics have never been able to attack its authenticity. Universally it has been believed, and that from earliest time, to be the production of the Apostle Paul.

To Whom the Epistle was Written

The Epistle is addressed "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called Saints." There was then a church, a local assembly of believers in the great world city Rome. We do not know the facts of its origin. The wicked system which goes by the name "the church of Rome" claims that Peter had much to do with the church there and was the first bishop in Rome. This is done to uphold the claims of the papacy. But it is a mere invention, lacking all historical support. Long before Paul ever addressed the Saints in Rome, Peter had made in Jerusalem declaration which confined his ministry to the circumcision (to Jews) while the Gentile field was left to Paul. "And when James, Cephas (Peter), and John who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me (Paul) and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles and they unto the circumcision" (Galatians 2:9). Peter wrote two Epistles addressed to scattered Jewish believers. He does what the Lord told him "to strengthen his brethren." and nowhere does he claim the exalted position into which the Romish apostate system has put him. That no Apostle had anything to do with the foundation of the local assembly in Rome seems fully established by Paul's statement in chapter 15:20. If Peter had anything to do with the church in Rome, if he had founded the church there, Paul would have certainly made some mention of him. And when later the Apostle Paul wrote his great prison Epistles, not a word did he say about Peter's presence and activity in Rome. These and other evidences are conclusive.

Perhaps Jewish believers were used in carrying the gospel to the capital of the Roman Empire; or Gentile believers may have been the means of proclaiming first the good news there. While the assembly in Rome was composed of Jews and

Gentiles, the latter were predominant, for the names mentioned in chapter 16 are nearly all Gentiles. Many of these may have been Jewish proselytes. That this church was also troubled with a Judaizing element, teachers who demanded the keeping of the law and circumcision as a means of salvation, may be learned from the warning exhortation at the close of the Epistle: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (16:17). This may explain the different objections raised and answered in the Epistle, objections which would come mostly from a Jewish mind. See 3:1, 5, 7, 31; 4:1; 6:1, 15; 7:7; 9:14, 19, 30; 11:1, 11. However, there are conclusive proofs in the Epistle itself which show that the Gentiles were the more numerous in the Roman assembly.

Paul addresses them as the Apostle of the Gentiles and in chapter 15:16 he writes, "that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being "sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

The Great Theme of the Epistle

The great theme of Romans is the Gospel of God, that is the good news concerning the way which God, in His infinite love, has provided by which sinners are saved and all which this free and full salvation includes. While this great theme has been recognized by all intelligent writers on this Epistle, various estimates have been given of the doctrinal unfoldings, which often miss the mark. Some have called Romans a religious treatise written by a man with a wonderful, logical mind, in which he explains his views concerning salvation. Others state that the letter is "the foundation document of the Pauline system of teaching" or they call it "the explanation of the Pauline theology." Still others have suggested that the Epistle to the Romans is "the personal mental history of the Apostle, in which, after his conversion, he worked his way from the old Jewish standpoint to his standpoint under the Gospel." But there is a far better statement which explains it all. In the sister Epistle of Romans, the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he gives the defense of the Gospel, Paul acquaints us with the origin of the Gospel, which he called so peculiarly "My Gospel."--"But I certify you brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). The Gospel he preached and which is so wonderfully taught in the Epistle to the Romans was given to him by revelation. It was not the product of a logical mind, a system of theology which he had thought out, or which some one else had taught him. It is revelation. And the proof of it is the Gospel itself. The mind of man could not have invented or discovered such a scheme. God Himself had to reveal it. The more a Christian studies this great Epistle concerning the Gospel of God, the more he will find out the truth that all is of God and not of man. A great thinker called Romans the profoundest document which has ever been written. It is that, because it is of God. And all that comes from Him is as inexhaustible as His Person. The things revealed in this Gospel of God are deep; no saint has ever sounded the depths. Yet it is simple at the same time. This is always the mark of divine revelation, profundity and simplicity.

We shall point out more fully in the analysis the scope and division of this Epistle, how this great theme is unfolded. God reveals man's true condition, destitute of all righteousness, positively and negatively bad, the whole world guilty before God, Jew and Gentile lost. Upon that dark background God writes the story of His great Love. The source and center of all is the sacrificial work of Christ in which the righteousness of God is now manifested, no longer condemning the guilty sinner, but covering every sinner who believes in Jesus. Justification is by faith, and this faith which trusteth in Jesus is counted for righteousness. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (4:5). And the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is also our justification; the blessed results of all this are seen in the opening verse of the fifth chapter. Being justified by faith we have peace with God, a secure standing in Grace and the hope of the Glory of God. The justification of the sinner is the great foundation of the Gospel of God. Then follows an equally blessed revelation, which is another part of the Gospel. The justified sinner is constituted a Saint, and as such he needs deliverance from sin and its power. Up to chapter 5:11 we learn how God has dealt with our sins and after that how He has dealt with sin. The believing sinner is no longer in Adam, the first man, but in Christ, the second man. What we have by nature through Adam and what we receive through Grace in being in Christ (by the new birth), this most wonderful contrast, is the subject in chapter 5:12-21. God therefore does no longer behold the believer as in Adam, but he sees him in Christ; the old man has been put to death in the death of Christ "that the body of sin might be annulled that henceforth we should not serve sin." God looks upon the believer as being dead with Christ to sin. He is therefore no longer to live in sin. The assurance is given "sin shall not have dominion over you." And faith is to act upon it as being dead to sin and alive unto God (6:11-13). In the seventh chapter the question of the law is raised and the Gospel of God declares that the justified believer, in Christ, dead with Him and delivered from the sin principle is also dead to the

law. The eighth chapter leads us into the full place of deliverance. What was impossible to the law, to produce the righteous requirements of the law, is made possible by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The Spirit of God and His work in the believer is now revealed as a part of the Gospel. Furthermore the believer saved by Grace is a child of God and an heir of God. Glory is his eternal destiny and nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then follow three chapters which deal with dispensational matters, Israel's fall and coming restoration to the place of blessing as His earthly people. The final chapters contain exhortations to walk in the power of this blessed Gospel.

The Importance of Romans

If we are asked what portion of the New Testament should a Christian study the most, we answer always, unhesitatingly, the Epistle to the Romans. Dr. Martin Luther found his great message and deliverance in this Epistle. No better testimony about this Epistle could be given than his. He said, "It is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes."

John Wesley, the godly preacher of the eighteenth century, found peace and deliverance while listening to the reading of Luther's introduction to Romans. No Christian can enjoy the Gospel and know true deliverance unless he knows the precious arguments of the first eight chapters of this Epistle. It is the great need at the present time. So many professing Christians are ignorant of what redemption is and what it includes. Many have but a hazy view of justification and have little or no knowledge of a settled peace with God and lack the assurance of salvation. They are constantly striving to be something and to attain something, which God in infinite grace has already supplied in the Gospel of His Son. And the ignorance about deliverance from the power of indwelling sin! Most Christians live constantly in the experience of the wretched man in chapter 7:15-24. The teaching of the Gospel of God according to Romans is therefore of the greatest importance. It brings assurance and peace; its teachings lead the believer into a life of victory. So many sincere, but untaught believers become ensnared in all kinds of strange doctrines, taught by different cults, because they are deplorably ignorant of the salvation of God. Luther was right, "it can never be too much or too well read or studied." Even if we have grasped the great doctrines of salvation as revealed in this Epistle it is needful that we go over them again and again. And it must be done with prayer. There are many Christians who hold the correct doctrines concerning justification and sanctification as made known in Romans, but they lack the power of these truths in their lives.

Nor must we forget that these blessed truths are increasingly denied as well as perverted in our days. We must therefore keep in constant touch with them, lest they slip away from us and we lose the reality and power of the blessed Gospel in our lives.

Division of the Epistle to the Romans

The division of the Epistle is very simple and presents no difficulty. There are three very clearly defined parts.

The first eight chapters contain the doctrine of the Gospel of God, what salvation is and what it includes. Justification, Sanctification and Glorification are revealed and the believer's deliverance from the guilt of sin, the power of sin and the future deliverance from the presence of sin is made known in these eight chapters.

Chapters 9-11 form the second part. God's sovereign dealings with Israel is the theme of these chapters, which have a parenthetical character. Here we learn of Israel's election, rejection and coming restoration. God's righteousness is demonstrated in this second part as it is in the doctrinal section of this Epistle.

Chapters 12-16 constitute the third part. Here we find the exhortations for the justified and sanctified believer, who waits for the coming glory, how he is to live on earth in the power of the Gospel and manifest practically the righteousness of God.

I. DOCTRINAL. THE SALVATION OF GOD. Chapters 1-8

1. Introduction. Chapter 1:1-17
2. The Need of Salvation Demonstrated. The Whole World Guilty and Lost. Chapter 1:18-3:20.
3. The Righteousness of God Revealed. Justification, What it is and What it Includes. Chapter 3:21-5:11.
4. In Christ. The Sanctification of the Believer; his Deliverance from Sin and the Law. Children and Heirs. Chapter 5:12-8:39.

II. DISPENSATIONAL. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL

Chapters 9-11. 1. Israel and God's Sovereignty

Chapter 9. 2. Israel 's Failure and Unbelief

Chapter 10. 3. Israel 's Future

Chapter 11.

III. EXHORTATIONS AND THE CONCLUSION. Chapter 12-16:27.

1. The Exhortations. Chapter 12-15:13.
2. The Conclusion. Chapter 15:14-16:27.

The Epistle to the Romans demands the closest Study. "Its texture is so fine, its very vein so full, its very fibers and ligatures so fine and yet strong, that it requires not only to be again and again surveyed as a whole, and mastered in its Primary ideas, but to be dissected in detail, and With unwearying patience studied in its minutest features, before we can be said to have done it justice. Not only every sentence teems with thought, but every clause; while in some places every word may be said either to suggest some weighty thought, or to indicate some deep emotion" (D. Brown). In the analysis and annotations we point out the way to the deeper study of the Epistle. But the most successful learners of these great truths are the men and women who walk in the truth and learn daily anew that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, who rejoice in God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Analysis and Annotations

I. DOCTRINAL. THE SALVATION OF GOD. Chapter 1-8.

CHAPTER 1

1. The Apostle and the Gospel of God. 1-6.
2. The Greeting. 7.
3. The Apostle's Prayer and Desire. 8-15.
4. The Great Theme Introduced. 16-17.

Verses 1-6

The introduction to the Epistle is unsurpassed by any other Epistle. Every word should be carefully studied. The writer introduces himself first of all as a servant (literally: slave) of Jesus Christ and called an apostle. Notice that in verses 1-7

two little words are found three times in italics, the words "to be." They are supplied by the translators and should be omitted. Paul was not called to be an Apostle, but he was called an Apostle. The Lord Jesus Christ was not declared to be Son of God, but He was declared Son of God; believers are not called to be Saints, but they are called Saints. Paul loved to call himself bondman of Jesus Christ. He knew the Lord had redeemed him and now he was no longer his own, but belonged to Him who had purchased him and made him one with Himself. His highest ambition was to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. His Apostleship he puts in the second place. The highest and best is to be in reality a willing, devoted servant of the Lord. How did he become an Apostle? "Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:1). The exalted Christ in glory had called him and sent him forth. And next we find in the opening verse the specific work unto which the Lord had separated him--"separated unto the Gospel of God." The Gospel was his great commission and therefore is the great theme of his Epistle. The Holy Spirit who guided his mind, as well as his pen, now unfolds this Gospel. The highest and the best, after all, in God's whole revelation is the Gospel. And the Gospel is not confined in the Pauline Epistles to Romans. We read Colossians and find there still the Gospel. The highest revelation which ever flowed through this chosen vessel is contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians; it is still the Gospel. Oh! the blessed Gospel! it can never be exhausted; it will be the object of eternal praise. In His presence, conformed into His image we shall know its heights and its depths.

Notice after Paul mentioned the Gospel of God there follows a parenthetical statement about that Gospel. Verse 5 is the continuation of what he saith about his Apostleship. The word Gospel means "good news." It is the good news of God, for it has its source in Himself and in His eternal counsel. The Gospel is also called the Gospel of Christ, because it centers in Him, and is proclaimed through His finished work on the cross. This Gospel was promised by God's Prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures. In many ways, in types, in the sacrifices, in direct predictions this Gospel has been announced and Jewish believers looked forward to its accomplishment. Throughout the Old Testament from Genesis 3 to the Prophet Malachi the promises and predictions of the Gospel are found. The Old Testament is the foundation of the Gospel. The rejection of the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God is therefore a very serious matter. And the Gospel of God we learn next is a person. It is "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus is the name of the Son of God in humiliation, living on the earth; Christ is His official name in resurrection and He is the Lord of all. The Lord Jesus Christ is the proper way to address Him. "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh." This brings before us His incarnation "made of a woman, made under law" (Galatians 4:4). He came of the seed of Abraham and from the house of David, according to divine promise. He was both David's Son and David's Lord, the Root and Offspring of David. To Him belongs a throne for He is the King of the Jews. But "He came to His own and His own received Him not." He came to go to the Cross and finish the mighty work there which enables God to be just and a Justifier, as we shall find later. He will receive the throne when He comes again in great power and glory. And He is declared (marked out) the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. He lived in Perfect holiness on earth and the Spirit of holiness was upon Him. He raised the dead and thereby demonstrated that He is the Son of God. But it is equally true that His own resurrection must be included in this statement, for His resurrection is the effectual justification of Himself as the Son of God. Trace in these opening verses all the great facts of Christ--Son of God--Son of Man--Incarnation--His Death--His Resurrection--His Lordship.

Verse 7

Precious is the word of greeting to all the believers, not only in Rome, but everywhere. "Beloved of God called Saints." Such are all who have accepted Christ as their Saviour. They are justified, sanctified, and accepted in the Beloved. Blessed truth! in Christ, one with Him, we are the objects of the Love of God. The Love wherewith God loves His Son is the Love with which He loves all who belong to Christ (John 17:23). And then we are Saints, not called to be, or to become Saints, by a separated life; but we are constituted Saints in Christ, sanctified, that is separated unto Himself. God loves us and in Christ has set us apart to Himself. Nothing that we do could ever make us the Beloved of God. No effort of ours to live consistently, apart from evil, could make us Saints of God. God has done it for us in Christ. And because we are Saints we can live saintly lives. The greeting is from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned, for He is in and with the Saints of God, both individually and also collectively forming the body, the church.

Verses 8-15

In addressing them the Apostle has no rebuke, no evil to correct, no exhortation. Instead he thanked God that their faith

was spoken of throughout the whole world. They let their light shine brightly in the darkness of paganism. And His heart was filled with love for them. He thanked God for them, He prayed for His blessing upon them and that "by the will of God" he might be enabled to be with them. He longed to see them for mutual blessing. Here we have an illustration of Christian fellowship. Oftentimes he had purposed to come unto them, but was hindered. "The thwarted desires of Paul gave occasion to the Spirit of God to indite and publish, by his hand, this invaluable Epistle; to present to the Church a gift, not of present and passing effect, but which should build up and feed, and instruct, the Saints to the end of the time of the church's patience in the wilderness of this world." He felt, what every sinner, saved by Grace should feel, that he was a debtor to all. The possession of the Gospel makes us debtors to all. He had constantly discharged his debt by preaching the Gospel to the Jews and Gentiles and now he is eager "to preach the Gospel to you that are in Rome also." And can there be anything more blessed for the Saints than the Gospel? To be reminded of it and to be led deeper into the story of God's love and redemption is one of the great needs of God's people. Only as we do this can we be maintained in the reality and freshness of the Gospel. Therefore Paul longed to visit Rome to preach the Gospel to "the Beloved of God called Saints."

Verses 16-17

These two verses are the key verses of the Epistle. The great words of the doctrinal part of the Epistle are found here. Righteousness and Faith are these words; Paul declared that he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It cannot mean, what it is often said to mean, that Paul was not ashamed to confess Christ. It means that he had the utmost confidence in the Gospel of Christ; he knew it would not make him ashamed; he was not ashamed of it because of its intrinsic character. The world sneered at the Gospel he preached "for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18). He knew that in the Gospel was embodied the highest wisdom, that God Himself was its author, that it came from God and leads to God; he knew that through the Gospel the Greek, the Jew, the Barbarian could be saved out of the horrible pit and the miry clay and become a child of God and an heir of God. He was not ashamed of it for "the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation." What weighty words these are! The power of God is needed to save man. And that power God has, to save the vilest sinner through the Gospel of Christ. God is omnipotent, but in one thing God is powerless, He cannot save sinners apart from the Gospel of Christ, for the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. The spurious Gospel of today, which denies the Cross of Christ and the blood, which substitutes character, good works or something else for faith in the Work of Christ as sin-bearer, has no power to save. God cannot save in any other way than the way made known in the Gospel of Christ, who died for our sins. And what is salvation? It includes the whole of Christ's redemption work. It includes Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification. Saved from the guilt of sins; saved from the power of sin; saved from the presence of sin. Salvation from wrath and eternal damnation; salvation from the power of darkness and sin's awful dominion; salvation unto eternal glory. The word includes all the sinner needs. The cross of Christ has supplied every need. If man had to do something with it and could help along in his salvation, it would be an imperfect and insecure salvation. But God being the author, it is His salvation and thus (Acts 28:28) it is a perfect salvation, a salvation which is both deliverance and safety forever. (Philippians 2:12 "Work out your own salvation" is often quoted as meaning that we must work to be saved and to stay saved. It means that we are to work out with results the salvation which is ours by faith in Jesus Christ.) And this salvation is to any one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Faith is the means of obtaining this salvation. Of this we shall hear more in the third and fourth chapters. Furthermore, in the Gospel "the righteousness of God" is revealed. This great word will receive our closest attention in the annotations of the third chapter. Here we briefly state that the Gospel of Christ makes known that the very righteousness of God, which condemns a sinner, is now on the side of the believing sinner. it is revealed from faith to faith, which means that it is not on the principle of works, but on the principle of faith.

2. The Need of Salvation Demonstrated. The Whole World Guilty and Lost. Chapter 1:18-3:20.

CHAPTER 1:18-32.

1. Wrath Revealed from Heaven. 18.
2. Gentile Knowledge of God. 19-20.
3. Turning from God to Idolatry. 21-23.
4. God Gave Them Up to Corruption. 24-32.

Verse 18

God now demonstrates that the whole world is destitute of righteousness and needs salvation. Verse 18-3:20 is parenthetical, showing the moral condition of the whole race, away from God and lost and therefore under wrath. In this verse we read that wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. It is a solemn declaration. All who are ungodly and unrighteous, who oppose the truth by living in sin are under wrath. And this is now shown to be the actual condition of the entire race, Gentiles and Jews. All are by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). A holy God must forever exclude from His Presence those who are His enemies by wicked works.

Verses 19-20

The heathen world in its moral history is first described. The heathen darkness which prevails now in idolatry and its attending degradations was preceded by the knowledge of God and produced by turning from God. Man can know God, in and through creation; His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen in the things that are made. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). And there was no doubt also a primeval revelation, though unwritten, so that the Gentiles could know God.

Verses 21-23

They knew God and glorified Him not. They turned away from the light. Here is the true law of evolution, not an evolution upward as taught so much at the present time, but an evolution downward. The ascent of man is a delusion; the descent of man is the truth. The only possible way of lifting man, who has fallen so low, yea beneath the beast, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "They became vain in their imaginations." The word imagination means, perverse, self-willed reasonings revealing the evil heart beneath from which they spring. Then their foolish heart was darkened. The next step down is that they professed themselves wise and became fools. Rejecting the light and turning away from God, they became philosophers and thought to find out things by searching. Idolatry was the next step. "A god, in some shape, is a natural necessity of man. His natural desire, in his first apostasy from truth, is a god after his own heart." A brief history of idolatry is given. First they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into a likeness of an image of corruptible man. But they did not stop with this, but they worshipped birds, four-footed beasts and creeping things. Birds, flying through the air, therefore considered nearer heaven, are put above the quadrupeds, which walk on the earth and the creeping things, which cannot rise out of the dust and mire of the earth are the lowest form. They worshipped the serpent, as it is still done by the Indians in Arizona. And idolatry is not confined to the heathen nations, it is practised in that great apostate system Romanism. A piece of bread, under an elaborate ritual, is lifted up and claimed to be changed by a few words of a sinful man, into the body and soul of the Son of god; then they fall down and worship. The mass is a blasphemous idolatry.

Verses 24-32

Then moral corruption of the worst kind follows. They had given Him up and now He gives them up. Three times we read that God gave them up. But why should there be a threefold repetition of the fact that He gave them up? Man is composed of body, soul and spirit. The first giving up is as to the body; this is found in verses 24-25. Then He gave them up to vile passions; this concerns the soul and the horrible things stated in verses 26-27 are the results. These were practised openly in the Greek and Roman world in the days of the Apostle Paul. Ancient literature bears abundant witness to that effect. These vile things are still going on in heathen India, China, Africa and elsewhere. They are found likewise in the midst of Christendom. Whenever and wherever the Truth of God is abandoned, degradation in every way follows, for the Truth of God alone can restrain evil. The third giving up is found in verse 29. Given up to a reprobate mind, which involves the spirit of man. "All these things spoken of here are clearly regarded as the recompense" even now, of the error of the creature, in departing from the Creator. "The world is thus regarded as under a judicial bondage of sin and dishonor. Men eat the fruit of their own ways, sometimes pleasant to the taste of corrupted nature, but with prospect of Divine and eternal judgment at the end. The very lusts which govern and torment the slaves of sin are, as it were, the earnest and token of that wrath of God, which, now revealed from heaven, will yet deal with ungodliness and unrighteousness of unrepentant sinners after death" (Hebrews 9:27). (Pridham on Romans)

Then follows a description of the sins, the fruits of a corrupt human nature, sins which were the characteristic features of heathendom when this Epistle was written. If we turn to 2 Timothy 3:1-5 we find a similar list, which corresponds in a striking way with the list at the close of the first chapter of Romans. There is, however, an important difference. As already stated Romans 1:29-31 describes the moral condition of the heathen world in Paul's day, but 2 Timothy 3:1-5 describes the moral condition of the professing Christian masses of the last times, church members who have the form of godliness and who deny the power thereof. They make an empty profession, their hearts are away from God and the last days of this age revert to the moral conditions in which the heathen world was in the days of the Apostle. And these characteristics prevail everywhere in Christendom. The last verse of our chapter tells us, that they know that they are worthy of death, yet they keep on in their evil ways.

CHAPTER 2

1. The Gentile Moralists and Reformer and His Condemnation. 1-6.
2. The Two Classes. 7-16.
3. The State of the Jew. 17-29.

Verses 1-6

But in the heathen world there were such who gave witness against the immoral condition, the different vices. There were Moralists, Reformers and Philosophers like Socrates, Seneca and others. They judged and condemned certain evils. But God declares that they were not a whit better than the rest. The very things they condemned they were guilty of themselves. One of their own writers declared, "I see the good and approve of it and follow the evil." Thus they practiced evil, because the same evil heart was in them; in spite of their ethical writings, they were corrupt. And this is not confined to heathen moralists in the past, the same is true of others during this age, who judged existing evils and condemned them, while later they were found out to do the very things they condemned. Such is the unregenerated heart of man. They cannot escape the judgment of God. They were impenitent, despising the riches of His goodness and were treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the days of wrath.

Verses 7-16

God is righteous and He will render every man according to his deeds. Then two classes are mentioned. The first are those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, and to that class God will give eternal life. (Eternal life is here not, as in John's Gospel a present possession, but is that to be entered in after death.) How is this to be applied? Does this answer the question how man is to be saved? it does not, but it is the question of God's moral government. Man in his unconverted state cannot obtain eternal life by patient continuance in well doing, for we read later that God's Word declares "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Man cannot seek for glory for it is written, "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (3:11). On these terms no human being can obtain eternal life. Man is a sinner and all the wages he can earn is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (6:23). If eternal life is received by faith in Jesus Christ then man is able to do right and live the life that pleases God. Then there is the other class; those who obey not the truth, who live in unrighteousness, who reject His Word. Indignation and wrath is in store for such and this is the condition in which Jews and Gentiles are by nature "Among whom also we (Jews) all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others (Gentiles)" (Ephesians 2:3). God states in these verses the principles on which He judges according to man's works, and as man is a sinner and cannot do good works, man is therefore under condemnation.

And likewise there is no respect of persons with God. The Jew may boast of a higher place than the Gentile, but God deals with all alike. The Gentiles had not the law and therefore sinned without law and they cannot escape the righteous judgment of God. They had the witness in Creation, as seen from the first chapter, and besides this there is conscience and that witnesses of what is sin; they have the knowledge of good and evil and are therefore morally responsible. They turned from God and they will be judged apart from the law; but it is more than that "they shall perish without the law." That

completely answers the teaching that the mercy of God covers in some way the heathen world and that the heathen are not lost. And the Jews had the law and did not keep it. Could the possession of the Law make them just before God? Certainly not, "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). And theirs will be the greater judgment, for they knew His will and did not according to His will and shall be beaten with many stripes (Luke 12:47). The entire passage deals with the judgment of a righteous God and that neither the Gentile without the law nor the Jew with the law is righteous before God, but that both classes must fall under the judgment of God. And there is a day appointed when this righteous judgment will be executed by the Son of Man, our Lord. And that none can be just by doing is seen in Paul's defense of the Gospel.

Verses 17-29

Then the case of the Jew is more specially considered. He possessed the Law, the Holy Scriptures. And he rested in the law; the Apostle knew something of that in his own experience for he had declared "that touching the righteousness which is in the law" he thought himself "blameless." (Philippians 3:6). The Jew still does the same thing. He rests in the law and in the obedience to it for righteousness. But the law was never given for man to obtain righteousness. "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). The law was given to convict of sin and not as a means to obtain righteousness. All the outward righteousness of which the Jew boasted, especially in the strictest sect of the Pharisees, was but an attempt to cover the inward corruption of a heart which cannot bring forth the fruits of righteousness. The Scribes and Pharisees were "like unto white sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27). Self-righteous, despising others, condemning others-such was the state of the Jew, as he rested in the law, boasted of God and as being instructed out of the law. But the Spirit of God now uncovers his true condition. They violated that law. All the sins forbidden by the law were secretly and publicly committed by them. They dishonored God so much so that the name of God was blasphemed among Gentiles through them. Their whole history bears witness to all which is written in these verses. In Ezekiel's message we read that they profaned His name among the heathen (Ezekiel 36:20-23). And this condition is the same among ritualistic, law and ordinance keeping, professing Christians, who are religious, but unsaved. They boast in what they do and what they possess and yet they live in sin, and their conduct belies their profession.

Especially did the Jew boast of his circumcision as a means of having favor with God, as nominal Christians trust in the sacraments as the means of salvation. But circumcision or ordinances cannot save man and make him right before God. And besides this, circumcision had become a reproach among the Gentiles, because the Jews had dishonored God and denied the true meaning of circumcision. (Separation.) "Was circumcision of no use because of the dishonor put upon it? No, but that could not be counted such which was united with the transgression of that which it pledged one to keep. And the uncircumcised person keeping the commandments of the law would before Him be counted as circumcised. Israel, in fact, never contained all the sheep of the Lord's flock, as we know; and the apostle will presently remind us that Abraham himself was an example of the faith that might be in one uncircumcised. How indeed would the obedience of the uncircumcised condemn the man who, having both the letter of the law and circumcision also, yet violated the law! Plainly then, one must place what is internal and spiritual before what is external in the flesh. The true circumcision is spiritual and of the heart, and constitutes the true Jew, whose 'praise' (the word Jew means 'Praise') is found with Him who sees the heart." (Numerical Bible.)

Outward observances have no value; it is the heart which needs circumcision. They boasted in circumcision and all the time denied and broke the law. Verse 29 is often misused by certain sects who claim that all the Jewish promises are now fulfilled in those who are Jews inwardly, that is Christians, and that Christians are the spiritual Israel and should keep the seventh day as Sabbath, etc. These arguments reveal ignorance in the scope of this Epistle. It is simply to prove the Jew with his boast in circumcision is lost. There is a circumcision of the heart, in the Spirit. Of this Paul wrote to the Philippians, "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

CHAPTER 3:1-20

1. Objections and Their Answers. 1-8.

2. The Whole World Under Sin. 9-20.

Verses 1-8

A number of objections are next raised and answered. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" Such would be the natural question of the Jew after reading the argument that the Jew is on the same level with the Gentile. This objection is stated here for the first time. It is important, for the Jews are God's chosen people and as the Apostle states later, to them belongs "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises" (9:4). If God puts Jews and Gentiles upon the same footing, what then becomes of all these peculiar blessings promised to the Jews? And in chapter 11 the question comes up again. "I say then hath God cast away His people?" What superiority then hath the Jew? This question of a supposed objection is at once answered. The advantage of the Jew is "much every way." The chief advantage is stated "unto them were committed the oracles of God." They possessed what the Gentiles did not have, the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God. What we call now the Old Testament is therefore the Word of God, in which God spoke to His covenant people. And in these oracles of God are found the great promises for that race, which await their glorious fulfillment in the day of their national restoration.

Another objection comes next. And this is also met and answered (Verses 3-4). All did not believe, but that does not make the faithfulness of God void for those who do believe. God does not fail those who put their trust in Him, because others did not believe. Part of the answer is from David's penitential Psalm (Psalm 51:4). David justified God, declared that He was true and then condemned himself. In the day of judgment it will be found that God is true and every man a liar. But this second objection leads to still another one, which is also answered by the Apostle (Verses 5-6). But if our unrighteousness commend God's righteousness, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who inflicteth wrath? If that were true, that He needs our sins for the praise of His righteousness "then how shall God judge the world?" But more than that. They had accused the Apostle and others of saying, "Let us do evil, that good may come." If it were true that our unrighteousness commends God's righteousness, then this slanderous statement would be perfectly right. For if our sins help to glorify God, why should we be judged for them? But the Apostle brands it as utterly false. For those who sin on such a principle awaits a damnation (judgment) which is just.

Verses 9-20

We have seen that the previous verses considered possible objections to the arguments of the preceding chapter. Verses 1-8 have therefore a parenthetical character. And now we come to the summary. Gentiles and Jews were proved to be absolutely unrighteous and therefore guilty and lost. The judgment wrath of a righteous God is upon them who had no law and upon them who possessed the law. The verdict of the Oracles of God is given. The following Scripture passages are quoted to confirm all that has been said: Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Isaiah 59:7-8; Psalm 36:1. The whole human race is proved to be negatively and positively bad; nothing good and everything bad is in man. Read carefully these positive statements. We need to be reminded of them in a day when almost universally the truth of man's lost condition is disbelieved, and when religious teachers constantly speak of "a better self," "a divine spark," "the germ of good"; when thousands follow the unscriptural teaching of a Fatherhood of God apart from true and saving faith in the Lord Jesus. Therefore read what God saith about the condition of his fallen creature. "There is none righteous, no, not one";--"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God";--"there is none that doeth good, no, not one." How positive are these statements. And it is blessed to read in the Scriptures that God knows all the depths of sin into which we have been plunged. God knows all, and here He shows us the true picture of ourselves. "Wherefore by works of law shall no flesh be justified before Him; for through law is knowledge of sin." Men try to do something to meet God's requirements, but they cannot do that. All human efforts in doing good works are futile. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And they that are in the flesh cannot please God. By deeds of law, all kinds of religious observances and good works, no flesh shall be justified before Him. Thus ends the revelation concerning man guilty and lost. The whole world is proved under sin. Man cannot save himself. If there is salvation, it must come from God. Upon this dark, dreary background a righteous God now flashes forth the wonderful story of redeeming love.

3. The Righteousness of God Revealed. Justification, what it is and what it Includes. Chapter 3:21-5:11.

CHAPTER 3:21-31

1. The Righteousness of God Manifested. 21-22.

2. Just and Justifier. 23-26.

3. Not of Works but of Faith. 27-31.

Verses 21-22

And now God comes forward and manifests His righteousness. Verse 21 must be connected with chapter 1:17. As previously stated chapter 1:18-3:20 is a parenthesis proving all the world destitute of righteousness and therefore guilty. Righteousness of God as revealed in the Gospel was the statement in chapter 1:17 and it is this which is brought more fully in view. The term "Righteousness of God" is much misunderstood. Not a few think it is the righteousness of Christ (a term nowhere used in Scripture) which is attributed to the believing sinner. They teach that Christ fulfilled the law, lived a perfect life on earth and that this righteousness is given to the sinner. All this is unscriptural. Righteousness cannot be bestowed by the law in any sense of the word. If the holy life of the Son of God, lived on earth in perfect righteousness could have saved man and given him righteousness, there was no need for Him to die. "If righteousness came by the law then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). It is God's righteousness which is now on the side of the believing sinner; the same righteousness which condemns the sinner, covers all who believe. And this righteousness is revealed in the Gospel. God's righteousness has been fully met and maintained in the atoning work of Christ on the Cross. By that wonderful work God is now enabled to save sinners and to save them righteously. The righteousness of God is therefore first of all revealed in the Gospel of Christ. Apart then from the law, righteousness of God is manifested, the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ. And this righteousness now revealed was also witnessed to by the law and the prophets. The law of the different sacrifices, insufficient in themselves to take away sins, pointed to the great sacrifice, in which God would be fully glorified as well as His righteousness satisfied. There were many types and shadows. Now since the righteousness of God is fully made known in the Gospel we can trace God's wonderful thoughts and purposes in the types and histories of the Old Testament. To deny that the law testified to the coming redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ is to deny the Gospel itself. And this is done in the camp of higher criticism. But the Prophets also witnessed to it (Isaiah 41:10; 46:13; 51:5, 6, 8; 56:8).

It is blessed to see that the Prophet Isaiah who has the most to say concerning the sufferings of Christ, also witnesses to the righteousness which should follow. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:24-25). "A just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah 45:21). "His Name... the Lord our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6). The old, old question never fully answered "how should man be just with God?" is now solved. Thus the Oracles of God witness to the righteousness of God. And this righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is "unto all and upon all them that believe." It is unto all, which means that the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to save all. The whole world may be saved. It is "upon all that believe," which means that only those who believe on Christ are covered by the righteousness of God and are justified.

Verses 23-26

"Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Christ has met all, He paid for all our sins. If we believe on Jesus we are justified freely by His Grace, that is, as a free gift. And justification is acquittal; we are acquitted from sin and from any charge of it. "It is divine righteousness that acts in justifying; righteousness is just that attribute of God which is concerned in it. It is like a broad, effectual shield stretched over the believer, and for all like a house that with its open door invites men to take shelter from the coming storm of judgment." The redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ has satisfied every claim forever. Christ has paid the price and all who believe are fully acquitted from every charge and penalty. "Whom God hath set forth a mercy seat through faith by His blood." On the day of atonement on the mercy seat, overshadowed by the Cherubim, the blood was sprinkled. And now the better blood, that which alone can take away sin, is upon the mercy seat, and God is faithful and just on account of that blood, to justify the believer.

"To declare His righteousness in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God." The sins that had taken place before, does not mean the sins committed before the conversion of an individual

believer. It means the sins of believers before Christ had come and died. When sins were forgiven in Old Testament times God's gracious forbearance was manifested, but when Christ had paid the great redemption price, when His blood had been shed, then God's righteousness was made manifest in having declared righteous believers, who lived before Christ had died. In view of what God's blessed Son would do, a righteous God forgave the sins of all who believed. And now God is just; His righteousness is unchanged and fully maintained and as the just God He is the justifier of Him that believes on Jesus. The justification of the believer is fully consistent with the righteousness of God. Negatively stated "what if God were not to justify, declare free, a sinner who believes in Jesus?" Then God would not be just to the blood of Christ. And in view of these wonderful revelations of the Gospel of Christ, so far above man's wisdom, God-like from start to finish, how awful the rejection of this blessed Gospel, as well as the perversion of it! Surely a righteous God must deal with such in judgment of eternal wrath.

Verses 27-31

Boasting from man's side is excluded. The law could do nothing but condemn man. The principle of simple faith excludes all boasting. "Not of works lest any man should boast." It is all of God and therefore all the praise belongs to Him. And there is another question. God justifies the circumcision (the Jews); He justifies the uncircumcision by faith (Gentiles). "Do not we then make void the law by faith? Far be the thought! No, but we establish the law." The law is not made void but established by the Gospel, not in the sense that it is to help the sinner. The broken law and its curse was borne by Christ; therefore the law has been vindicated as well as the holiness and righteousness of God. The man who tries to be right with God by the works of the law makes the law void, for he will not live up to the letter of the law, as the law demands and excuses his failures at the expense of the law, which is holy and good.

CHAPTER 4

1. The Witness of Abraham to Justification. 1-5.
2. As Confirmed also by David. 6-8.
3. Circumcision the Sign of the Covenant. 9-12.
4. Faith in Him Who Raiseth the Dead. 13-25.

Verses 1-5

Two witnesses are summoned next in whose lives the truth of justification by faith is illustrated. The Jews boasted of Abraham as the father of their nation. "Abraham our father" is still the common phrase used by all orthodox Jews as it was in the days of John the Baptist, as he declared, "Say not within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father." How then was Abraham counted righteous before God? Was he justified by keeping the law? That was impossible, for the law was 430 years after Abraham. He was not justified by works. He was a sinner like every other human being. He had no works to justify him. But what saith the Scripture? "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Abraham simply believed God when He gave him a promise (Genesis 15:5-6) and God said, you have no righteousness, but I take your faith instead of righteousness. Faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. There is then a difference between the righteousness of God in the previous chapter and the righteousness imputed in this chapter. And a blessed statement it is "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." Abraham did not work. To him that worketh not, God reckons a reward. And what a reward. What God puts on the side of him, who believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, will only be fully known when redeemed sinners are in His presence. "The glory which Thou has given me I have given Them" (John 17:22). This wonderful utterance of our Lord tells us of the great reward in store for him that worketh not, who, as ungodly, believes on Christ, who died for the ungodly. Thus faith is reckoned for righteousness and has its reward of glory through grace. The statement in Galatians 3:6-9 must be studied in connection with these verses. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." (In Galatians analyzed and annotated this statement is more fully explained.)

Verses 6-8

And David is the second witness. David and Abraham are mentioned in the first verse of the New Testament. The covenant God made with Abraham and with David make these two men the leading men of the nation. Now Abraham had no law, but David was under the law. David describeth the blessedness of the man (whosoever he may be) to whom God imputes the righteousness without works. The beautiful 32nd Psalm is quoted. The blessedness of the believer is there described. Iniquities forgiven; sins covered; sin no longer imputed. He does not impute sin, but imputes righteousness. Forgiveness takes the place of sin, and everlasting righteousness has covered the believer's iniquity, hiding it alike from the eyes of Divine glory, and from the conscience of the justified vessel of His grace; and significantly it is stated in that Psalm "for this cause shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in the time when Thou mayest be found." This is the way to be godly, confessing ourself a sinner, confessing sin and believing on Him, who justifieth the ungodly.

Verses 9-12

The question of circumcision is raised again. The Jew boasted in circumcision as placing him into a position of favor and blessing before God. Is this blessedness, justification by faith, sins put away, righteousness imputed, for the circumcision, the Jews, only, or does it come also upon the uncircumcision, the Gentiles? When Abraham was declared righteous he was still in uncircumcision. The historical account in Genesis shows that circumcision followed the declaration "he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness;" circumcision did not precede his faith which was reckoned to him for righteousness. He was in uncircumcision, practically a Gentile, and circumcision was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith. All this manifests the wisdom of God. It was divinely arranged so that Abraham "might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised (Gentiles) that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had being uncircumcised." Here we have the best possible argument that ordinances, or sacraments so called by man, have no part in bestowing salvation upon man. Baptism is called "a sacrament" and ritualistic Christians hold that it is necessary to receive the blessing of forgiveness. Others who do not hold to corrupt ritualism, also teach that Baptism as an ordinance is necessary for salvation. This portion of the Epistle answers completely these unscriptural claims. "For by Grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Verses 13-25

This section is of deep interest and must be carefully studied. While we had the atoning death of Christ so far before us, resurrection is now brought to the foreground as another important fact of the Gospel. The faith of Abraham is defined. How did he believe? When the promise was given that he should have a son and numerous offspring (Genesis 15:4-5), he believed God, who quickeneth the dead (resurrection) and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Abraham was an old man and Sarah was far beyond the time of childbirth; their case was humanly impossible. But Abraham believed that God could bring life from the dead, that He had the power to touch a grave and bring life out of it. "Against hope he believed in hope--and being not weak in faith he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." From Genesis we know that he was also weak in faith and that he acted in unbelief. But this is graciously passed by. God, so to speak, had forgotten his unbelief and remembered it no more.

The application of all this is found in verses 23-25. The promised seed was more than Isaac, it was Christ; so that Abraham believed the God who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. And we believe on Him also. Our Lord was delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification. His resurrection is the blessed and positive proof that our sins are completely put away. For this reason the resurrection of Jesus, our Lord, is the justification of the believer. We have then a threefold justification of the believer. We are justified by His blood; He bore our guilt and penalty. We are justified by His resurrection, because this assures us that the work is done and we are accepted, and we are justified by faith, which is reckoned for righteousness.

CHAPTER 5:1-11

1. What Justification Includes. 1-11.

The blessed results of justification are next revealed. What justified believers possess and what they may enjoy is the theme of the opening verses of this chapter. The first thing mentioned is that all who are justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace was made in the blood of the Cross, He who died for our sins is our peace. His greeting to the assembled disciples on the resurrection day was "Peace be unto you," and then He showed unto them His hands and His side, and again He said, "Peace be unto you." This peace with God we have as believers in Christ. It is settled forever and can never be disturbed. Some times Christians ask others if they made their peace with God. They mean by it, turning away from sin, repentance, conversion, surrender, etc., as if those actions from our side could make peace with God. This is incorrect and the reason why so many professing Christians lack the assurance that they have peace with God is in this very fact, that they are constantly trying what they term "to be right with God." Peace does not need to be made, it was made when Christ died for our sins. And into this peace we enter when we believe on the Lord Jesus and are justified freely of all things. We may live sober, earnest and useful Christian lives for fifty years or longer and at the end of such a devoted life we have not more of the peace with God than we had the moment we trusted in Christ. And our failures and stumbling walk as the "beloved of God, called Saints" our sinning, can never disturb and undo that peace.

The second result is that we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. We have a perfect standing before God in Christ, and perfect access. We stand in grace, accepted in the beloved One and this grace keeps and sustains. We are the children of God made nigh by blood. Grace makes us nigh. We can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Our faithfulness cannot increase this standing in Grace, nor can our unfaithfulness decrease it, for the simple reason that it is Grace. The third result of justification is "the hope of the glory of God" in which we can now boast. The only title to glory is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has secured the glory for us and has made us sharers of His own glory He received from God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. People speak of fitting themselves for heaven by living good lives. No one can be fitted for heaven. The only fitness is the new nature, received in the new birth. And that nature is given to the justified believer when he is justified by faith. That there are, special rewards for sacrificing service is very true, but to be in glory is a matter of grace and is given along with justification. The glory of God is the Hope of righteousness (Galatians 5:5). These three things cover the past, the present and the future. Past; Peace was made. Present; Standing in this Grace. Future; The Hope of the Glory of God. The approach to God in the tabernacle illustrates this beautifully. First the brazen altar, the type of the sacrifice of Christ; then the laver for washing, the candlestick, the table--typifying the cleansing, light, food and fellowship, the grace wherein we stand. Then behind the veil the glory of Jehovah, which ere long God's people shall reach when He calls them home. How happy God's people should be in possession of such precious things with the knowledge of sins forever put away!

But we are still in the wilderness and there are tribulations. And in tribulations, as justified and assured of the glory of God, we can even boast (the word used in the Greek) in them. Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed. "Here is how that which is against us works for us; and notice that the very first thing effected is the breaking down of our own wills, those wills, that Jacob-like struggle so much with the will of God. Sovereign He must be; and spite of all that we have known of Him, it is what in practical detail we so little want Him to be. Amid the clouds and darkness that encompass Him in His providential dealings, faith that should find its opportunity finds oftentimes bewilderment and perplexity; yet in it we are forced to recognize our nothingness, and creep close to the side of Him who yet goes with us. Forced to let God be God, it is then that we get experience of a moral government which is that of a Father. The forcing of outward things comes to be read as drawings of Omnipotent Love that seeks us for its own delight. His ways, if still they may be beyond us, are not strange and still less adverse. They beget, not fear or misgiving, but a brightening hope, that steadies as it brightens." (F.W. Grant)

In verse 5 the Holy Spirit is mentioned for the first time in this Epistle. The highest truth is not the work of the Spirit in the believer, but the work of Christ for the believer. The Holy Spirit is here to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us. Once more therefore Christ and His finished work and the outflow from it are mentioned. God commending His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Justified by His blood we shall be much more saved from wrath through Him. All believers are exempt from the wrath to come because they are one with Him who is the administrator of the judgments of God. And there is a second "much more". Reconciled by the death of His Son, much

more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life, the life which is in God's own presence and which is in us, for He is our life. And the very highest result, the joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation.

4. In Christ. The Sanctification of the Believer; his Deliverance from Sin and the Law; Children and Heirs. Chapter 5:12-8.

CHAPTER 5:12-21

1. Sin and Death Through the First Adam. 12-14.

2. In Adam by Nature; in Christ Through Grace. 15-21.

So far the subject of this Epistle has been our sins and how God has dealt with them in the Cross of Christ. The guilt and penalty of the sins of the believer are forever gone. With this section the question of sin itself is taken up and we learn how the justified believer is also sanctified in Christ and as such delivered from the dominion of sin and from the law. Furthermore we learn it also includes that believers are children and heirs of God. To distinguish between sins and sin is important. Sin is that evil principle in us, as fallen creatures, and sins are the fruits which spring from the evil root in us. Sin, the old nature, and how God deals with it in virtue of the redemption of Jesus Christ, is now, first of all, revealed. What we were in Adam and what we are through grace in Christ, how as identified with Christ we may be delivered from the power of indwelling sin, are truths unknown to many believers. Without this knowledge a true Christian experience, such which a believer should constantly enjoy, is impossible. One of the chief reasons why true believers are carried about with divers and strange doctrines, is the ignorance of these great facts of our redemption in Christ as unfolded in this part of Romans. How many others are constantly striving and struggling to lead a spiritual life and fail in it because they know not the great principles of sanctification and deliverance in Christ.

Verses 12-14

"Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death and thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." By one man, the first Adam, sin entered into the world (not sins, but sin). And death followed, which is physical death. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," and this death has passed upon the race because of sin. The margin of the authorized version contains a statement which is responsible for a very unscriptural teaching. The margin states "in whom all have sinned"; upon this it has been taught that the guilt of Adam has been imputed to all. This is not correct. We are not responsible for the sin of Adam nor are we held responsible by God for a sinful nature; we are responsible for the outworking of that nature, that is for our own sins. The wicked dead, those whose sins were not taken away, because they believed not, will not be judged for having had a sinful nature, but solely according to their works (Revelation 20:12). Death comes upon us on account of our sins, as it is stated in this verse "death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.

"For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law; nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him to come." This looks difficult, but it is simple after all. The law was given by Moses; from Adam to Moses there was no law, men were left to conscience, by which they knew good and evil. But death reigned nevertheless from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Adam had a commandment which he transgressed, inasmuch as there was no law till Moses, the generations could not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Sin is lawlessness and not as the faulty translation of 1 John 3:4 states, "sin is the transgression of the law." However, sin becomes transgression when there is a law. As there was no law from Adam to Moses, sin was therefore not imputed as transgression. But as they all sinned, death reigned and there is also judgment afterwards for them. The last sentence of verse 14 "who is the figure of Him that was to come" is the important statement which is fully developed in the verses which follow and upon which the whole argument rests.

Verses 15-21

The first Adam is the type of the last, Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The same comparison is also found in 1 Corinthians 15 "For as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive" (verse 22). This passage has often been used by those

who teach the ultimate, universal salvation of the whole race. It has nothing whatever to do with salvation from the penalty of sin, but it applies to the resurrection of the bodies of the redeemed. Here in Romans the contrast is of a different nature. Adam and Christ are viewed as two heads, having each his offspring to whom they communicate something. The first Adam bestows upon his offspring the results of his sin; Christ, the last Adam,* bestows upon those who belong to Him, by personal faith in Him, the blessed consequences of His great work. (Christ is never called the second Adam, but the last Adam, as there will not be another after Him.) A sinful nature and physical death is what we have as the children of the first Adam. In Christ the believer receives a sinless nature, eternal life and glory. In this sense Adam is the figure of Him to come.

The first sentence of verses 15 and 16 is best put in the form of a question. This helps much in understanding this deep portion of the Epistle. "But shall not the free gift be as the offence?" By the offence of Adam the many died, his offspring has been affected by his Offence. In like manner the grace of God and the gift of Grace, which is by the other Adam, Jesus Christ abounds also to the many. The question asked must therefore be answered in the affirmative. This and the following verses have also been used to teach that there is universal salvation. But it does not mean that. The condition "faith in Christ" must not be lost sight of. We are all in the first Adam by the natural birth; identification with the second Man is only possible by the new birth and that takes Place when a sinner believes on Christ and in His finished work. Those who do not believe are in Adam and are dead in trespasses and sins. "And shall not as by one that has sinned be the gift? For the judgment was of one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification" (verse 16). The sins committed are here in view. Our sin brought judgment. The free gift of justification, on account of Christ's atoning sacrifice, is blessedly sufficient to deliver from the guilt of many offences. "For if by the offence of one death reigned by the one; much more shall those who receive the abundance of grace, and Of the free gift of righteousness, reign in life by the one, Jesus Christ" (verse 17). The Previous verse spoke of the guilt of sins, which rests upon all those who are in Adam and this guilt is met in Christ by justification. In verse 17 death which reigns in the first man is met by reign of life in Jesus Christ. Those who believe on Him have life now and are delivered from the reign of death. When He comes, the bodies of His Saints will be raised in incorruption and we who remain shall be changed in a moment and be caught up into His Presence without dying. Verse 18 in the Authorized version is poorly translated and misleading. "So then as it was by one offence towards all men to condemnation, so by one righteousness towards all men to justification of life." This blessed contrast between Adam and Christ is made again in verse 19. "For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many shall be constituted righteous." Here it is the contrast between Adam's disobedience and Christ's obedience. And the obedience of Christ which constitutes all who believe on Him righteous, is not His obedient life, but His obedience in the death of the cross. "But law came in in order that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded grace overabounded, in order that, even as sin has reigned in the power of death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here for the first time a reason is given why God gave the law. The Epistle to the Galatians will bring the subject of Law and Grace more fully to our attention. Law came in that the offence might abound; it has constituted man a transgressor and in this sense the offence abounds. But grace overabounds. It deals with the transgressions and reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Wonderful and preciously deep contrast! In Adam sin. condemnation and death. In Christ righteousness, justification and eternal life; yea much more, eternal glory. In Adam we have his constitution; in Christ we possess through grace His life and glory.

CHAPTER 6

1. Dead with Christ to Sin. 1-7.
2. Risen with Christ and Alive to God. 8-11.
3. Sin shall Not Have Dominion. 12-14.
4. Servants to Righteousness. 15-23.

Verses 1-7

We have learned from the previous chapter that the justified believer is in Christ and fully identified with Him. God sees the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, no longer in Adam, but in Christ, the head of a new creation. "So if any one be in

Christ, it is a new creation the old things have passed away, behold all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Judicially the believer therefore is dead to sin, the old man was crucified, put completely to death in the death Of Christ, and the believer is alive to God in Him. But this wonderful part of the Gospel must become a reality in the life and experience of the believer. God beholds us as dead to sin in Christ and alive in Himself, this must be lived out. This is the solemn responsibility of the justified believer. And we are not to do this in our own strength, but in the power of the indwelling Spirit, who is also given to the believer. All this is unfolded in this chapter.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Inasmuch as we have died to sin in the death of Christ, the practical deliverance of sin and its dominion must be manifested in our lives. As we find later the old nature, the flesh is still in the justified believer, but he has also another nature, another life and he is therefore enabled in the power of that new life and his identification with Christ, to continue no longer in sin. It is a most positive fact "dead to sin" and this is true of all believers positionally in Christ, and therefore the Holy Spirit tells us that we should no longer live therein. And this truth is illustrated in Christian baptism; it is into Christ's death and illustrates the truth of death and burial in Christ. Baptism therefore does not save. It has no power to put a sinner in Christ, nor can it convey forgiveness of sins and impart the new life. Faith alone is needed for that, and when the sinner believes, the grace of God saves and accomplishes identification with Christ. And furthermore we are more than dead and buried with Christ "as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." We share in His resurrection. What the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ did to Him, raising Him from the dead, He does to all who believe on Him. "He hath raised us up together" (Ephesians 2:6). We possess His life, the risen life and therefore we should also walk in the power of this life. Our old man (what we are in Adam), was crucified with Christ. When He died we also died. Our old man was crucified with Christ "that the body of sin might be annulled, so that we should be slaves to sin no longer." Many have been misled by the mistranslation which states "that the body of sin might be destroyed" and teach that the old nature is completely eradicated. But it does not say destroyed, but annulled, or cancelled. The body of sin is our mortal body with the law of sin in its members. And as long as we have this mortal body, the law of sin is in its members. But the operation of that law is annulled for the believer, who in faith, as we shall see later, reckons himself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God in Christ Jesus. And therefore the believer is enabled to be no longer a slave to sin, as the natural man is. A dead man is justified or discharged from sin; the tyrant's power is at an end when the subject over which he domineers is dead. And so we being crucified with Christ escape the tyrant's power, and ultimately when the Lord comes this mortal body will be changed and sin itself will be forever gone.

Verses 8-11

Inasmuch as we have died with Christ we shall also live with Him. Death hath no more dominion over Him; He liveth unto God. And all this is true of the believer. Then comes the most important answer to the question raised, in the beginning of the chapter. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" "In the same manner reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." This is an exhortation to take hold of this great and deep truth, the identification of the believer with Christ in death and resurrection. Reckon is an act of faith. It means to believe all this and to appropriate in faith what God has put on our side in Christ Jesus. We must reckon that we are dead and in possession of the life which empowers us to live unto God. "We reckon this is so, not feel it to be so. It is an entire mistake, and fraught with important consequences, to imagine this being dead to sin to be a feeling or an experience. We cannot feel Christ's death on the cross, and it was there He died to sin, and we because He died. If it were experience, it would be an absolute perfect one, no evil thought, feeling, or desire, ever in the heart; and this not true of some of the more advanced, but of all Christians and that always. But this is contrary to the experience of all. The attempt to produce such a condition in ourself ends either in the misery of utter failure, or, still worse, in self-satisfaction, indeed, the well-nigh incredible delusion for a Christian, that he is as impassive to sin as Christ Himself! The words do not express such an experience. (As claimed by Perfectionists and Holiness sects.) In every way, it is plain that it is not an experience of which the apostle is speaking here. We could not be told to reckon what we experience. What we reckon is a fact for faith, the fruit of the work done for us, not of that done in us. Because Christ died unto sin once for all, and in that He liveth, liveth unto God, thus also do we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus." (Numerical Bible.)

Verses 12-14

The exhortation which follows in verse 12, addressed not to the world but to justified believers, proves that sin is still in

the mortal body of the believer. It is not destroyed. But while sin is in our mortal body, it has no more right to reign there. However it will reign, if we yield to the desires of the old nature. If a believer obeys the old nature in its lusts, he walks not in the Spirit but in the flesh. Whenever temptation comes, the believer must take refuge in prayer, in self-judgment and self-surrender and yield (or present) his members afresh as instruments of righteousness unto God. As long as the believer is in the mortal body there is the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). And if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; this necessitates that we make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof (Romans 13:14). Furthermore, the promise is given to the believer in Christ that sin shall not have dominion over him because he is not under the law, but under grace. The grace which has saved the believing sinner and made Him nigh unto God, teaches also to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age (Titus 2:12). And more than that; grace supplies the power to live godly. Therefore sin shall not have dominion over a believer because he is under grace. But this promise must be appropriated in faith.

Verses 15-23

Another question is asked. "What then, shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?" Another, "God forbid"--perish the very thought of it--is the answer. Whoever yields to sin falls under the mastery of sin. Then follows a word of praise. He thanks God that the believers to whom he writes, once servants of sin, but having obeyed from the heart (and true faith is obedience), they were made free from sin and became servants of righteousness. "Free from sin" does not mean, as often taught, free from the old nature, but free from the domineering power of indwelling sin. Then there is the contrast between the former state in sin and the place of deliverance into which grace has brought the believer. In the former life as unsaved, slaves of sin, there was an awful fruit and the end of it is death. But now as servants of God, freed from sin's awful slavery, there is another fruit, the fruit of holiness and the end eternal life. How this fruit of the justified believer is to be produced we shall learn in the next chapter. Sin's wages is death; that is what man receives in payment for sin. Eternal life, the great and inestimable gift of God is bestowed through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER 7

1. The Law and its Dominion. 1-3.
2. Dead to the Law and Married to Another. 4-6.
3. Concerning the Law; its Activities and Purpose. 7-13.
4. The Experience of a Believer in Bondage to the Law. 14-24.
5. The Triumphant note of Deliverance. 25.

Verses 1-3

The law is now more fully taken up. We have learned before that by the works of the law no man can be justified before God. But when the sinner is justified by faith, does he need the law to please God? Can obedience to the law produce in him the fruit of holiness unto God? What is the relation of the justified believer to the law? Is he still under the dominion of the law or is he also delivered from the law and its bondage? These questions are answered in this chapter. An important principle is stated in the first verse. The law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. The law has dominion over man (both Jews and Gentiles). The law, which is holy, just and good (verse 12) condemns man, his sinful nature and the fruits of that sinful nature, and in this sense it has dominion over every man and holds him in its grasp. But when death takes place, the rule of the law is broken. It cannot touch a dead man. The penalty of the broken law is death, when that sentence is executed, the law can have no longer dominion.

An illustration from the marriage law as instituted by God is given to make this clear. Husband and wife are united in a union till death dissolves it. The married woman is bound by that law to her husband as long as he lives. When he dies she is free and can be married to another. And we are become dead to the law by the body of Christ. The body of Christ means the death of Christ on the Cross. On the cross He bore the judgment which is our due. He bore the penalty and the curse of

the law for us. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). The penalty of the broken law has been met and the law is vindicated. Inasmuch, then as His death is our death, in that we died with Christ, the law can have no more dominion over us; "we are dead to the law by the body of Christ."

Verses 4-6

The old union is dissolved. Death has done its work and it is now possible after being freed from the law to be married to another. In Galatians the question about the law and its authority is viewed from another side. The law was the schoolmaster unto Christ; now after faith is come, the full truth concerning redemption by the death of Christ is made known, we are no longer under a schoolmaster (Galatians 3:23-25). Being then dead to the law by the body of Christ we are married to another. And this other One is He who died for us and who is risen from the dead. Justified believers are in a living union with a risen Christ; He lives in us and we live in Him. And the result of this most blessed union is fruit unto God. The law could not produce any fruit whatever but only death; nor can the legal principle bring forth fruit unto God in a believer. Ephraim was joined to idols as we read in Hosea. But Ephraim observed the Lord, heard Him and became like a green fir tree. And the Lord adds, "From Me is thy fruit found" (Hosea 14:8). The parable of the vine and the branches (John 15) illustrates in a simple and blessed way the apostolic statement, "Married unto another--that we should bring forth fruit unto God." As the branch is in closest union with the vine and the sap of the vine produces the fruit, so are we one with Christ, and abiding in Him we bring forth the fruit unto holiness, the fruit which pleases God.

And "when we were in the flesh" (our former state) the passions of sins were by the law. The law by its holy character brings out what the natural man is and stirs up the passions of sins. But it is different now. We are delivered from the law and we can serve in newness of Spirit. We have a new nature, even eternal life, and in that we can render a true spiritual service.

Verses 7-13

"Is the law sin?" is the next question raised. It springs logically from the statement that the passions of sins, coming out of an evil, sinful heart, were by the law and bringing forth fruit unto death. Still another "God forbid" is the answer. The law was given that we might have through that law the knowledge of sin. "I had not known sin, but by the law." I would not be conscious of lust, unless the law said, "Thou shalt not covet." The law given by a holy God is God's detective. The law forbids and the commandment at once brings out what is in the heart of man. Therefore, no blame can be put upon the law. Sin is that which must be blamed. Sin is lawlessness, rebellion against God and the law brings out that rebellion. Therefore apart from the law sin was dead, that is, dormant. But as soon as the commandment is given, the evil heart rebels against it and man is detected to be a sinner and a transgressor. Let us notice the change of the pronoun "we" to "I." Some thirty times this little word "I" is found in verses 7-25. We are brought upon the ground of personal experience; it has to be discovered and learned experimentally. The Apostle personifies this experience and speaks thus personally describing how a believer learns the lessons about the law, how the law cannot help a justified believer, and but makes of him a wretched man. It must also have been his own experience.

"For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." This is the experience of a man who is ignorant of the spirituality of the law. He thinks himself alive, but when the commandment came, its spiritual demands realized (the law is spiritual, verse 14), the false notion of being alive was detected, for sin revived and he died, which means that sin, discovered by the law, condemned him to death. "And the commandment which was unto life was found for me to be unto death." In connection with the commandment, the law, it is written, "This do, and thou shalt live." And so in this experience--he tries next to get life by the law, but he found it was unto death, for the declaration of the law is "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10; Deuteronomy 27:26). He speaks of sin, his evil nature, as one who had deceived him into all this, so that the law could manifest its power in slaying him. Verse 12 is the real answer to the question, "Is the law sin?" The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good. And because the law is holy it gives knowledge of sin and detects sin, bringing it to light in all its hideousness and then pronounces the sentence of death. One other question is asked, "Was then that which is good (the law) made death unto me?" God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful." It all comes back upon sin (the evil nature, the flesh). Thus by the commandment sin becomes exceeding sinful.

But all this must be learned by experience, especially the fact "I am carnal," the knowledge that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing and that I have no power, I am powerless against indwelling sin. What person is it who describes his experience in these words? Some have applied it exclusively to the Apostle. Others state that it pictures an awakened sinner and not a converted man. The man described is born again, but is in bondage to the law and is ignorant of his deliverance in Christ. We find first the statement "we know that the law is spiritual." This is the knowledge which a true Christian possesses concerning the law. And the Christian who knows this great truth, that the law is spiritual, also has learned another truth. "I am carnal and sold under sin." Here then it is where experience begins. True Christian experience is to know our full deliverance in Christ and to walk in the Spirit; the experience of a Christian in struggling with the old nature and discovering what is that old nature, the flesh, is put before us in verses 15-24. That we have here a converted person is seen by the fact first of all, that he does not want to do evil, he wants to do good and cannot do it and therefore hates what he does. The carnal nature, the flesh, which is still in a converted person, is thus demonstrated as enslaving him, however, he is no longer a willing slave, but he hates that old thing which has the mastery over him. In hating it and condemning sin, he does the same what the law does, for it also condemns sin. In this way he consents to the law that it is good. The seventeenth verse is of much importance. "Now then it is no more I that really do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." He learns the difference between himself as born again, in possession of a new nature, and the old nature. He begins to distinguish himself as in possession of a new nature that wills to do good, hating evil, and sin in him, the flesh in which dwells nothing good, but all that is evil. "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." It is a great discovery to find out by experience, that although the believer is born again, he has a nature in him which is evil, which cannot bring forth a good thing. But the will is present with him to do good, because he is born again; however, he finds not the power in himself to perform what is good. And now the conflict between the two natures is on. It brings out some important facts. "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." He as born again, no longer loves sin; he hates it. Because he does that which he does not want to do he can truthfully say "it is no more I that do it." Furthermore he delights in the law of God after the inward man. This can never be said of an unconverted man, but only he who has a new nature can delight in the law of God. But he finds himself in helpless captivity to the law of sin which is at work in his members. He finds out that while he has a new nature to will good and to hate evil, he has no power; sin is too strong for him. And this is to teach the believer that he must get power to overcome outside of himself. All his resolutions and good wishes cannot supply the strength to do. That he is self-occupied, seeking power by what he does and tries to do, is seen from the use of the little word "I." The name of the One in whom we have deliverance, Christ, is not mentioned once. The case is clear, it is the description of the experience of a believer, who is justified, born again, in union with Christ, dead with Him, risen with Him and indwelt by the Holy Spirit; but he lacks the knowledge of this and tries by his own efforts and in his own strength, through keeping the law, to obtain holiness. Having discovered that nothing good dwells in his flesh; that the flesh is not himself, but sin in him and that, because it is too strong for him, he is powerless, the cry of despair is uttered by him. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He has reached the end of self. He looks now for deliverance from another source, outside of himself. The answer comes at once. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." In Him there is deliverance and what that deliverance is, we shall learn from the first four verses of the eighth chapter. The two laws are mentioned once more in the last verse of this chapter. With the mind, as born again, he serves the law and the law gives him no power; in the struggle with the old nature he is enslaved by the law of sin.

CHAPTER 8

1. In Christ; no Condemnation but Deliverance. 1-4.
2. Flesh and Spirit. 5-8.
3. The Body and the Spirit. 9-11.
4. Sons and Heirs of God. 12-17.
5. The Time of Travail and Groaning; the Future Redemption. 18-25.

6. The intercession of the Spirit. 26-27.

7. The Saints Calling; the Challenge and the Assurance. 28-39.

Verses 1-4.

We have reached the mountain-top of this great Epistle. What man is in the flesh and under the law has been fully demonstrated. "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). The law cannot give power to deliver, but only produces wretchedness, and, as we saw, deliverance must come from another. "Power belongeth unto God" (Psalm 62:11); the power of deliverance must come from God. And this was the triumphant note in the previous chapter. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And now we see the believer in Christ Jesus, free from all condemnation, free from the law of sin and death, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, a child of God, an heir of God and joint heir with the Lord Jesus Christ." It is the contrasted statement of the privileges, the capacities, the security, and the prospects of the Christians as having the Spirit, that is here presented as the divinely wrought counterpart of the preceding description of man "as carnal, sold under sin." The proof and witness of human wretchedness is the Law. The title and measure of Christian blessedness is Christ. "As alive in Christ the believer is estimated, not according to the variable standard of his own emotions, but according to the eternal fixedness of Divine truth now realized and established in the person of Christ before God" (Pridham on Romans).

The first statement assures the believer in Christ that there is for him no more condemnation. In Christ Jesus, in identification with Him who died for our sins and is risen from the dead, in whom we have died and have life, in such a position condemnation is no longer possible, because nothing is left to be condemned. There can be no condemnation for those who are united to a risen Christ; as He is so are we. And this most blessed assurance is unconditional.

The words "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" as they appear in the Authorized version must be omitted here; they have been proven to be an interpolation. We find them at the close of the fourth verse, which is the proper place for them.

But what makes the believer in Christ Jesus free from the law of sin and death, which is in his members? The second verse answers this question. "For the law of the Spirit, of life in Christ Jesus, hath set me free from the law of sin and death." The law of sin and death has lost its power by another law; the law of the Spirit is that of life in Christ Jesus. It means that the Spirit's law is that we are, as believers, for everything, for all things, dependent on Christ. In Him are all our springs and resources. He is our life and His life is in us. We are one with Him. To appropriate this in faith, identifying ourselves with Christ as God has done it, giving Him the preeminence, glorifying Him--this gives power and deliverance. And the Spirit, the Spirit of holiness and power is also given to the believer; He dwells in Him. If the believer then walks according to the law of the Spirit, that is in Christ, we are made free from the law of sin and death. The righteousness of the law can in this way be fulfilled in us. But there is a condition. We must walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. What is the walk according to the Spirit? It is not self-occupation, nor even occupation with the Holy Spirit. Walking according to the Spirit is occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ. If the believer ever looks to Christ, depends on Him, draws all he needs from Him, if Christ is His all--then the believer walks according to the Spirit. Then there is power over the old nature and the righteousness, demanded by the law is being fulfilled. And we must not overlook the fact that God's love is mentioned in this blessed unfolding of our deliverance in Christ. The law was weak, it could not get its righteous requirements fulfilled, on account of the flesh, the fallen nature of man. Then God came in. "God sending His own Son in likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." It points us once more to the cross.

"He has sent His own Son in 'the likeness of sinful flesh' as the cross manifests Him, but there for sin, our sin, putting it completely away, while, at the same time condemning it, utterly. Sin in the flesh is condemned,--I myself, with all that is in me, my own thoughts, my will, my wisdom, my ways,--in the cross, I see the end of it all, but the end of it in the love which has come in fully for me and which now fulfills in me the righteous requirement of the law when it is no longer simply requirement, but the Spirit of God has filled my heart with the joy of Christ. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' I am free to give myself up to drink in this love which God has shown me and which rests upon me in Christ, in all the fulness of God's delight in Him. I have no cause now to ask: Must not God condemn the evil in me? He has condemned it, and I read the condemnation there where I find also Himself for me in a grace which knows no conditions, and which holds me fast, therefore, forever" (Numerical Bible.)

Notice that the opening verses of the eighth chapter refer us back to the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters. The believer is in Christ the last Adam and therefore beyond condemnation. (Chapter 5:12-21). Sin is not to have dominion over us (Chapter 6). Sin in the flesh has been condemned and the righteousness of the law is fulfilled by a walk according to the Spirit (Chapter 7). (To much included for 7.)

Verses 5-8

Next we find a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. While the believer is no longer in the eyes of God in the flesh, the flesh, however, is still in him as long as he has this mortal body. There is therefore a conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. Humanity falls into two classes, those who are according to the flesh, the unsaved; and those who are according to the Spirit, believers in Christ. A believer is called to walk according to the Spirit, in the sphere into which he is brought through grace. He may walk according to the flesh, but that does not put him back into his former state, when unsaved, he was in the flesh. The mind of the flesh, the condition in which man is by nature, is described in a fourfold way:

1. It is death.
2. It is enmity against God.
3. The flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
4. They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Such is the state of all who are not born again. But the believer is no longer in the flesh, but is in Christ and the mind of the Spirit is life and peace, which the believer possesses. The believer who walks carnally cannot please God, just as a man who is not born of the Spirit, cannot please God. The carnal walk of the believer results in a broken fellowship with God. But Christ is our Advocate with the Father and He restores while the indwelling Spirit leads to confession and self-judgment. The standing of a believer before God is always in Christ; God beholds us in Him and no longer in the flesh, the sphere of sin and death. The practical state of a believer is often varying. But our failures and shortcomings can never affect our standing before God in Christ. This is an important truth. Many true believers are in a miserable bondage, in doubts and fears, lacking assurance and the joy of salvation, because they do not know the fixed and unalterable standing a believer hath in Christ.

Verses 9-11

The believer's standing is, therefore, emphasized. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so that the Spirit of God dwell in you; but if any one have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." The believer is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit because the Spirit of God dwells in him. For the first time we have the blessed truth declared that the Spirit of God is in the believer. AS the Spirit of God, He marks the new standing before God; as the Spirit of Christ, He is evidencing the facet that the believer belongs to Christ, and that He produces in him Christ-likeness. Sometimes true believers ask the question, "How can I get the Holy Spirit?" Certain teachers say that a believer, after being saved, should seek the gift and sealing of the Spirit. To teach this is altogether unscriptural. The gift and sealing of the Spirit are at once bestowed upon all who are in Christ, and every true believer is in Christ. "In whom ye also trusted, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also believing, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). "He that hath sealed us with the Holy Spirit is God" (2 Corinthians 1:22). The sealing with the Spirit does not put a believer in Christ; but because we have trusted on Him we are sealed. This verse here in Romans is conclusive. The Spirit given to us marks off the believer as belonging to Christ. Acts 19:2 is frequently quoted to back up the erroneous teaching that the Spirit must be received in a definite experience after conversion. One little word is responsible for the error. The word "since" is mistranslated; it is "when." "Have ye received the Spirit when ye believed?"

Occupation with the Spirit of God and His indwelling is nowhere demanded of the believer. He has come not to testify of Himself, but to glorify Christ. Therefore He testifies of the blessed fact that "Christ is in you." The Spirit is life on account of righteousness. It means that the spirit of the believer is energized by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is the power of life in the believer. What about the body of the believer? It is dead on account of sin. The body has not yet the effects of

redemption in it; it is not yet quickened. But the mortal body of the believer has the promise of redemption. The Holy Spirit dwells in that body and He is the earnest of our inheritance. "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies on account of His Spirit who dwelleth in you." This is the redemption for which we wait (see verse 23). It will come when the Lord comes for His Saints. The believer is nowhere taught to look for the death of the mortal body he has, but for the Coming of the Lord, who "shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:21). "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). Here we have a blessed answer to the question asked in the previous chapter. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer is "the Lord Jesus Christ." And while the believer waits for that promised, coming deliverance, deliverance from the presence of sin, He walks in the Spirit, freed from the power of sin.

Verses 12-17

Believers are therefore no longer debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. We owe the flesh nothing, for it has never done anything for us. If a person lives according to the flesh, if this is the sphere in which he moves, he is "about to die," on the road to death. But if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "Death and life are here set in prospect before the soul as the results, respectively, of the path now chosen. As to the believer, he is characteristically one who is not in the flesh. This he is, not as the result of attainment, but by the grace of God. The appeal which the Apostle here makes is to the Christian conscience. Where there is life, there will be an answer to that appeal. The mortification of the deeds of the body is the result of the Spirit's energy, the energy of that Spirit, who produces in him the fruits of life, when unhindered in the gracious operations of His love. Mortification of the deeds of the body is looked for only from believers who are indwelt by the Spirit. There is, therefore, nothing in verse 13 that need chill in the least the confidence of the poor weak-spirited self-judging Christian. Those who are most given to self-judgment are they to whom the warning here expressed has the least application." The mortification of the deeds of the body does not mean asceticism. It is that which is more fully mentioned in Colossians 3:5-7. (If men live according to the flesh, they are on the way to death. It does not say that they will die. God's grace is always free to come in, but then if it comes in it takes one off the road to death; it does not speak in such a manner as if sin were of no consequence.--Numerical Bible.)

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. This proves the believer to be in this blessed relationship. The life and walk in the Spirit is the outward evidence of sonship. And the Spirit we have received is not the Spirit of bondage, to fear and to doubt, but it is the gracious Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Abba is the Aramaic (the language spoken by Jews in Palestine). Father is the word the Gentile uses. Both Jews and Gentiles believing receive the Spirit of Sonship. They both have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Ephesians 2:18). "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). The marks and evidences of the sonship of the believer are more fully given in the first Epistle of John (1:5-7, 2:1-3, 9, 10, 27, 28, 3:1-6, 14, 19, 24, 4:1-4, 7, 8, 15, 20, 21, 5:1-4, 10-12, 13).

Furthermore, the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. This witness is not a mere good feeling, which is subject to fluctuations, but the witness of the Spirit is in the Word of God. We know that we are the children of God, because the Word assures us that it is so; this is the witness of the Spirit. And our own spirit bears the same witness, for we know that we have passed from death unto life. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us His Spirit" (1 John 4:13). We have the blessed consciousness of our relationship as children in our own spirit, the highest intelligence we possess in ourselves. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God.... Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be, but we know, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-2). We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. And we suffer with Him--for the world knoweth us not as it knew Him not--and shall be glorified with Him, in the coming day of His glorious manifestation. Our fellowship with Him as God's children is now in suffering, and afterward in glory.

Verses 18-25

The highest summit of the Epistle has been reached. In Christ; no condemnation; free from the law of sin and death; indwelt by the Spirit of God; led by the Spirit of God; children of God; heirs of God; joint heirs with Christ--this is the

blessed and sublime culmination. And as it is when we stand on some mountain-peak, a great vision now bursts upon us. It concerns the future. A wonderful glory is in store for the children of God. The sons of God are going to be manifested (verse 19). That Will be when Christ, the head of the new creation is manifested; then we shall also be manifested with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4). Then He will occupy the throne of His glory and "we shall reign with Him over the earth." All creation groaneth and travaileth until now, anxiously looking forward to that coming day when the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For creation was put into the place of corruption and death through the fall of man. But it was subjected to this not without hope. The hope of a ruined creation is the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both the Creator of all things and the Redeemer. Upon His blessed brow He bore the thorns, the emblem of the curse which rests upon creation. And when He comes, groaning creation will be delivered. Then "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and fatling together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isaiah 11:6-9). It is the glorious vision of the coming age, the dispensation of the fulness of times, when all things will be gathered together in Christ. The Prophets and the Psalms tell out more fully the story of a restored creation, through Him who paid for it by His own precious blood. And we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit also groan within ourselves, awaiting that blessed consummation, when we shall come into our full inheritance, the redemption of our body. Our salvation is in hope of this future redemption and glorification. We wait patiently for it.

Verses 26-27

Prayer is now mentioned. We need it in the midst of the groans, the sorrows and sufferings with which we are surrounded and which is our lot as long as we are in this mortal body. And prayer is our refuge, the expression of our dependence upon God and our utmost confidence in Him. But while we know how to pray, we often do not know "what we should pray for as we ought." Then the Spirit Himself maketh intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered. "Prayer is most commonly the witness of our infirmities. The burdened heart may find itself too full for speech, too much perplexed, for the ordering of its thoughts. But there is an utterance of supplication that makes no sound. It is the Spirit, as the helper of our infirmities, who makes these desires known to the God. Groaning in sympathy with the tried and longing heart, He makes His intercession for the Saints according to the will of God." Thus the mind of the Spirit in us is known of God-- and heard by Him. And then we must remember that besides this intercession of the Spirit there is the intercession of Christ at the right hand of God (Verse 34). The believer is therefore hedged about and made secure and if he walks in the Spirit, constant peace and joy will be His daily portion.

Verses 28-39

Therefore we know that to those who love God all things work together for good, to those who are called according to purpose. We can rest in God and commit all to Him. The purpose of God for His own, from eternity to eternity is blessedly revealed. "From God's foreknowledge of us in the past eternity to the accomplished glory of the future, there is a perfectly linked chain of blessing, no link of which can ever be sundered. God's purpose is that Christ His Son, should be a First-born among many brethren" (Numerical Bible). And the chain of blessing is--foreknown -- predestinated -- called -- justified and glorified. We do not enter into the controversies of the past concerning predestination, but repudiate that unscriptural conception that God has predestinated a part of the human race to be lost. This is incorrect in view of the statement of Scripture that God "will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). But all are not saved because they believe not. (Foreknowledge expresses the original operation of the Divine mind, considered with reference to the pure and unapproachable majesty of the blessed and only Potentate. Predestination respects rather the condition of that which is thus foreknown, objectively regarded as a vessel of His will."--Pridham.) God knows all who would believe and these are predestinated, called, justified and Will be ultimately glorified. And His eternal purpose will not fail and all who are in Christ will be conformed to the image of His Son. This is the Hope of God's calling (Ephesians 1:18).

And what a blessed, most precious and glorious ending of this great chapter and the entire doctrinal section of this great Epistle! What shall we say then to these things? Our answer must be worship and adoration of the God who hath loved us so in giving His only begotten Son, who reached down to our misery and shame and who hath lifted us so high. The great truths of the Gospel are once more reviewed. God is for us. Who can be against us? The proof of it is that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him UP for us all. With Him He has given us freely all things. God is the justifier; therefore "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Christ died, Christ is risen, Christ is at the right hand of God

making intercession for us-- who then is he that shall condemn? And nothing can separate us from the love of Christ and the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No condemnation and no separation. No more wrath but eternal glory! Such is the salvation of God.

II. DISPENSATIONAL. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL. Chapters 9-11.

1. Israel and God's Sovereignty. CHAPTER 9

1. Paul's Yearning over Israel. 1-3.
2. What Israel Possesseth. 4-5.
3. God's Unconditional Election. 6-13.
4. God's Sovereignty. The Vindication of His Justice and Mercy. 14-26.
5. Mercy for the Remnant. 27-29.
6. Israel 's Rejection of God's Righteousness. 30-33.

This second division brings before us Israel and shows that the principles of the Gospel, as unfolded in the first eight chapters are in harmony with God's ways with Israel. Jews and Gentiles, those who have the law and those who had no law, were proved guilty before God. All have sinned and are equally lost. Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. The same God justifies the circumcision by faith, and also the uncircumcision. Jews were thus brought upon the same level with the Gentiles. There is no difference. Grace goes forth alike to Jews and Gentiles who believe. But this fact raises a most important question. How can all this be reconciled with the promises made in a special manner to the Jews? How can the principles be harmonized with God's faithfulness? Has God gone back on His Word and covenants? Hath God cast away His people? The answer to these questions and the demonstration that God is just and faithful in all His dealings with Jews and Gentiles is given in these three chapters.

Godet states that the problem "how can God set aside those He elected," is answered in three ways:

1. God preserves His entire liberty (9).
2. He shows that Israel 's sin is the true explanation (10).
3. God vindicates His action by foretelling future consequences (11).

Verses 1-3

Paul speaks of himself in each of these three chapters. Knowing that they rejected the salvation of God, he yearns and sorrows over his kinsmen. In the next chapter he expresses his heart's desire and prayer for their salvation, and in the eleventh chapter he mentions himself as an evidence that God has not cast away His people. The Jews, because he preached salvation to the Gentiles, looked upon him as an enemy of their nation and as a traitor. "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always, for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." Thus he wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:16). In Jerusalem the Jewish mob cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth." They hated him, but he loved his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. It was this mighty love which burned in his soul, which constrained him to go up to Jerusalem, in spite of the warnings given by the Holy Spirit. So intense was his yearnings for them that he had wished to be cut off from Christ for them, if that were possible. He was like Moses, when he prayed, "If Thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book, which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32).

Verses 4-5

And what is this people in the purpose of God? What are their possessions and privileges? It is the most favored nation on the earth. "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" (Deuteronomy 4:7). The adoption is theirs, as His family on earth, destined for earthly blessings (Amos 3:2). And God had said, "I am a Father to Israel " and " Israel is my son, my Firstborn." They had the Glory. In visible glory Jehovah dwelt in their midst. While absent now, the promise is, that in the future day of their restoration, that glory will return with the coming of the Lord (Isaiah 4; Ezekiel 43:4). Theirs are also the covenants; they were made with the nation; and the giving of the law. Furthermore, theirs is the service of God, that divinely instituted levitical ritual, so full of blessed and prophetic meaning. All other rituals are unauthorized counterfeits. They also have the promises. "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came, He, who is God over all blessed forever. Amen." (More than once the attempt has been made to change those wonderful words, bearing testimony to the Deity of our Lord. The revised version, in its marginal reading, is one of the latest attempts to rob our Lord of this great and true tribute.) And all these great things belong to Israel. They still belong to them. When the time of their national conversion and restoration comes, all these things will be manifested in their fulness, even to a restored, glorious service in the millennial temple (Ezekiel 40-47). And these statements show that the Apostle to the Gentiles did not despise the nation Israel and its privileges.

Verses 6-13

Now if the nation as such had failed, as we find later, on account of unbelief, and they were rejected for the present, the Word of God had not failed on that account. If God had called the Gentiles and they received now the blessing of righteousness, it does not mean that the Word of God has come to naught. God's purpose concerning Israel cannot fail. But they prided themselves that they were of the seed of Abraham and therefore exclusively entitled to the promises. "We have Abraham to our father" (Luke 3:8), was their boast, and the Lord had told them "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). They forgot in their blind antagonism to the Gospel that the Scriptures showed that blessing had its source with the choice of God, that blessing is the result of elective mercy and the title to it must be of faith. Divine election is the only ground of blessing. They are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children. If such were the case, then the children of the flesh, Ishmael and his offspring, were on the same ground with them. There was a promise made "At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son." In that promised son, in Isaac alone, the seed was called, therefore the children of the promise are counted for the seed. This showed that they had no right to expect Divine blessing simply on the ground of natural descent. And in the choice of Isaac, God's sovereignty and election is seen. They might therefore be Abraham's seed and yet not be Abraham's children; only those that are of faith are the children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7). The case of Jacob and Esau is next cited. Rebecca was their mother. Before the children were even born, and therefore had done neither good nor evil, to merit anything, it was said unto her, "the elder shall serve the younger." It was so ordered "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." If they claim and expect blessing merely on the ground of natural descent, then the descendants of Esau, the Edomites, must be admitted to the same blessings with them.* This they would not admit. Inasmuch as all rests upon God's unconditional election, their objections to the blessing of the Gentiles through the Gospel, God dealing with them in grace, were disproved by their own history. ("Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The love for Jacob was unmerited. "Esau have I hated" stands written at the close of the Old Testament, after the continued wickedness of Edom had been fully demonstrated and merited God's indignation.)

Verses 14-26

God can choose whom He will. This is His sovereignty. Is then God unrighteous in doing this? God forbid. Two examples of God's sovereignty in mercy and in judgment are given. Had God dealt with Israel according to His righteousness, they would have been cut off. Then the sovereignty of God was displayed and Israel was spared. All rests upon that sovereign mercy--"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." And Pharaoh illustrates God's sovereignty in judgment. Pharaoh was a wicked, God-hating man. God had shown him mercy, but he hardened his heart and defied the Lord. In arrogant pride he said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey Him? I know not Jehovah." Then He hardened his heart and made him a monument of His wrath. "Both were wicked-- Israel and Pharaoh. Righteousness would have condemned both. He has mercy on one, and hardens the other. He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens, when simple righteousness would have condemned both. This is sovereignty. He proves Himself not merely righteous (the day of judgment will prove that), but proves Himself God." But man, the creature of the dust, replies to God and brings his finite thoughts to judge God. The questions in Verse 19 are severely

rebuked. What is man that he should speak to his Creator! The thing formed speaks to Him that formed it. "Why hast Thou made us thus?" The potter can take a lump of clay and form out of it two vessels, one unto honor and another unto dishonor. It is his right. God can do this according to His sovereign will, and none can say, What doest Thou? However, while this is God's right, that He can do so, if He chooses to do it, there is nothing said, that He has done so. "God's sovereignty is the first of all rights, the foundation of all rights, the foundation of all morality. If God is not God, what will He be? The root of the question is this; is God to judge man, or man God? God can do whatsoever He pleases. He is not the object for judgment. Such is His title: but when in fact the apostle presents the two cases, wrath and grace, he puts the case of God showing long suffering towards one already fitted for wrath, in order to give at last an example to men of His wrath in the execution of His justice; and then of God displaying His glory in vessels of mercy whom He has prepared for glory. There are then these three points established with marvelous exactitude; the power to do all things, no one having the right to say a word; wonderful endurance with the wicked, in whom at length His wrath is manifested; demonstration of His glory in vessels, whom He has Himself prepared by mercy for glory, and whom He has called, whether from among the Jews or Gentiles, according to the declaration of Hosea." (Synopsis by J.N.D.) The objections which were raised against God's dealings in race with Gentiles are completely met and answered. He calls whom He will and calling the Gentiles and showing them mercy has not cancelled the promises made to Israel.

Verses 27-29

Now while Grace goes forth to the Gentiles, mercy is also in store for Israel. Ultimately a remnant will be saved--not the whole nation, but a remnant. It refers us to a specific time, "When He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Isaiah 10:22-23). It is a prediction concerning the future. They will, when this age closes, pass through a time of judgment; in that period God in sovereign power and mercy will call a remnant of His people, the remnant so often seen in the prophetic Word and in the Book of Revelation. That remnant will be saved and will become the nucleus of the coming Kingdom; the unbelieving apostate Israel will be swept away in judgment.

Verses 30-33

The conclusion of this intensely interesting and often misunderstood chapter puts before us the fact of God's merciful dealings with Gentiles and Israel's failure. The Gentiles, who did not follow after righteousness, have attained to the righteousness, which is of faith. They believe the Gospel and enjoy the blessings of the Gospel. Israel failed. Why? They sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, the way of failure and death. They rejected the principle of faith, even declared in their own Scriptures, "the just shall live by faith." They stumbled at the stumbling stone (1 Peter 2:8).

2. Israel's Failure and Unbelief.

CHAPTER 10

1. Israel's Condition. 1-4.

2. Righteousness by Works and by Faith. 5-13.

3. The Gospel Published Abroad. 14-17. 4. Israel's Unbelief. 18-21.

Verses 1-4

For His beloved people Israel the great apostle of the Gentiles prayed to God, that they might be saved. What an example he has given to us believers of the Gentiles. We owe a great debt to Israel; but how little prayer there is among Gentile Christians for the salvation of the Jews! Paul bears witness that they had zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Their ignorance consisted in not knowing God's righteousness, that which is found in the first part of the Epistle, seeking therefore to establish their own righteousness; in doing this, they did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. They were religious, kept the law outwardly, and Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that

believeth, they rejected. Alas! The same is still the condition of the Jews.

Verses 5-13

Righteousness by works and by faith is contrasted. Moses, in whom they trusted as their great teacher, describes the righteousness which is of the law in these words, "the man who doeth those things shall live by them." But the righteousness by faith is likewise mentioned by Moses; but for the Holy Spirit calling attention to it in this passage, it would never have been known. Deuteronomy 30, where these words are found, speaks of the time, when Israel in a world-wide dispersion, will return with the heart to God and when He will have compassion upon them. Then their heart will be circumcised and grace will be manifested towards them. Driven out of the land for having broken the law, they will hearken to the Word and obey in faith.

"The Apostle therefore quotes such terms as exclude 'doing' on the part of man. Righteousness springs out of the finished work of Christ (verses 3, 4), and there can be no 'finished' work while man is endeavoring to be saved by law, for this would be virtually to undo what Christ has done. That which would be impossible to man, God has already done in Christ. All the 'doing' required by the law, has been accomplished by Jesus Christ, and everything that is required now from men is to believe what Christ has done. Christ has neither to be brought down from heaven, nor to be raised again from the dead; everything has been accomplished, and all that is left is to accept in trustful thankfulness. Faith has not to acquire or win a Saviour, but to accept One Who has already accomplished the work of redemption. God's righteousness is not distant and difficult, but near and easy" (Professor W.A. Griffith Thomas).

And this word, which is nigh, the Apostle saith "is the word of faith which we preach." And this it is "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." How blessedly simple all this is. Jesus must be owned as Lord; He, who died for our sins, and whom God raised from the dead. Blessed assurance, "thou shalt be saved!" Saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

"Moreover, this faith is manifested by the proof it gives of its sincerity--by confession of the name of Christ. If some One were convinced that Jesus is the Christ, and refused to confess Him, his conviction would evidently be his greater condemnation. The faith of the heart produces the confession of the mouth; the confession of the mouth is the counterproof of the sincerity of the faith, and of honesty, in the sense of the claim which the Lord has upon us in grace. It is the testimony which God requires at the outset. It is to sound the trumpet on earth in face of the enemy. It is to say that Christ has conquered, and that everything belongs in right to Him. It is a confession which brings in God in answer to the name of Jesus. It is not that which brings in righteousness, but it is the public acknowledgment of Christ, and thus gives expression to the faith by which there is participation in the righteousness of God, so that it may be said, 'He believes in Christ unto salvation; he has the faith that justifies.'"

Then twice the word "Whosoever" is mentioned, that Precious Gospel word, which includes all, Jews and Gentiles, for there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, for the same Lord over all is such unto all that call upon Him. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21). All proves that righteousness is by faith and is offered to all. The statement in Joel also refers to a future day in connection with the coming deliverance of the remnant and the coming of the Lord.

Verses 14-17

And this good news for Jews and Gentiles must be proclaimed, for how can they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent? Of such a gracious world-wide mission the law had nothing to say. Its message and the promises were confined to the nation Israel. The Lord Jesus as the minister of the circumcision sent His messengers only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10); but after His death and resurrection He gave the commission "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached unto all nations, beginning in Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). And the Lord sends forth His messengers; even so it was written before in Isaiah 52:7. (A careful study of this passage and the context shows its future meaning likewise, at the time, when the Lord reigneth, "when the Lord shall bring again Zion,") All is of Him, the righteousness, the salvation as well as the proclamation. But not all obeyed the gospel, nor

do all obey the gospel call now. This also was foretold by Isaiah, in the great chapter (53) in which Israel 's rejection of the Messiah is foretold, as well as the future confession of that rejection. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Verses 18-21.-- Israel is unbelieving. They heard and believed not. The law and the prophets had borne witness to the fact that the Gentiles would believe (Deuteronomy 32:21; Isaiah 65:1). And in infinite patience and longsuffering the Lord had stretched forth His hands unto Israel as a disobedient and gainsaying people. They were unbelieving and set aside. Their future restoration is the theme of the next chapter.

Israel 's Restoration.

CHAPTER 11

("The Jewish Question", by A. C. G., gives a complete exposition of this great chapter.)

1. God Hath not Cast Away His People. 1.
2. Israel 's Apostasy not Complete; a Remnant Saved. 2-6.
3. Israel 's Blindness for a Season. 7-10.
4. To Provoke Them to Jealousy. 11.
5. Their Fulness and Reception Life from the Dead. 12-15.
6. The Parable of the Two Olive Trees. 16-24.
7. A Mystery Made Known. All Israel Saved. 25-32. 8. The Doxology. 33-36.

Verse 1

In view of the preceding chapter on Israel 's rejection, the question is asked "Hath God cast away His People?" Is there nothing more in store for national Israel ? God forbid. If it were so, God's gifts and calling would be subject to repentance and He would not be the faithful, covenant-keeping God. He foreknew His people Israel and that foreknowledge embraced all their sad history of failure and apostasy. The Apostle Paul speaks of himself as an Israelite of the seed of Abraham. He demonstrates in his own experience the fact that God hath not cast away His people. Hating Christ, having zeal for God without knowledge, a persecutor of the church, he had obtained mercy that in him Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him (1 Timothy 1:16). His unique conversion must be looked upon as a prophetic type of the conversion of the remnant of Israel, when the Lord comes. As Saul of Tarsus saw Him in the glory-light, so the Israel living in the day of the second Coming of Christ will behold Him (Zechariah 12:10; Revelation 1:7). This vision will result in their national conversion.

Verses 2-6

The time of Elias was one of the darkest Periods of their history. it seemed as if the whole nation had apostatized from God. Elias had this conception when he complained in his despondency. "They have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." The Lord told him then that there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. The apostasy of Israel was not a complete apostasy. The Lord had preserved a faithful remnant. Even so at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. In the beginning of this present age there was in existence a distinctive Jewish remnant. This Jewish-Christian remnant in the beginning of the dispensation was an evidence that God had not cast away His people. A similar remnant of believing Jews will be called for a definite work and testimony during the end of the age. And throughout this Christian dispensation it has been abundantly demonstrated that God has not cast away His ancient people, for thousands of them have been saved by grace

and have become members of the body of Christ.

Verses 7-10

When the apostle speaks here of the election he has in view the believing part of the nation at all times, the remnant past, the future remnant and all those who believe in Christ now. When he speaks of the rest being blinded he means the unbelieving part of the nation. Judicial blindness has come upon them for their unbelief. Three quotations are given from the Old Testament showing that the Lord foreknew their unbelief and predicted the judgment which was to come upon the nation (Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:10 and Psalm 69:22-24). A careful study of these chapters will show that the threatened judgments and the judicial blindness are not permanent. All the Prophets and many of the prophetic Psalms reveal the fact that the judgments which have come upon the people are for a season only and that there is glory and blessing in store for them. The curses pronounced upon them have found their literal fulfillment; the unfulfilled promises of blessing and glory will also be literally fulfilled and Israel will be saved and restored to their land.

Verse 11

The setting aside of Israel is not final; their present blindness is not their permanent condition. But have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. They stumbled over Him in whom they saw no beauty and whom they did not desire. They received Him not, who had come to His own. But this did not result in their complete fall. God in His infinite wisdom and all-wise purpose brought by their fall salvation to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy. In this statement we see again that God has not cast away His people Israel. If He had cast them away, why should He wish to provoke them to jealousy? And this provoking to jealousy is with the intent that some of them might be saved (verse 14).

Verses 12-15

And now the Apostle of the Gentiles addresses us Gentiles. "I speak to you Gentiles." It is a message of much importance. The fall of Israel was the riches of the world, the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles (verse 13); the casting away was the reconciling of the world. Thus blessing, great blessing came to the Gentiles by Israel's unbelief and fall. But this is not all. All this is far from accomplishing the promise made to the father of the nation, when God said to Abraham "In thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blest." Israel's fall, the means in God's purpose to bring salvation to the Gentiles, is not the final thing, and the blessings the Gentiles received by their fall is not the fullest blessing which God has in store for the world. Much more is in store for the world in blessing through Israel's restoration. To Israel is promised in the Old Testament a time of fulness, a time when they shall be taken back. Their time of fulness comes when Christ returns in power and in glory. If then God brought blessing to the Gentiles by their fall, how far greater will be the blessings for the world, when their time of fulness has come. It will be life from the dead. Israel is now nationally and spiritually dead. They will be nationally and spiritually made alive (see Ezekiel 37:1-17, 39:25-29; Hosea 5:15-6:5). And the whole world comes in for blessing then. The nations will be converted and the kingdom will be set up on earth (see Zechariah 2:10-18).

Verses 16-24

The parable of the two olive trees illustrates great dispensational facts and contains solemn warnings for Christendom. The good olive tree typifies Israel in covenant relation with God in the Abrahamic covenant. The olive tree is evergreen; and so is the covenant, unchangeable. Israel's faithlessness and disobedience cannot annul it. The root is Abraham, who was holy, separated unto God. On account of unbelief some of the branches were broken off. They are now separated from the good olive tree and are withered. The wild olive tree is a picture of the Gentiles. The branches of this wild olive tree are grafted among the branches of the good olive tree to partake of the root and fatness of the good olive tree. The wild olive tree branches grafted upon the good olive tree do not represent the true church. The Gentiles are meant by it, who are, after Israel's unbelief, put upon the ground of responsibility which Israel had, to partake now of the promised covenant blessings. The grafted in branches represent the Christian profession, Christendom, as we call it. The grafted in branches are solemnly warned. They are not to boast, not to be high-minded; they must abide in goodness. If the warning is unheeded they will not be spared but cut off. And when that happens God will graft in again the natural branches into their own olive tree if they no longer abide in unbelief. God is able to do this. He can and will put back Israel into their former relation. It is prophetic. Christendom is exactly that which is here warned against--boasting, high-minded, not abiding in

goodness, in one word, apostate. The unbelief and failure of professing Christendom is as great, if not greater than the unbelief and failure of Israel. The time will come when God will not spare, but execute judgment upon Christendom. He will spew Laodicea out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16). Then the hour of Israel 's restoration has come.

Verses 25-32

A mystery is made known. Blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. The fulness of the Gentiles means, the full number of the saved, gathered out from among the Gentiles, who constitute the church, the body of Christ. And when the body is joined to the Head in glory, the time of the coming of the Lord for His Saints (1 Thessalonians 4:17), the Lord will turn again to Israel. All Israel, that is, the all Israel living in the day will be saved, when the Deliverer comes out of Zion (Isaiah 59:20; Psalm 14:7). It is the second, visible, personal and glorious coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob and take away their sins. Between the coming of the Lord for the Saints, who will meet Him in the air, and His coming in great power and glory, are the days of Jacob's trouble, when the nation will have to pass through the fires of tribulation and the wicked among Israel will be cut off. And after He has come and has taken away their sins, all the great prophecies of Israel 's earthly glory will be fulfilled. Verses 33-36.--A doxology closes this dispensational section of the epistle. What depths of riches, both of wisdom and knowledge of God, in His merciful dealings with the Gentiles and the Jews! How unsearchable His judgments! How untraceable His ways! For of Him, and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen.

III. EXHORTATIONS AND THE CONCLUSION. Chapters 12-16.

CHAPTER 12

1. The Body as a Willing Sacrifice. 1-2.
2. Service. 3-8.
3. The Daily Walk in Holiness. 9-21.

Verses 1-2.

Grace calls for obedience. After God has made known the riches of His grace, the fulness of the Gospel, His Spirit shows how believers should walk in a world of sin and tribulation. The first thing is to present the body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. This connects with the truth of chapter 6:19, "yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." "The body is the instrument of the spirit; and this so completely, that, if it be laid hold for Him, there is no part of the practical life but must, of necessity, be His. The feet are used to walk at His bidding, the hands to employ ourselves in His things, the tongue to speak for Him and nothing else, the ear to hear His words; the eye also, so that whatever it looks upon, it will look upon as being under His control" (Numerical Bible). It is plain that the whole life thus finds its government." And this yielding of the body, giving it as a living sacrifice, is our intelligent service. It is the needful thing so that all which is written in the sixth chapter may become a practical thing in our lives. Is this presentation of the body as a living sacrifice an act done once for all (as some teach), or is it a daily yielding? It must be done continually. And it becomes possible to go on presenting the body thus, under all circumstances, if we remember the mercies of God, what God in Christ has done for us and in what a wonderful position He has put us in His own Son. But it needs constant watchfulness, prayer, meditation on the Word and self-judgment.

In doing this the believer will be able to carry out the exhortation, "be not conformed to this world (age)." A soul in touch with Christ, knowing the mercies of God in redemption, cannot enjoy the world. Well has it been said "true joy in the Lord renders the soul in which it dwells incapable of enjoying what the world esteems pleasure. Natural pleasures are the solace of that which is essentially alien of God." The present age is evil and Christ died to deliver us from this present evil age. Satan is the god of this age. It is not controlled by the Spirit of God. Therefore friendship with the world, conformity to it, is enmity to the cross of Christ. Separation from it is God's demand, for the cross of Christ has made us dead to the world and the world dead unto us. We must be transformed by the renewing of our mind. This is the work of the Spirit of God in us. The inward man is to be renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16); and this will be so as we daily present our bodies as the living sacrifice.

Verses 3-8

Service is mentioned next. This is to be rendered in humility and according to the measure of faith as God has dealt to every man, who is a believer. Here the body, that is, the church, is touched upon. In first Corinthians and Ephesians the truth concerning the church and the different gifts is more fully revealed. All believers are members of that body, and as in the human body not all members have the same office, so in the one body there are different gifts bestowed by grace. Each must take his place given to him in that body and render the service unto which he is called and thus demonstrate the divine truth, that we are one body in Christ, and individually members one of the other. Ministry in the Word stands first and there is also ministry in other ways. The latter are, giving, ruling (or leading) and showing mercy. Giving is to be in simplicity (or liberality); ruling is to be in diligence and showing mercy in cheerfulness. The emphasis here is not so much upon the different gifts as it is upon the faithful exercise of the gift.

Verses 9-21

The daily walk in holiness is unfolded in these verses. These are precious exhortations and every Christian should read them often and order his daily life accordingly. Love stands first, for it is the great essential of the divine nature. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16). It is to be unfeigned. Love seeketh not her own and therefore we are to prefer in honor one another. "Not slothful in business" is often misunderstood and many have thought it means devotion to a secular business. But the correct translation is, "In diligence, not slothful." Then there is rejoicing in hope, patience in suffering, prayer, sympathy with others and many other blessed things into which we cannot enter in detail. The child of God desires all these things and the Spirit of God is with us to produce these blessed fruits in our lives.

CHAPTER 13

1. Obedience to Authorities. 1-7.
2. Love the Fulfilling of the Law. 8-10.
3. The Day is at Hand. 11-14.

Verses 1-7

The children of God are strangers and pilgrims in the world. Our citizenship is in heaven. But what is the Christian to do as living under different forms of government? The Christian is to be in subjection to these, for the powers that exist are ordained by Him. Resisting these powers would mean resistance to God who has ordained them. They are God's ministers to maintain order. "Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." If Christians had always obeyed these injunctions, how well it would have been. But often they are forgotten and an attempt is made to control the politics of this age and to rule.

Verses 8-10

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." The first sentence does not mean that it is wrong to borrow money. The question is about paying. If a debt is due it should be paid exactly on time. Borrowing money in a reckless way, without any prospect of returning the amount, is sinful, and often great dishonor has been brought upon the name of our Lord on account of it. But there is another debt which always remains. The Christian owes the debt of love to all. And this love is the fulfilling of the law. Love does not work ill to his neighbor. The natural man may claim that he keeps the sum of the other commandments, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," but he cannot do it. Only one who is born again, in whose heart there is love, has the power to do this.

Verses 11-14

The Coming of the Lord is brought before us in these verses as a motive to holy living. The final salvation is nearing, for

the night is far spent and the day is at hand. The blessed hope is to be always before the Christian's heart; it is a purifying hope. "He that hath this hope set upon him purifieth himself as He is pure." In view of that approaching day, when we shall see Him face to face and be with Him in glory, the exhortations are given to awake out of sleep, to cast off the works of darkness, to put on the armor of light, to walk becomingly as in the day, to abstain from the things of the flesh, putting on the Lord Jesus and making no provisions for the flesh. We are to walk in the light as the children of the day, with faces set towards the coming glory. And never before were those exhortations more needed than now. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. The signs of the end of the age are seen everywhere, and yet in these solemn days how few of God's people walk as the children of the day in the path of separation.

CHAPTER 14

1. Strong and Weak Brethren are the Lord's Servants. 1-12.
2. The True Way of Love. 13-23.

Verses 1-12

The question concerning brethren who were weak in faith, how they are to be treated by those who are strong is now taken up. Those weak in the faith had not the complete knowledge of their position in Christ, though they knew Christ and loved Him. They did not realize that certain observances of days, or abstinences from meats and drinks, could not affect their salvation in any way. There were scruples and conscientious difficulties, as there are still among God's people. One believeth he may eat all things, he knew his full Christian freedom--another who is weak eateth herbs. How are these two to treat each other? Were they to criticize and condemn one the other? "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him." The weak in faith are to be received, but not to doubtful points of reasonings; these questions are not to be brought up for discussion, or worse, to make them a test of Christian fellowship. Judging a brother, or condemning him on such matters is forbidden, for inasmuch as God hath received him, he is the Lord's servant and not ours. The rebuke is "who art thou that thou judgest another's servant? to his own Lord he standeth or falleth." More than that, the Lord in His gracious power shall keep him in all his weakness. He bears with him, "the Lord is able to make him stand." Each is responsible to the Lord. Each does it as unto the Lord. No one lives to himself, and no one dies to himself, we are all the Lord's. There is also a day coming when we all must stand before His judgment seat and then He will judge, who knows the secrets of every heart. Therefore we must not judge. Every one, as stated in all these cases, should be fully persuaded in his own mind and should not judge another, but look forward to the judgment seat of Christ.

Verses 13-23

But more than that there should be loving tolerance for the brother. let the harsh judgment of the brother, whom God has received be abandoned; but judge this rather, "not to put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." There is nothing unclean in itself. Yet a brother may account something unclean, his conscience so judges, then it is unclean for him. The brother with the weak conscience must be considered. The law of love demands this. "If thy brother is grieved on account of thy food, thou walkest no longer in love; destroy not with thy food him for whom Christ died." Therefore "it is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything, whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended, or is made weak." "He that serves Christ in these things is acceptable and approved of men. We are to follow what makes for peace and edifies others. To the pure all things are pure; but if a person defiles his conscience, even though an unfounded scruple, to him it is unclean. Happy for him who, in boasting of his liberty by faith, does not go beyond his faith in what he does; and does not offend in what he allows himself to do; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. If a man thinks he ought to honor a certain day, or abstain from a certain food, and then, for the sake of showing his liberty, does not do it, to him it is sin. It is not faith before God" (Synopsis).

CHAPTER 15

1. The Example of Christ. 1-7.
2. The Ministry of Christ. 8-13.

3. Paul's Personal Ministry. 14-33.

Verses 1-7

An additional motive is brought in why the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak and not please themselves. It is Christ. He did not please Himself, but bore in great meekness and patience the reproaches with which men reproached God, and these reproaches fell on Christ Himself. It was the reproach of God He bore in perfect meekness. We are therefore to be likeminded one to another according to Christ Jesus. Wherefore receive ye one another even as Christ also received you to the glory of God. We have then three instructions concerning the weak brother: 1. To receive the weak, but not to doubtful disputations. 2. Not to judge a brother in those things, because he is Christ's servant, and any one must give an account of himself. 3. To bear the infirmities of the weak, to put no stumbling block in their way, not to please ourselves. We are to walk in love and manifest that love by receiving one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God. And blessed are we if we also walk according to those rules and manifest the mind of Christ.

Verses 8-13

The exhortations are ended, and what we find in the rest of this chapter is supplementary to the whole Epistle and touches once more on the question concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. Christ was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises to the fathers. Thus He appeared in the midst of His people. But the Gentiles also were to receive mercy through Him. Four Scriptures are quoted to prove that it is the purpose of God to bless the Gentiles in mercy with His people Israel (Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43 in Moses' great prophetic song; Psalm 117:1 and Isaiah 11:10). But it must not be overlooked that these quotations do not teach that Gentiles are as fellow heirs put into the same body with believing Jews. They show that God had announced that Gentiles would rejoice in salvation and trust in Christ. The fulfillment of the passages quoted awaits the second coming of our Lord "when He shall rise to reign over the Gentiles," when Gentiles will rejoice with the saved remnant of Israel. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." This is our most blessed inheritance. The Holy Spirit indwells the child of God and in believing He manifests His power, the God of hope filling us with all joy and peace, so that we abound in hope, looking forward to that blessed day, the realization of our blessed Hope, when we shall be like Him and see Him as He is.

Verses 14-33

Then the great man of God speaks lastly of his own ministry. Much might be written on this interesting paragraph. He had a special ministry conferred upon Himself. It was grace which had given it to him. His ministry he describes as being "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." A closer study of his statements, which tell of his humility, his marvelous service in power, his confidence, as well as other things, will be found helpful and instructive. He looked forward to his coming visit to Rome and requested the prayers of the brethren. And when he came there at last, he came as the prisoner of the Lord, and from Rome he sent forth the greatest of his Epistles.

CHAPTER 16

1. Greetings to Individuals. 1-16.
2. Warning and Comfort. 17-20.
3. The Final Salutations. 21-24.
4. The Conclusion. 25-27.

Verses 1-16

Phoebe (which means "radiant") is first mentioned. She was probably a person of great influence and wealth, for she had been a succorer of many, including the Apostle. She is heartily commended to the assembly in Rome, to be received in the Lord, worthily of the Saints. Then that interesting pair of fellow workers of the Apostle Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, are saluted. To follow their wanderings and interest in the Gospel we have to omit here; see Acts 18:1-3, 18-19, 26; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19. At what time they laid down their necks for the life of the Apostle we do not know. The assembly met in their house. Then the first convert of the province of Asia, the beloved Epaphroditus is greeted. Many, who had labored much; Andronicus and Junius, who were in the Lord before Paul, and others are greeted. Little do we know of all these names, but their records are on high and at the judgment seat of Christ they and their abundant labors and sufferings will be made manifest.

(Not till the third century have we any proofs of the existence of buildings set apart for Christian worship. Not only were most of the churches too poor to build meeting-places, but, until *Christianity became the religion of the empire, the privacy and secrecy possible in a meeting held in a dwelling-house were important considerations. The wealthier members of a church seem to have put one of their rooms at the disposal of the brethren for this purpose. First comes the Upper Room, in which our Lord held his Last Supper with his disciples (Matthew 26:18), and then the house of Mary in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), although this may have been the same place. In Ephesus the house of Aquila and Priscilla was a meeting-place (1 Corinthians 16:19), as it was in Rome also. At Laodicea the church met in the house of Nymphas (Colossians 4:15), and at Colosse in the house of Philemon (verse 2). Although there may have been in Rome one house in which the whole body of Christians met, yet it would seem that it was usual to hold meetings in a number of houses. The phrases, "and the brethren that are with them" (verse 14), and "all the saints that are with them" (15), seem to imply separate groups of believers.--A.E. Garvie.)

Verses 17-20

There is a warning against those who create divisions and give occasions to stumbling, contrary to the doctrine they had learned. These were probably teachers like those who disturbed the Galatians and these teachers were to be shunned--"turn away from them." To create divisions in the body of Christ is a work of the flesh and a serious matter. "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and by kind and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the guileless." How often this is the case with false teachers in our own times. Destructive critics, false teachers, deniers of the Gospel of Grace are often in character very amiable and kind. Such is especially true of Christian Science with their leaders; the blasphemies of that cult are generally covered up by kind and fair speeches. And Satan, who is behind all these things, will shortly be bruised under the feet of His people. Complete victory over all evil is promised for His people and will surely come.

Verses 21-27

And now the final salutations and the conclusion in praise. "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

The two Epistles addressed to the Corinthians follow, in our New Testament, the Epistle to the Romans. A more logical arrangement would be to put the Epistle to the Galatians next to Romans, for the Galatian Epistle contains the defense of the Gospel and its message is closely linked with the truths unfolded in Romans. Ephesians and Colossians lead upon still higher ground, and if the arrangement of the Pauline Epistles is to be made according to progressive revelation, these two documents should follow the Epistle to the Galatians. While Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians are preeminently doctrinal Epistles, the Epistles to the Corinthians, while not excluding Christian doctrines, are more of a practical character, dealing with very grave and serious conditions which had arisen in the church at Corinth.

The Church at Corinth

Corinth was one of the foremost Grecian "" cities, the capital of the Province of Achaia. The Roman proconsul resided there (Acts 18:12). Corinth had a very excellent situation, which gave to the city commercially a great advantage and was therefore known for its vast commerce and great wealth. Its large population had a cosmopolitan character, thousands of traders and mariners of all nations visited the far-famed city. Greek civilization flourished here in all its branches. The fine arts were cultivated, athletic games as well as schools of philosophy and rhetoric flourished in this proud city. But the worst feature was an open and very gross licentiousness. The whole city was steeped in immoralities of various kind. Drunkenness, gluttony, and above all religiously licensed prostitution were in Corinth at its worst. The Greek worship of Aphrodite was of the most degraded nature. So great was the moral corruption that the Greek word "Corinthiazesthai," which means "to live like a Corinthian," had become a byword of shame and vileness among the profligate heathen of that time. The horrible picture of vileness as given in the Epistle to the Romans (chapter 1), written by the Apostle in Corinth, describes some of these moral conditions prevailing in Corinth. It has well been said, "The geographical position of Corinth was its weal and its woe."

The Apostle Paul had been in Athens first and then came to Corinth (Acts 18:1). While the origin of the church in Rome is obscure, we know that the Corinthian assembly was founded by the Apostle. The record of it we find in Acts 18. He labored there under great blessing for a year and six months. Jews and Gentiles were saved, among the former was Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue. But the majority of those who believed were Gentiles, and these belonged to the poorer classes (1 Corinthians 1:26) with at least two exceptions, Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, and Gaius, a wealthy man, whom Paul had baptized. The historical account of Paul's ministry in Corinth and what happened there should be carefully read, for it throws light upon the Epistles he sent to that church.

What he preached in that wealthy and wicked city, boasting of culture and much learning, filled with an arrogant pride, we learn from his own words in the first Epistle. "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (2:1-2). He was greatly pressed in spirit while there (Acts 18:5), yea, in fear and trembling (1 Corinthians 2:3). He knew this was one of Satan's strongholds. But God stood by His servant, and while his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, it was in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Corinthians 2:4).

Both Epistles reveal the deplorable state of the Corinthians and these conditions called forth through the energy of the Holy Spirit this first Epistle. The evil things which had sprung up among the Corinthians had been reported to the Apostle. The house of Chloe (chapter 1:11) is mentioned, as informing him about the contentious spirit which was manifesting itself. Probably from the same source as well as from others, he heard even of worse things which were making headway

among the believers. Gross immorality was being tolerated in their midst; lawsuits of Christians were being submitted to courts over which pagan judges presided; they had degraded the blessed memorial feast, the Lord's supper, on account of which some had been dealt with by the Lord. Then there were other matters, such as disorder in public worship, abuse of certain gifts, the forwardness of women. Controversies must have also agitated the Corinthian assembly about the marriage state, certain church matters, such as collections, the exercise of gifts, etc. They had not been brought up Christians, and had everything to learn. This fully explains the character of this first Epistle.

When and Where Was the Epistle Written?

Attempts have been made to question the authenticity of the First Corinthian Epistle. They have not, however, been successful. Testimonies to the authorship of this document are found in the writings of Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and others. Dean Alford states, "As far as I am aware, the authorship of the First Epistle to the Corinthians has never been doubted by any critic of note. Indeed, he who would do so must be prepared to dispute the historical truth of the character of St. Paul." The Epistle itself answers our question concerning the place and the time when it was written by the Apostle. The statement at the close of the Epistle, printed in some editions of the Bible "written from Philippi," is incorrect. In chapter 16:8 we read the writer's statement, "But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost." The Apostle Paul was therefore in Ephesus and intended to leave about Pentecost. The Book of Acts shows that he left that city about the time of Pentecost in the year 57. It is quite certain that this first Epistle to the Corinthians was written during the first part of the year 57, probably around the time of Easter. (See 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). From Acts 19:22 we learn that the Apostle, while still in Ephesus, had sent Timotheus and Erastus to Macedonia. He had given commission to Timotheus to go to Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10). No doubt Timotheus was to prepare the way for the visit of the Apostle (1 Corinthians 4:17-19). In all probability the Epistle was taken to Corinth by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17).

But are the two Corinthian Epistles the only epistles Paul wrote to them? In chapter 5:9 Paul says: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators." From this we learn that he had written them a previous letter. Commentators have spoken of this letter as a lost epistle. If it was an inspired document, like these two Epistles and the other Pauline Epistles, it would certainly have been preserved. But the Apostle also wrote letters which were not meant to form parts of the Word of God, which were not inspired, as Romans, Ephesians and the other epistles are. The Epistle therefore mentioned in chapter 5:9 was a private letter of the Apostle.

Important and Practical Truths

The church, constituting the fellowship of the Saints on earth, its place and testimony in the world; the church, its order, membership, spiritual gifts and manifestations, discipline and other important matters, are the truths dealt with in this first Epistle. Then, after the church is viewed as on earth, as His witness, the great truth of the resurrection of the body is made known as well as the fact that when the Lord comes "we shall not all sleep, but shall be changed in a moment." This puts before us the blessed hope, the great consummation, when the church will leave this earthly scene of conflict and failure and become, according to promise, the glorious church.

All about us in the professing church manifests the fullest failure and ruin. The evils which were in the Corinthian church such as sectarianism, self-indulgence and worldliness have become the prominent features of the institution which claims to be the church. For the true believer whose aim it is to be obedient to the Lord in all things, this Epistle has a message and shows him the way which he can follow, though failure and confusion is about him.

The Division of First Corinthians

On account of the different topics and questions treated of in this epistle, a division into well defined sections is rather difficult to make. The epistle is a church epistle, dealing throughout with matters concerning the church. A careful reading of the epistle will disclose the fact that first, the church is viewed as the temple of God indwelt by His Spirit. As such the church is in the world, though not of the world, and is called to be separated from the world and all its wisdom. The world is hostile to the church; the activities of the enemy of the truth, through the wisdom of this world and the lusts of the flesh are learned from the state of the church in Corinth. The church and her relation to the world, and the testimony for Christ, the church is to give and to maintain in the world, are unfolded in the first ten chapters of this epistle. After that, the church

is viewed as the body of Christ. In chapter 11-14 no more mention is made of the world and the believer's conduct in the world. We are introduced to church order, the activities of the church, the body and its members, the ministries and the exercise of the different gifts, bestowed upon the body. Then follows the great chapter which deals with resurrection. The doctrine of resurrection is unfolded in chapter 15; first, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself the head of the body, and also the resurrection and translation of His people. The glorious destiny of the church is therefore revealed at the close of the epistle. The concluding chapter contains an instruction concerning collection and the greetings. This brief survey of the epistle, showing its scope, gives us three main divisions:

I. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD. SEPARATION AND TESTIMONY. CHAPTERS 1-10

1. What Grace Has Done and the Assurance which Grace Gives. Chapter 1:1-9.
2. Contrasts. Chapter 1:10-4.
3. Corinthian Failures. Chapters 5-6.
4. Concerning the Relationship of Man and Woman. Chapter 7.
5. Concerning Meats Offered to Idols. Liberty Governed by Love. Chapter 8.
6. Paul's Gracious Example. Chapter 9.
7. Concluding Warnings and Exhortations. Chapter 10.

II. THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST. CHAPTERS 11-14

1. The Headship of Christ and of Man. The Lords Supper. Chapter 11.
2. The Body and the Members of the Body. Chapter 12.
3. The Need and Superiority of Love. Chapter 13.
4. Prophecy and Speaking with Tongues. Chapter 14.

III. RESURRECTION AND THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. CONCLUSIONS. CHAPTERS 15-16

1. The Doctrine of Resurrection and the Hope of the Church. Chapter 15.
2. Instruction and Greetings. Chapter 16.

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD. SEPARATION AND TESTIMONY. CHAPTERS 1-10

1. What Grace has Done and the Assurance Grace Gives. 1:1-9.

In the opening verse of this epistle the Apostle Paul associates with himself the name of Sosthenes. There can be little doubt that he is the same Sosthenes mentioned in Acts 18:17. Like the great apostle he was once "a persecutor and injurious." The experience through which he passed, when, as an enemy of Christ he received the deserved beating, was instrumental to bring him to Christ. When he was the chief ruler of the synagogue he was an enemy, but now through the

grace of God he had become "a brother beloved." It was to call to the remembrance of the sadly drifting Corinthians the former days, as well as the power of God in salvation. Then Paul addresses them as "the church of God which is at Corinth"; and this church of God is composed of those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints. All believers are set apart to God in Christ. Grace has constituted them Saints; but with the gifts grace bestows, there also goes the responsibility of manifesting that separation from the world, from which the church is called out. To the Saints, true believers, sanctified in Christ, set apart to God, the epistle is addressed. Then follows another sentence, which goes beyond the church at Corinth. "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Thus the true circle of fellowship was laid down, for every local church to observe. As we shall find later in this epistle, the party spirit, sectarianism, was manifesting itself in Corinth and these words of address may be looked upon as a protest against that unchristian spirit. All who acknowledge Christ as Lord and call upon His name belong to the church. He is their Lord as He is our Lord. Furthermore we learn from these words that the messages of this epistle are for God's people at all times. "In every place" means every place where believers are found today. The truths unfolded, the exhortations given, have therefore a universal application; they are the commandments of the Lord to all His people (14:37).

Before the Apostle begins to mention the evils which the Corinthian assembly tolerated and which burdened his spirit, he speaks first of all of the grace of God given to them by Jesus Christ. They had been saved and were enriched by Him. The truth they had received, they also communicated "in all utterance and knowledge" to others. They had all the gifts in their midst, and were waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace had bestowed all these gifts, and yet they failed to manifest His grace. In possession of such grace and the gifts of grace, they should have walked in humility and should have lived soberly, righteously and godly. But they were walking in an evil way.

The Apostle knew all the evil which was among them as an assembly (and more so did the Holy Spirit know), but before he uncovers their condition, he gives a most precious assurance. He speaks of the faithfulness of God, who had called them into that wonderful fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ. God is faithful! He reckons on God's faithfulness to do in the end all for them which He had promised, so that they would be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not repent of His gifts and calling. The same assurance is found in other epistles. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23--24). Such a loving and gracious assurance to those who are called according to His purpose, that He is faithful and will bring it about that His people shall be blameless in that coming day of Christ, leads to self-judgment and repentance.

2. Contrasts. Chapter 1:10-4).

CHAPTER 1:10-31.

1. Divisions rebuked. (1:10-16).

2. The Cross of Christ, the Power of God. (1:17-31).

The section which begins, after the introductory words, with the tenth verse and ends with the fourth chapter, shows a number of contrasts. There is the contrast of the fact that they were called into the one fellowship. The fact of being called into the fellowship of God's Son, as members of the one body is contrasted with their divisions. There is the contrast of the preaching of the cross, which is foolishness to them that perish, but the power of God to those who are saved. The wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world are likewise contrasted. Jews and Gentiles, what they require and seek are seen in their contrast with those who believe. Every chapter makes these contrasts and through them the blessed truth of the Gospel and the walk of the Saints of God is fully brought out.

As the introduction to the epistle reveals, all believers have one Lord to whom they belong, and God has called all into the one fellowship, the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. No other name is to be owned by His people, but all must be united in that blessed name, and obedience yielded to Him. He therefore beseeches them in that name to present a united confession and testimony "that ye all speak the same thing"; an unmarred fellowship in the Spirit "that there be no divisions among you"; and such a oneness of mind and judgment which becomes those who are one in Christ "that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." And why this exhortation? Because those of the house of Chloe had given to Paul the information that contentions had arisen among them. He mentioned the source

without giving the names of the individuals. Those of the house of Chloe were no doubt deeply spiritual and much exercised over these contentions and the dishonor done to the name of the Lord Jesus. And these contentions, which threatened serious schisms in the one body were connected with teachers, the chosen instruments of the Lord. Some said, "I am of Paul"; others, "I of Apollos"; another party, "I of Cephas." Instead of sitting at the feet of the One, who alone is worthy and is the teacher of His people, they scattered and divided themselves among the different teachers, given by the Lord to the church. It was the beginning of sectarianism, which has been such a curse to the people of God. It did not begin in the blessed assembly of Philippi, nor among the Saints in Ephesus, but among the puffed up, worldly-minded Corinthians. Partyism, sectarianism, is the fruit of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). How it has multiplied in Christendom, the evil fruit it has borne, the apostasy which is fostered by it, we need not point out, for all spiritually minded Christians are acquainted with it.

But a fourth party said, "I of Christ." Piously they said, we do not acknowledge Paul, Apollos or Cephas; we call ourselves after Christ. They made Him the head of a party, and put His teaching in contrast with the teachings of the chosen vessels of the Lord, through whom He made known His will. It was only a pretext to discredit the ministry of Paul and the other Apostles. That last named contention was perhaps the worst.

And so the inspired Apostle asks, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Christ was crucified for them and in His Name they had been baptized. In their contentions they were doing wrong to the Person of Christ and to His blessed work. And water baptism is especially mentioned by him. He thanked God, that he had baptized none of them, but Crispus and Gaius, as well as the household of Stephanas. Baptism has been and is a prominent source of the division of the body of Christ. Ritualism has made of it a sacrament which saves and none can go to heaven without it. Other sects make it likewise a necessary act for salvation. Still others teach that water-baptism is the appointed means by which a believer becomes a member of the church, the body of Christ. It is not water-baptism by which a believer becomes a member of the body of Christ; the Holy Spirit alone can do this and does it with every believer (1 Corinthians 12:13). Others have gone into the other extreme and reject water-baptism entirely. The Apostle did not do this. "The solemn assumption, by the newly born believer, of the name of Jesus as his Lord (as it is done in baptism) was an act both too important and of too solemn and precious a significance to be regarded lightly by an inspired Apostle." Then the Apostle states his commission. He was not sent by His Lord to baptize. His great mission was to preach the Gospel. "Baptism would surely follow a true reception of his testimony, but that, with all other resulting effects, is kept distinct from the positive and vital work of God by His own Word. We may notice a real difference between the Apostolate of Paul and that of the eleven, as defined at the close of Matthew. The latter were sent expressly to baptize. Paul was not."--Pridham on Corinthians.

Verses 17-31 unfold the Gospel which he was sent to preach, the Cross of Christ and the power of God to salvation made known by that Cross. He preached that Gospel "not with wisdom of words." All that was attractive to the natural man, such as rhetoric, beautiful language, enticing words, was avoided by the Apostle. He was "rude in speech" (2 Corinthians 11:6); he did not preach with enticing words (1 Corinthians 2:4). He feared that in any way the power of the Cross of Christ should be made void. He had a complete, a perfect confidence in the Gospel and knew it needed not human embellishment and human schemes to make it effective. All human efforts by rhetoric, sentimental claptrap methods, aim to stir up and to direct the emotions and sympathies of the natural man.

The preaching of the Cross is foolishness to those that are perishing. Unto us who are being saved it is the power of God, for it saves us from the guilt of sins, the power of sin itself and ere long from the presence of sin in our homegoing. And those who are perishing in rejecting the Cross of Christ were never so numerous as today. To the "Christian Scientist"--the Unitarian--the Destructive Critic-- the new Religionist and others, the preaching of the Cross is foolishness. And the world with all its boasted learning and wisdom did not think of the Gospel and its wonderful plan and power. The nations who boasted of culture and wisdom even in their highest form groped in the dark, and instead of discovering how man can be saved and brought back to God, were dragged down deeper and deeper into sin and despair. And thus God made foolish the wisdom of this world. Therefore the men who today turn their backs upon the Gospel and speak of philosophy, science and wisdom, turn to foolishness once more, which will lead them into the blackness and darkness forever. The preaching of Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, because the Jews required a sign and the Greeks sought after wisdom, but the Cross puts human pride and glory into the dust. And what Jews and Greeks rejected and treated as foolishness is the power and wisdom of God. What men considered foolishness, a crucified Christ, is therefore wiser than men, for it gives to the believer what the wisdom of the world cannot supply. And the "weakness of

God", which is Christ crucified through weakness, is more powerful than men; man is saved by it. Thus the charge of Jews and Gentiles, that the cross is foolishness, that it is weakness, is repudiated and the foolishness and weakness of man is thereby demonstrated and laid bare.

And that no flesh should glory in His presence, God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the things which are mighty. He hath chosen the base things, the despised things and the things which are not to bring to naught the things that are. Therefore not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. God in His sovereignty takes up that which is foolish and weak to manifest His power. How fully this is evidenced by experience. And the believer is always in the safe place, if he is in the place of self-abasement, self-effacement and weakness. "Of Him are we in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." It is all of God, and all in Christ, and nothing of us or in ourselves. Christ is the wisdom of God.

"Christ is made unto us wisdom from God; and thus with Christianity, for faith, every cloud is lifted. The wisdom that is from God is a casket of priceless jewels; in which the redeemed one finds, not only liberty, but marvelous enrichment. How much is contained in just those three words, 'righteousness, sanctification and redemption!' And they are in an order of progressive fulness, by which we enter more and more into the heart of God."--Numerical Bible.

Righteousness in Christ is that of which Romans so fully speaks. Our guilt is gone. Righteousness is on our side, covering the believer. The believer is justified by His blood and by faith in Him and fully accepted in the Beloved. And Christ is the believer's sanctification. The work of Christ has separated us unto God; but the believer is also sanctified by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of holiness. In Christ we are holy and walking in the Spirit, obedient to His Word, the believer manifests in his conduct the fact that he is set apart to God. Redemption looks forward to the future, when the believer shall be glorified, and be conformed to the image of the Lord. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." Therefore the believer has nothing to glory in himself, but he glories in the Lord. And all this put to shame the Corinthians who made so much of the wisdom of this world and were puffed up.

CHAPTER 2

1. The Apostle's Preaching. (2:1-5).
2. The Revelation of the Spirit. (2:6-13).
3. The Helplessness and Ignorance of the Natural Man. (2:14-16).

The Apostle had been among them and declared unto them the testimony of God. This he had not done with excellency of speech or wisdom. He preached unto them the Person of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He, who is the wisdom of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3), was his one theme; he determined not to know anything among them but the Person and Work of Christ. He had not come with a system of philosophy, to tickle their ears, but with the highest wisdom made known by revelation. He well knew that in Christ, His blessed Person and in His Cross all their unanswered questions, seeking for light, were answered, and more than that, the power of God through His Spirit would be active in their salvation. When he was with them he had a sense of weakness; he was in fear and much trembling. It shows the deep exercise of his soul. But he also had the special encouragement from the Lord, who spoke to him by a vision (Acts 18:9-10). He avoided all human eloquence, to which the Corinthians were specially given and attracted, so as not to flatter them. And therefore the Spirit of God manifested power; his preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Their faith, as a result, rested not on the beautiful, persuasive and eloquent words of a man, but on the power of God. Here is the pattern for every preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What unworthy methods are used in our day by some professional evangelists! What sentimental trash is preached by those who are men-pleasers and under the guise of Gospel-preaching aim at their own popularity! "For just so far as preachers fill men with admiration for their peculiar style of thought or language, is it evident they are weak in the Spirit, and attract to themselves instead of clearing and establishing souls in the truth whereby the Spirit works in power."--W. Kelly.

Among them that are perfect he spoke wisdom. The perfect are those who have believed the Gospel, experienced its power and are in Christ, accepted in the perfect One; they know the truth as it is in Christ. But the wisdom Paul spoke was not the

wisdom of the world (literally: age), but God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom ordained by God before the world unto our glory. And what is this hidden wisdom, God's wisdom in a mystery which Paul preached to those who had accepted Christ? It is more than Christ crucified. It is Christ glorified, seated at the right hand of God, given as head over all things to the church which is His body. This wisdom of God in a mystery (but now made known) is fully revealed in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It was unrevealed in the Old Testament. The rulers of this age did not know it, for had they known the wonderful wisdom of God they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But the very deed they committed (ignorantly as Peter declared, Acts 3:17) fulfilled the Scriptures, and the Lord of Glory whom they crucified is now the glorified Man filling the throne of God, and believers are one with Him. This is the manifold wisdom of God which is made known by the church (Christ as glorified head and the church His body) to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10).

Interesting is the quotation from Isaiah 64:4. The prophet speaks of the inability of man to know what God hath prepared in His infinite grace and love for them that love Him. It was hidden from the Prophet. None of them beheld the great truths of the Church as the body of Christ nor the glory connected with it. But now this is changed. God hath revealed it through His Spirit. The Spirit has come and He has made known the hidden wisdom of God. Through Him and His blessed testimony in the Word we know "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And these things are in Christ. The church is going to share with Him the glory which He has received. And the Spirit in the believer is searching all things, yea, the deep things of God. So the Spirit of God Himself leads the child of God deeper and deeper into this wisdom of God. The more we learn of it, the more we enter into the deep things in blessed fellowship with the Father and the Son, the more we desire to know. This should be for the child of God, the greatest thing--the Spirit in him searching out the deep things of God. The excuse some Christians make of their inability to grasp certain truths, when they say "it is too deep for me," dishonors the indwelling Spirit. For our poor, little minds all is "too deep;" but not for the Spirit of God.

The things of God cannot be known, save by the Spirit of God. This blessed gift is bestowed upon the believer, so that he can know the things which are freely given to him of God. And these deep and spiritual revelations were transmitted by chosen instruments. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing (or communicating) spiritual things with spiritual" (Verse 13). Here is a definition of verbal inspiration. The thoughts and revelations of God have been given to us through human instruments, in the words which the Spirit teacheth. We have therefore an inerrant Bible.

A contrast between the natural (psychical) man and the spiritual man concludes this chapter. The natural man, no matter what his mental attainments are, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. He must be born again and receive the Spirit before he can discern spiritual things. Why do men criticize the Bible, reject its great Truths, ignorant in spiritual things, though learned in the wisdom of the world? They are natural men, not having the Spirit (Jude verse 19).

CHAPTER 3

1. The Carnal state of the Corinthians. (3:1-9).
2. The Workmen and their Work. (3:10-15).
3. The Church the Temple of God. (3:16-17).
4. Warning against Deception and Glorifying in Men. (3:18-23).

Their condition is next uncovered. They did not depend on the Spirit of God and did not enjoy the hidden wisdom and walk in it. They were carnal, mere babes in Christ, in the sense that their growth, their spiritual development had been arrested. Carnal (fleshly) is not equivalent to "natural." The believer is no longer a natural man, for he is born again. Carnal describes a condition in which the believer walks when he is not subject to the Spirit of God, but is led and governed by natural instincts and motions. Such was their condition. What was merely of man; wisdom, learning, intellect, eloquence and other things, were highly esteemed by them. They were wise in their own conceits and gloried in men. They delighted in and longed for that which is of man, and admired it, therefore the real spiritual truths communicated by the Spirit were unknown to them.

The evidence that they walked not according to the Spirit and the wisdom of God, was the strife and factions which existed among them. They were carnal and walked according to man. This party spirit among them had its source not in the Spirit Of God, but in the flesh. In it, not the Lord was glorified, but man was exalted. They were more occupied with Paul and Apollos, their persons and talents, than with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way sectarianism began, as the fruit of the flesh. And the remedy for it is "seeing no man but Jesus only." If the Lord Jesus Christ is owned in His glory, and union with Him is enjoyed, then the carnal condition ends and the believer walks in the Spirit and glories no longer in man. Paul and Apollos were but servants by whom they had believed. It is true Paul planted; Apollos coming after him, watered, but God gave the increase. God is all. And any man, whether he planteth or watereth, shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. They were God's fellow-workmen and the Saints are God's husbandry (tillage), God's building. And so all true servants of the Lord, though differing in gifts, are one in this that they are instruments in God's hand.

Next (verses 10-15), God's fellow-workmen and their work is considered in view of the time "when each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Paul here calls himself a wise master-builder (an architect). It was not of himself. He did not plan the great building, the church, but it was according to the grace bestowed upon him. The Lord had chosen him for that. The mystery concerning the church which was hidden in former ages, had been made known to him by revelation. Laboring in Corinth, by preaching the Gospel, he was used by the will and the grace of God to establish the church there. The foundation was laid by him in sound doctrine, according to the revelation given to him. But neither Paul nor Peter nor any other man is the foundation upon which the building rests ; there is but one foundation, Jesus Christ, the Son Of God. The church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20-21). The foundation is laid, but the question is what fellow-workmen are going to build upon this one foundation.

Those who are not at all building upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ the Son of God, are of course, not considered. (The different anti-Christian cults, like Christian Science, Spiritism, New Thought, theosophy, etc., all lay claim to the name of Christ, but they reject Him and belong therefore to that class who destroy the Temple of God.) Those who own the one foundation may build upon it either gold, silver, precious stones; or wood, hay, stubble. The first three things mentioned are precious and durable; the other three things are worthless and perishable. Gold, silver and precious stones are the fit adornment of the church as the temple of God, but wood, hay and stubble are worthless material fit not for a temple, but for a mud hovel. Gold, silver and precious stones typify the service of the workman which is of faith, done in obedience to the Word and manifesting the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, while wood, hay and stubble represent what is not of faith, the work and service done in self-will, exalting man instead of the Lord, and therefore disfiguring the temple of God.

The workman whose aim is to please God and not man, whose one ambition is to exalt Christ in all his service, who labors for the perfecting of the Saints, the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12), builds that which is durable and which can never perish. The workman who pleases men, seeks the applause of man, uses the means and schemes of the world to carry on what is called "Christian work" and in it all is not obedient to the Word of God, builds that which is worthless and his work will perish.

A day is coming in which each man's work shall be made manifest. The day is the day of Christ when all believers shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. He is a consuming fire; and before Him whatever is of man and not of Himself will be burned up. That fire shall try every man's (who is a believer saved by grace) work of what sort it is. Then those who toiled in an unostentatious way, who built upon the one foundation that which glorifies Him, whose work was done in faith, shall find that their work abides and they will receive their own reward. The others will see all their work go up in smoke. They shall suffer loss. There is no reward for them. They shall be saved, yet so as by fire. Like Lot who escaped out of Sodom; but all that he had wrought in Sodom, his righteous soul being vexed, was burned up. But the salvation the believer has is independent of his service and work. Every believer will be saved and live, though what he wrought may be found in that day only fit for the fire.

And the building of which the Apostle speaks is the church, the temple of God, the habitation of God through the Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is dwelling in every member of the body. The temple of God is holy and such are ye. Then the solemn warning "if any man destroy (not defile) the temple of God, him shall God destroy." God's temple in which He dwells, the church, is founded on His truth. The destruction of that temple means therefore the denial of the truth of God or the introduction of false doctrines; critics of the Word, who deny the fundamentals of the faith have well been called "destructive." They are the enemies of the cross, whose end is perdition. They are not saved as by fire, but God is going to

deal with them in an awful judgment.

In the professing church today are uncountable numbers, who have crept in unawares: they were never born again and therefore they work corruption and will perish. Therefore "let no man deceive himself." The Corinthians were setting aside the wisdom of the Spirit and were being seduced by the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God. They marred the temple of God by their carnal spirit, trusting in men and glorying in men. In God's gracious purpose as revealed by the Spirit of God all things were theirs. Paul, Apollos and Cephas were the chosen instruments of God for blessing them. As believers they had all things and belong to none but Christ and through Christ to God Himself.

CHAPTER 4

1. Servants of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. (4:1-5).
2. Contrast Between Self-Glorification and Humiliation. (4:6-13).
3. Admonition to Beloved Children. (4:14-21).

Paul speaks of himself and the fellow workmen as servants of Christ and the stewards of the mysteries of God. They were serving under Christ. Apollos, though not an Apostle, is included by Paul. Apollos with his great eloquence probably appealed strongly to the Corinthians and thus the party spirit had been fostered among them. But Paul classes Apollos with himself; he might have told the Corinthians that Apollos was not an Apostle and by this belittle him in their eyes. All were servants of Christ to serve the household of faith and to give meat in due season. The "mysteries of God" are not, as claimed by ritualistic Christendom, the sacraments in their invented "mysterious" actions. The mysteries of God are those blessed hidden things, which were not revealed in former dispensations; but now they are made known and the servants of Christ are the stewards of the blessed truths of Christianity, to guard and to dispense them. And Paul who may be called "the chief steward" of these mysteries had been judged by them, but he expresses his independence of all their judgment. He is responsible to the Lord although he was not aware Of anything against himself yet he was not thereby justified, for the Lord might know something, that he had overlooked. He then points to that day (the day of Christ) when He comes and all His people will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Then the hidden things will come to light, the counsels of the hearts will be manifest and each man have his praise from God. To that day the servant of Christ, the steward of God's mysteries, yea, every Christian, must look, and serve in anticipation of it. Then all our acts and ways will be examined and judged by the Lord Himself. Paul therefore declared that any judgment now was a judgment "before the time."

And all this he wrote by the Spirit to uncover their foolishness and to counteract their party-spirit. "That ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written, that no one of you be puffed up the one against the other. For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received? But, if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Thus the Spirit of God exposed the folly of the Corinthian party spirit in which they were puffed up and had lost sight of Christ.

Where they had drifted in their carnal spirit by glorying in men and not in Christ is made known by the contrast between their self-glorification, self-exaltation and self-sufficiency and the path of humiliation, suffering and contempt, which is marked out for the true follower of the Lord and the servant of Christ. Here is solemn food for reflection. They were full and rich, reigned as kings, but without the Apostles, who were blessedly sharing the sufferings of Christ and were a spectacle unto the world, to angels and to men. By their profession the Corinthians were waiting for the coming of the Lord, yet in His absence they reigned as kings. They enjoyed prosperity, had all things in abundance, they gloried in all these things while the true servants of Christ were suffering, were in want, following in the path of His blessed life on earth, bearing His reproach, despised and rejected by the world. And so it is today that the professing church has fully gone the Corinthian way; an outward profession, a seeing after the honor of men, the applause of the world, glorying in earthly attainments, rich, increased in goods. With it the offense of the cross has ceased. The cross which has written the sentence of death upon the flesh, which has made the believer dead to the world and the world dead to him; the cross, which demands separation, self-denial, self-surrender and self-sacrifice is denied.

And what a record of suffering and privation, persecution, reproach and shame, the Apostle gives! The Corinthians knew

nothing of that; nor does the professing church of today. But has not the world changed since then? Is not the age becoming better? Is not the leaven of Christianity changing existing conditions so that the reproach of Christ ceases and suffering is changed into worldly honor and glory? A thousand times, No! These are the spurious claims. The world, this Present age, man's day, does not change. The world is the same today as it was in the days of the apostle. It is still true and will be true till the Lord comes "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions." The applause and approval of the world, the recognition by the world of that which is called "religion"--"Christian work and service," is an evidence that that service and religion is not according to the truth of God.

Paul sent Timothy to remind them "of my ways which are in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." And he was also coming in person. He was not afraid to visit them and meet them face to face; he would come in power. "What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?" It was his loving call for them to repent and humble themselves.

3. Corinthian Failures. Chapters 5-6.

CHAPTER 5

1. The Tolerated Case of Gross Immorality. (5:1-5).

2. The Call to Separation. (5:6-13).

The spiritual declension, the carnal spirit which prevailed among them, had brought forth fruit. One of their members had committed an act of the grossest immorality, which was an unspeakable outrage, such as was not even named in a licentious city like Corinth, where licentiousness of life was a broadly marked feature of society. It was a case of lawlessness and vileness, which was unknown among the heathen. And this case was tolerated in their midst. Instead of mourning over their sin they were puffed up and did not put away the evil doer from the assembly. If they lacked the personal instruction of the Apostle what to do in such a case, they should have turned to the Lord in sorrow of heart and asked Him for guidance. But they were indifferent. The Apostle now tells them what had to be done. He was among them in spirit, and exercises his apostolic authority in the name and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

"If the enemy had succeeded in drawing aside by the flesh a member of Christ, so that he dishonors the Lord by walking after the flesh as men of the world do, he is put outside, and by the power of the Spirit, as then exercised in their midst by the Apostle, delivered up to the enemy, who is in spite of himself the servant of the purposes of God (as in the case of Job), in order that the flesh of the Christian (which, from his failure to reckon himself dead to sin, had brought him morally under the power of Satan) should be physically destroyed and broken down. Thus would he be set free from the illusions in which the flesh held him captive. His mind would learn how to discern the difference between good and evil, to know what sin is. The judgment of God would be realized within him, and would not be executed upon him at that day when it would be definitely for the condemnation of those who should undergo it. This was a great blessing! although its form was terrible. Marvelous example of the government of God, which uses the adversary's enmity against the saints as an instrument for their spiritual blessing! We have such a case fully set before us in the history of Job. Only we have here, in addition, the proof that in its normal state, apostolic power being there, the assembly exercised this judgment itself, having discernment by the Spirit and the authority of Christ to do it. Moreover, whatever may be the spiritual capacity of the assembly to wield this sword of the Lord (for this is power), her positive and ordinary duty is stated at the end of the chapter." (Synopsis of the Bible)

The second epistle will show us how this discipline was greatly blessed to this wicked person upon whom this sentence was pronounced and who was put out of fellowship with God's people. But not only was there individual evil, but the sin affected the whole Corinthian assembly. As Achan's sin was a curse to Israel (Joshua 7), so the leaven of this wickedness was corrupting the whole church. Leaven is seen here once more as a type of evil. A little leaven, a little evil allowed, leavens the whole lump both individually and collectively. The Apostle demands that no evil in any form, whether moral or doctrinal, is to be tolerated among those who are Christ's. Christ is our passover Lamb sacrificed for us. In Him all believers are constituted holy. With the passover there was inseparably linked the feast of unleavened bread, showing that redemption is holiness. As the Jew had to put away all leaven in eating the passover, so the Christian must purge out all

leaven and be in an unleavened condition, in sincerity and in truth before God. Even the smallest bit of leaven, the least deviation from the truth of God, in holding some unscriptural doctrine, or any other evil, will, if not purged, ultimately leaven the whole lump. Christendom today is a solemn witness to this truth. The whole professing church is leavened by the leaven of the Pharisees (Ritualism); the leaven of the Sadducees (Higher Criticism or infidelity); the Corinthian leaven (vain glory and worldliness) and the Galatian leaven (Legalism). Then follows the command, "therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Such discipline demanded by the Holy Spirit is almost unknown today in that which professes to be the church of God. It has been said that it is uncharitable and harsh to deal in this way with those who are evil in doctrine or practice. It is not that, but rather a gracious measure, to humble such an one and bring him back to the place of blessing.

CHAPTER 6

1. Concerning Disputes before Heathen Courts. (6:1-7).
2. The Holiness of Believers; Their Bodies the Temples of the Holy Spirit. (6:8-20).

Instead of settling their disputes amongst themselves, as it becomes the Saints of God, they brought their difficulties before a heathen court. In doing this they had lost sight of the dignity of their calling. The Saints of God are to reign with Christ and share His glory; they shall judge the world and angels in that day. Going to a heathen court to have these matters settled by one who was not a child of God, but unrighteous, was unworthy of them; they were making known their own shame before the world. If they had remembered that coming day of glory, when as Saints they were to participate in the judgment of the world, they would not have acted in such a way. They would have gladly suffered wrong themselves and permitted themselves to be defrauded instead of rushing with their grievances before a heathen court. Matthew 18:15-18 shows the true way for believers to settle such matters. They were doing wrong and defrauding their own brethren. In all this they dishonored God and denied their relationship to Him. And these Corinthian failures are today in professing Christendom fully developed.

The unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. He reminds them what some of them had been in their unconverted state. They had practiced the vile things of the flesh, which were so common in Corinth. And connected with this there is a warning. If the little leaven was allowed to work, if they continued in the evil ways they were following, they would surely relapse into their former state. But even more, the Apostle reminds them what the grace of God had done for them in saving them from such a life. They had been translated from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The washing has nothing to do with baptism, as some claim. Through regeneration (called in Titus 3:5, "the washing of regeneration"), the believing sinner becomes clean every whit (John 13:10). Then he is also sanctified in Christ, set apart unto God. And the holy Spirit takes possession of the believer as His own temple. This is the meaning here of "Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." He is the seal.

Then the question concerning the believer's body is introduced. A believer is no longer under the law as to meats and foods, as the Jews were. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not profitable." A believer is not to be brought under the power of any of these things. He is not in bondage to anything, but is to have perfect liberty. To be a slave to anything, for instance, a habit, would be wrong. Meats are for the belly; they are but temporary and will pass away. "God will bring to nought both it (the belly) and them (the meats)." But the body itself is something different. In the body of the believer the Holy Spirit is the abiding guest, the divine Indweller. The body is therefore for the Lord and the Lord for the body. The body has the promise of redemption. God, who raised up the Lord, will also raise us up by His own power. And the bodies of believers are members of Christ, joined to Himself by the Spirit of God. "For he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." And all is in warning against the horrible sin, which was so prominent in Corinth, fornication. The bodies of believers belong to the Lord. They are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we are not our own. Furthermore, all this has been accomplished by the great redemption price, the price paid upon Calvary's cross. The body must be yielded to God as a living sacrifice. "For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, which are God's."

4. Concerning the Relationship of Man and Woman

CHAPTER 7

1. The Single and the Married Life. (7:1-9).
2. Separation and Divorce. (7:10-16).
3. Abiding in the Different Callings. (7:17-24).
4. The Unmarried and Married in Contrast. (7:25-40).

It is evident from the first verse that the Corinthians had inquired of the Apostle about marriage and the relationship of man and woman. It was an important question in a city of the character of Corinth, so full of immorality. This chapter answers their question and gives instructions concerning the unmarried and those who are joined together in marriage. "It is good for man not to touch a woman" has been used as sanctioning celibacy and discrediting the marriage union. Such is not the case. The unmarried state has for the Christian, who is fully devoted to the Lord, certain spiritual advantages. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord" (Verse 32). Compare this also with the words of our Lord in Matthew 19:4-12. The Apostle Paul was unmarried (verse 8) and denied himself the lawful privilege of having a wife (9:5) to be free in all things to serve the Lord. But there were great dangers, especially in heathen Corinth, where fornication was religiously sanctioned. Therefore the Apostle enjoins them that every man should have his own wife and every woman have her own husband. And in this relationship, fully approved by the Lord both must be true to its natural claims. As to the body, the husband belongs to the wife and the wife to the husband. They are not to defraud each other. However, by mutual consent they may be apart for a season to give themselves unto prayer. And this he wrote not as a command, but as a permission. "The Apostle gives his thoughts and judgment as a spiritual man, his mind animated and guided by the Spirit, and contrasts it with inspiration and what the Lord said."

Then the question of separation and divorce is taken up. The indissolubleness of the marriage tie had been declared by the Lord and is here confirmed. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matthew 19:6, 9). And so the Apostle writes that which is a command not coming from himself but from the Lord, that if a separation takes place between husband and wife, she is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled. The husband is not to put away his wife. How little heed is paid to all this among professing Christians in our days. The increase of unscriptural divorces is appalling.

Next the case of mixed marriages is considered. Most likely many such cases were in existence in Corinth. "According to the law a man who had married a woman of the Gentiles (and was consequently profane or unclean) defiled himself, and was compelled to send her away; and their children had no right to Jewish privileges; they were rejected as unclean. (See Ezra 10:3). But under grace it was quite the contrary. The converted husband sanctified the wife, and vice versa, and their children were reckoned clean before God; they had part in the ecclesiastical rights of their parent. This is the sense of the word 'holy,' in connection with the question of order and of outward relationship towards God, which was suggested by the obligation under the law to send away wife and children in a similar case. Thus the believer was not to send away his wife, nor to forsake an unbelieving husband. If the unbeliever forsook the believer definitively, the latter (man or woman) was free 'let him depart.' The brother was no longer bound to consider the one who had forsaken him as his wife, nor the sister the man who had forsaken her as her husband. But they were called to peace, and not to seek this separation; for how did the believer know if he should not be the means of the unbeliever's conversion? For we are under grace." (Synopsis of the Bible J.N.D.)

Of course the unbelieving husband by being united to a believing wife was not actually sanctified. This requires faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the unbelieving husband of a Corinthian household, whose wife was a believer, was no longer in the darkness of heathendom; he was surrounded by the light of Christianity and had come through being linked with a believer under its blessed influence. And so the offspring of such a union. Grace sought both the unbelieving husband and the children. But mixed marriages are never to be encouraged. 2 Corinthians 6:14 forbids them.

Verses 17-24 are parenthetical. And every man is to abide in the calling wherein he is called. Each is to abide with God (verse 24) in his own particular calling and thus glorify God in it. A believer is to be above all earthly circumstances. Yielding obedience to God is the one great thing. "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."

The final paragraph of this chapter (verses 25-40) gives the contrasts between those who marry and those who do not. Let us heed these blessed exhortations of such importance to God's people. "I say, brethren the time is short." If that was true then, how much more so is it in the significant days in which our lot is cast. With the ever increasing signs of the ending of the age and the coming of the Lord about us, we know that the time is short. In view of this fact those who have wives are to be as though they had none; they who weep, who pass through suffering, as though they wept not; they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away. We are to be without carefulness and distraction, so that we can serve the Lord. Much here is the advice of the Apostle concerning yielding to nature, which is perfectly lawful, or not yielding to it as to marriage. It is not the commandment of the Lord. Nevertheless we must remember that if he gives his apostolic advice, it is inspired advice, the advice of the Holy Spirit.

5. Concerning Meats Offered to Idols: Christian Liberty Governed by Love

CHAPTER 8

1. Concerning things sacrificed to idols and knowledge. (8:1-6).

2. True knowledge and liberty governed by love. (8:7-13).

Another question is raised concerning things offered to idols. Should Christians eat what had been offered in sacrifice to idols? These idol-offered meats were generally sold in the meat market. Would a believer be defiled by using such meats? They all had knowledge concerning these matters. But mere knowledge without love only puffeth up. Love is better than knowledge, for it edifieth, and this love they had to manifest in the matter of eating things sacrificed to idols. As to knowledge, how little man knoweth. How true it is "if any man think he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Pride because of knowledge is a dangerous thing, and much of this we see among Christians. True knowledge of God produces love for Him and such a one is known of God. Then the question is taken up. They had the knowledge that an idol is nothing in the world. There is none other God but one, "the Father, of whom are all things and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him."

But not all had this perfect knowledge. Some had the conception that the idol is a reality, a god, though a false one; they did not grasp the fact that an idol is nothing. They ate of the meat, feeling that it had been an idol sacrifice, and their conscience in these scruples being weak is defiled. They were therefore in bondage and did not enjoy the liberty in Christ. Verse 8 shows that eating meat or not eating meat has no advantage whatever before God. The important thing then is stated. "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to them that are weak." One who is weak in faith (not possessing true knowledge) sees a brother eating meat in the idol's temple and by it he will become emboldened to do violence to his conscience and do the same thing, and in doing it he sins. He acts not in faith, but imitates another and worse things may follow. By his act the brother who has knowledge may be more than a stumbling block. The weak brother may perish, for whom Christ died, through such an example. The disastrous effect is put in the strongest term. Of course the weak brother will not actually perish, but in his conscience he will be guilty. However grace will step in and prevent this threatening danger. No sheep or lamb of His shall perish; for none can pluck them out of His hand. We are our brother's keepers, not their Savior. Well has it been said, "out of our careless hands they fall for safety into His." But sinning against brethren and wounding their weak consciences is sinning against Christ. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (verse 1). The Apostle then states that he will relinquish his knowledge and liberty in case it would offend his brother, "Lest I make my brother offend." Christian liberty is to be governed by love for the brethren.

"The liberty of God's children is absolute, but they are expected to use it as imitators of God. We have to consider not ourselves only, but both our brethren and the world. A saint may be walking without circumspection, and yet with an unruffled conscience. But this is dangerous. Heed must be taken lest, while enjoying, in one sense blamelessly, our liberty, we become unwittingly a stumbling block to others. An ostentatious use of liberty rarely fails to injure the boaster and those who may observe his ways. True grace, because it is free and knows its happiness in fellowship with God, makes no effort to seem free. Rather it will seek to use its liberty in love, considering the weak, and neither despising them, nor tempting them by wrong example to act in anything beyond their faith."--Pridham.

All this is practical truth and much needed in our days of worldliness and laxity in the Christian walk. It is a good rule to ask in all our walk and in the use of our liberty, how will it affect the fellow-members of the body? We refer the reader to Romans 14 where the same truth is treated. (See the annotations there.)

6. Paul's Gracious Example.

CHAPTER 9

1. The Apostle's rights. (9:1-14).
2. He waives his rights for the Gospel's sake. (9:15-23).
3. The race-course and the crown. (9:24-27).

The great principle laid down in the previous chapter to forego one's Christian liberty, the Apostle Paul enforced by his own example. He was an Apostle and had seen the Lord Jesus, from whom he had received his apostleship (Gal. 1:1). From the second verse we learn that some had not recognized him as an Apostle; these must have been false teachers. But the Corinthians knew he was an Apostle. Through his testimony they had been converted so that he could say "for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." As an Apostle he had certain rights, but he did not make use of them. All his rights and his privileges had been given up by him. The law also affirmed his claim, for it forbade the muzzling of the oxen that treadeth the corn. Those that sow spiritual things are perfectly entitled to reap carnal (material) things. Other teachers used this God-given right and accepted their material things; and he had a greater claim for this upon the Corinthians, for he taught them first. "Nevertheless we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ." The Lord certainly had ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. All this he had not used; he had not made use of what was his right. Nor did he write these words that his claims might be satisfied. He did not want his glorying made void. What was his glory? Not the preaching of the Gospel in itself. Necessity was laid upon him and "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!" "For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward; but if not of mine own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship." (The translation of verse 17 in the Authorized Version is faulty.)

What is his reward? In what does he glory? His answer is "that when I preach the gospel, I make the gospel without charge, so as not to use, as belonging to me, my right in the gospel." In this way the gospel was not hindered; it was made more effective. For being free from all, free from the control of any person, he had made himself the servant of all, that he might win as many as he could. This was his reward, to preach the gospel gratuitously. Governed by love he had become a servant of all. His rights were given up, but he did not insist upon his Christian freedom, but gave up his liberty in order "that I might by all means save some." He did not seek his own things but the things of Christ. The most blessed self-sacrifice on behalf of Christ and the Gospel of Christ marked his service. How few such servants, who give up, self-denying, self-sacrificing, waiving their rights for the Gospel sake, are found today in Christendom. But how many are seeking their own!

The concluding paragraph is fully in line with these statements of the Apostle. He uses as an illustration the Greek stadium, the race-course, well known to the Corinthians on account of the games on the isthmus of Corinth. In order to run successfully and obtain the prize, self-denial was necessary. There was a prize for him who won. Spiritually, not one, but all may obtain the prize, if all run well. And in the race every man that striveth for the mastery, to obtain the victory, is temperate in all things. They do it to obtain a fading crown, a wreath; but we have the promise of a crown that fadeth not away, an everlasting crown.

And if those who strive for earthly honor deny themselves, how much more should we practice self-denial in view of the crown of glory! "I therefore so run not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." What did the Apostle mean by the latter statement? The word "castaway" is found also in the following passages: Rom. 1:28; 2 Cor. 13:5, 6, 7; 2 Tim. 3:8; and Titus 1:16. In these passages it is translated by "reprobate." In Heb. 6:8 it is translated "rejected." Did he mean that he feared to be lost himself? Or did he only fear disapproval as a workman, whose service is rejected and to be counted unworthy of a crown? The statement does not clash with the teaching of the eternal security of the believer. The Apostle personally does not fear for himself, as no true believer needs to fear, but he applies an important

principle to himself. Salvation and a holy walk are inseparably connected. Preaching alone will not do, but the truth must be lived.

"There would be difficulty indeed, if the apostle spoke of having been born again and afterwards becoming a castaway: in this case life would not be eternal. But he says nothing of the sort. He only shows the solemn danger and certain ruin of preaching without a practice according to it. This the Corinthians needed to hear. Preaching or teaching truth to men without reality, self-judgment and self-denial before God, is ruinous. It is to deceive ourselves, not Him who is not mocked. Nor do any Christians more deeply need to watch and pray than those who are much occupied with handling the word of God or guiding others in the ways of the Lord. How easy for such to forget that doing the truth is the common responsibility of all, and that speaking it to others ever so earnestly is no substitute for their own obeying it as in the sight of God!" (William Kelly)

It is a warning against an empty profession of Christianity without the manifestation of the power. Where there is true salvation and eternal life, it is proved by a godly walk. The Apostle in these personal statements shows that all the blessed knowledge he had and with it the most positive assurance of eternal glory, did not make him careless, but prompted him to still greater earnestness and continued self-denial. He knew nothing in his life of the self-indulgence which characterized so many in the Corinthian assembly; he kept his body under. But he also knew, as every Christian should know, that the grace which had saved him, which taught him to live soberly, righteously and godly, would also keep him and enable him to persevere through all hindrances.

7. Warnings and Exhortations

CHAPTER 10

1. Warnings from Israel's past history. (10:4-7).

2. Exhortations. (10:15-33).

The same subject is continued with this chapter. The concluding paragraph of the previous chapter is illustrated from Israel's history, as the professing people of God. What happened unto them has a typical meaning for us. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types), and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come." He speaks of "our fathers (Israel's fathers) were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

God had delivered them out of Egypt; the cloud covered them and the sea divided, for their salvation and for the judgment upon the Egyptian hosts. The Lord had made them free to serve Him and it is written "they believed the Lord and His servant Moses." In this sense they were baptized, or set apart, unto Moses as his disciples. And the person who accepts and professes Christianity is set apart to Christ. All who were under the covering and protecting cloud and who had passed through the sea, ate the same spiritual food, and drank the same spiritual drink, of the rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ. The Lord in infinite love provided for them by giving them food and water, which both are typical of Christ. All ate and drank of the miraculous supply. But what became of the great mass of this people? "But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." They lusted after evil things; some became idolators; some fornicators; some tempted the Lord by trying His patience and murmuring. Judgment followed. In one day 23,000 fell; others were destroyed by serpents and perished by the destroyer. (See Numb. 25:9; when 24,000 are mentioned. See for an explanation of this alleged discrepancy annotations on Numb. 25.) And all this was written for the admonition and warning of the Corinthians. It shows how those who enjoy divine privileges and lay claim to the title of being God's people, but do not live in separation, do not please God. They that are in the flesh cannot please God, though they may profess Christianity and partake of divine things. Many of the Corinthians were in this dangerous condition. And the admonition and warning is for us as well.

"The warning is for us all. We have no right to say, 'Well, but we are true Christians, and therefore we need not trouble about these things.' These are things which as principles are of the greatest importance for us to realize. There are evil things for which we may lust as they lusted. If God prevents the extreme result for us, that is His mercy, but the effect of our disregarding the warnings may be that our lives may be alas, how greatly spoiled and disfigured and made quite other

than He would have them, by our laxity!"--Numerical Bible

Two important statements follow. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This is our responsibility. But how can a believer stand in this world, so dangerous and full of evil? Only by faith can we stand, and faith is confidence in God. As we have no self-confidence, but trust in Him alone and walk in fellowship with Him we shall stand and be upheld. Then there is the blessed comforting statement: "God is faithful." He does not allow that we are tempted above that we are able, but he provides a way to escape. "Wherefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." It meant for the Corinthians the idolatry of heathendom. But there is also a more subtle idolatry. That believer is kept from all idolatry who is wholly devoted to the Lord and who gives to Him constantly the preeminence. Devotedness to God keeps from idols.

The second half of this chapter contains exhortations about idolatry and the believer's walk in the midst of the corruption which is in the world. The Lord's supper is significantly introduced at this point. As we find in the next chapter, it is the memorial feast of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. Blessed and precious is this feast of communion. And in eating of it there is identification with the body of Christ, for "we are all partakers of that one bread." In the Lord's supper, many of the essential truths of Christianity are revealed and enjoyed by faith, in the power of the Spirit, as an act of true worship. If the believer then realizes that he is a partaker of Christ and tastes afresh of His love and gazes in hope towards the coming glory, he will have nothing to do with idols, nor have any fellowship with darkness. As he has written before, the idol is nothing, meaning the supposed gods of the heathen. However, idolatry was a horrible reality, by which the souls and bodies of men were corrupted. The heathen sacrificed in idol-worship to demons and not to God. And how can he who drinks the cup of the Lord, the Lord of all, drink also the cup of demons? Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons. In doing this they would provoke the Lord to jealousy. Every wicked doctrine and false worship is backed by demons and participation in it means identification. This is especially true of the anti-Christian movements of our times, such as Christian Science, Theosophy and others. (1 Tim. 4:1.) The instructions call for a cautious and separated walk, as it becometh those who are the Lord's. God is to be before the heart of the believer in all things. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

II. THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST: CHAPTERS 11-14

1. Headship, and the Position of Woman. The Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER 11.

1. The Headship of Christ and of the Man; Position of Woman. 1-16.

2. The Lord's Supper. 17-31.

The opening verse belongs to the preceding chapter. And now after the church in relation to the world had been treated by the Apostle in the first part of the epistle, he takes up next the affairs of the church itself. Here, too, much had to be corrected into which the Corinthian assembly had drifted. After the brief and excellent word of praise by which he expressed his confidence in them (verse 2), he calls their attention to an important truth, which in our times is not only overlooked, but often belittled and altogether set aside. It concerns the headship of Christ, of the man, and the position of woman. It is evident that Corinthian women had assumed in the church a position which was not according to God's order in creation. They had not yet learned it. God's order in creation has to be manifested in the church. This order is unaltered by redemption, though in Christ there is neither male nor female, yet has God assigned to man and to woman their respective places which must be maintained. This divine order the Apostle states. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." These are weighty and blessed statements. Christ is the Creator, the Lord of all, but He also became man and is the "First born of all Creation" (Col. 1:15-16). He is therefore in possession of the headship in creation, and head of man as the Man, as He is also the head of the Church. God has given Him the preeminence in all things. And the head of the woman is the man; this is the place which God has given to woman on earth. In creation the head of the woman is man. Yet what would man be without the woman!--she is necessary to him.

"The woman is the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man." To these statements about the headship of Christ, the headship of

man, he being head of the woman, the Apostle adds "and the head of Christ is God." Christ is the eternal Son of God, coequal in Godhead in every way. He is God. But the Only-Begotten humbled Himself; He took on the creature's form and "was made of a woman." And as Man He has taken the place under God, yielding perfect obedience in all things. In all His redemption work He is under God, not only on earth, but now in glory, as the glorified Man at the right hand of God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.

The purpose of the declaration of this order of the ways of God in creation was to set them right on a matter which in our days is often sneered at. Man praying or prophesying is not to cover his head. Woman praying and prophesying is to have a covering on her head. The man who covereth his head in praying dishonoreth his head. Woman uncovered dishonoreth her head. A covering on the head is the outward sign of being in the place of subjection. An uncovered head signifies the opposite. The order which God has instituted as to the place of man and woman, His people are bound to respect. It may appear a little thing, yet if disobeyed, as it was in Corinth (where women seemed to be puffed up and refused to follow this order), it becomes a stepping stone towards more serious evil. Woman is to testify to her place of subjection by covering her head in praying and testifying. Man similarly engaged does not cover his head, for the authority is vested in man "for as much as he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man." How all this is denied and woman aims to take leadership and rulership in place of man, we need not to enlarge upon.

If woman persists in leaving the place (in subjection) where her glory shines, if she will persist in pushing out into the glare of public life and thrust herself into the struggle and grinding competition that wears out men's lives and tenderer instincts, let her not be astonished if she lose her distinctive grace--the delicate sheen that cannot bear the world's rough, unhallowed ways (Prof. Moorehead).

Another reason is given why praying women should wear outwardly a sign of subjection--because of the angels. Angels are watchers and attendants of the heirs of salvation. As the church is known to them and by it they know the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10), so are they observers of Christian worship and the order and behavior of God's people in His house. And angels themselves are in subjection and yield perfect obedience.

Then the church itself is brought into view. The first thing is not the fact that Christians are the members of Christ, who constituted the body of Christ, the gifts of the body and the exercise of these gifts. The Lord's supper, that blessed memorial of His love in His sacrificial death, the love which passeth knowledge, is the first thing mentioned. "Do this in remembrance of Me" was His request in the night in which He was betrayed. When the Holy Spirit came and the company gathered in fellowship we read at once of "the breaking of bread," to remember Him (Acts 2:46). The first thing in the assembly must be to remember Christ, His death, His presence in glory, His coming again. But before the Apostle tells them what he had received of the Lord, he had to reprove them for their disorder and their divisions. In these sects and parties they denied the very truth of the church as the one body, the body of Christ. They had a custom of eating a meal in connection with the Lord's supper. And at this meal some drank to excess, while it seems this custom of a preliminary meal led to a complete neglect or unworthy observance of the supper itself. Then he writes of what he had received of the Lord. How simple it all is! "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The Lord's supper is to remember Him, to show the Lord's death till He come. And all else that man has made of it is pure invention, if not wicked blasphemy, like the idolatrous mass of Romanism. And how often shall this feast, which delights His heart, where God's children worship and adore, be kept? In Apostolic days it was evidently kept every Lord's day (Acts 20:7).

And all God's children, whom the Lord has received, have a right to the Lord's table and gather thus around His blessed Person. The only things which bar from the Lord's table, are evil doctrines and an evil walk. And the Lord's supper may be eaten unworthily. He, who comes to the Lord's table without self-judgment, eats and drinks of it unworthily. We eat and drink unworthily when we partake without discerning the Lord's body and blood represented by the bread and the wine, for we do not then show to God the death of Christ. Let a man examine (judge) himself before eating or else he eats for his own judgment. This is God's way of producing and maintaining holiness in the church. And the Corinthians had experienced that the Lord dealt with a number of them in judgment. Upon many the Lord had laid His hand, many were weak and stricken with disease, while others had fallen asleep. It was mercy, "but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

"The world is condemned. Sin in the Christian is judged; it escapes neither the eye nor the judgment of God. He never

permits it; He cleanses the believer from it by chastening him, although He does not condemn, because Christ has borne his sins, and been made sin for him. The death of Christ forms then the center of communion in the assembly, and the touchstone of conscience, and that, with respect to the assembly, in the Lord's supper." (Synopsis of the Bible).

2. The Body and the Members of the Body

CHAPTER 12

1. Concerning spiritual manifestations and diversities of gifts. 1-11.

2. The Body and its members. 12-31.

In this interesting, important chapter, spiritual manifestations are first mentioned. The church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the church. And first the distinctive mark of the Spirit is stated. As heathen they had been under the control of evil spirits, who had deluded them with idolatrous worship. And these evil spirits were still active, creeping in among Christians, pretending to be the Spirit of God and counterfeiting His manifestations. It was so then and it is so now. Seducing spirits and doctrines of demons are in fullest evidence in the professing church. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light; he imitates and produces certain manifestations, as he must have done among the Corinthians; but Satan never owns Jesus as Lord. The work of the Holy Spirit is to exalt the Lord Jesus. The Spirit does not even speak of Himself, but always glorifies Christ, giving Him the right place. The evil spirits do the opposite; they degrade Him and attempt to rob Him of His glory. This they do through evil doctrines. It amounts to the same as saying "anathema" (curse) "Jesus" as Jews and Gentiles did in rejecting Jesus as Lord. No man speaking by the Spirit of God would say that. And all who own Him as Lord do so by the bidding and the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

"If the highest honor is not freely and sincerely given to the name of Jesus, its only other place is utter degradation. Between 'anathema' and 'Lord' there is no other place which it can justly occupy. The wide space which seems morally to intervene between a living and adoring faith and a deliberate and positive denial of that name, is ignored by the Spirit, in His estimate of human character, as a nullity and a deception. With Him men are either believers or unbelievers, confessors or deniers of the Lord. Now, by the Apostle's testimony, to confess Him truly is impossible but by the Holy Ghost."--Pridham.

The Holy Spirit, the divine Person, is on earth and manifests His power in the body of Christ, the church. The Lord Jesus having accomplished redemption, believers on His name are ransomed and cleansed by His blood, and united to Him, as His body, and the Holy Spirit dwells in each member of this body. It is through the Spirit that communion with the Head is realized and maintained. In His gifts the presence of the Spirit of God is therefore manifested in the members of the body. This is now more fully treated in this chapter. In verses 4-6 we hear of the Spirit, the Lord, and God; the same Spirit--the same Lord, and the same God. Yet there is not a division into three classes of gifts, but the same thing is seen in three relations. The diversities of gifts are by the same Spirit; through Him they are bestowed. These gifts are in relation to the Lord; they are to be used in ministries, that is, in service for the Lord, under whom and for whose glory these gifts are to be used. And the whole operations are of God, who worketh all in all. All this is of course confined to the members of the body of Christ.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man (a true believer) for profit." The gift bestowed upon one member is for the whole body, all are to profit by it. The possession of a gift makes the believer a debtor to the other members of Christ. Nine gifts by the same Spirit are mentioned. They are the following: The Word of Wisdom; the Word of Knowledge; Faith; the gift of Healing; the Working of Miracles; Prophecy; Discerning of spirits; tongues and interpretations of tongues.

It will be seen that the miraculous sign-gifts hold a secondary place, the last being speaking in tongues and their interpretations. The word of Wisdom stands at the head of these gifts and is followed by the word of Knowledge. They stand for the gifts to understand the deep things of God and to impart them unto others. It means a spiritual apprehension of the truth of God in all its phases and the power to communicate this truth to others. The gift of faith is a special endowment of confidence in God and His promises, which enables the possessor to lay hold on God and accomplish great

things. All believers have faith and live by faith. The gift of healing and the working of miracles, were sign-gifts for the inauguration of the Christian dispensation. There is no intimation that these miraculous gifts were to continue in the church throughout this age.

In Ephesians, the highest revelation concerning the body of Christ, the permanent gifts for the edifying of the body are mentioned, but gifts of healing, working miracles or speaking in tongues are omitted. Nor is there a promise in the Word that those extraordinary gifts are to be restored by the Spirit of God to the church before the Lord comes for His saints. Signs and miracles will take place at the close of this age, but they are the lying things of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2). Anything which claims to be a restoration of miraculous gifts, as it is the case among certain sects, must be looked upon with grave suspicion. Besides prophecy and the discerning of spirits (trying the spirits whether they are of God) the gift of tongues and their interpretation are mentioned. As we find later the Corinthians, in their bad spiritual state, esteemed the gift of tongues the highest; the Spirit of God, however, gives to it an inferior place. They were almost destitute of the exercise of the highest gift of wisdom and knowledge and magnified, what was for outward demonstration, because it exalted themselves.

The exercise of the gift of healing and similar gifts was never discretionary. They were manifested only in their fitting season, and could only work effectually by the immediate will of God. Power is His, and always in His hands. If Trophimus was sick, the wish of Paul could not restore him. Yet the believer can come to the Lord in prayer and claim his power. Our refuge in time of need must be sought, not in God's gifts, but in the faithfulness of the Giver.

Of much importance is verse 13: "For in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." This refers to the formation of the body. The baptism mentioned in this verse is not water-baptism. Water baptism does not save nor can this ordinance put any one as a member into the true church, the one body. The baptism is the baptism of the Spirit. It took place on the day of Pentecost. On that day the Spirit was poured out and while He filled every believer, He also united them into one body. Then the body of Christ was formed once for all by this baptism. Since that day whenever a sinner trusts in Christ he is at once joined to that body and shares in the one Spirit. Many Christians speak of repeated baptisms by the Spirit and refer to certain experiences as being new baptisms. In the light of this verse all this is incorrect. Scripture knows only one baptism. And all believers drink of one Spirit; they are all made partakers of one and the same Spirit.

And this body which was called into existence by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is not one member, but many. There are many members, yet but one body. And the different members in that body are dependent the one on the other, and have need of each other, just as it is in the human body. And God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him. Each member has his own place with a gift, a function, which is suitable for it. Nothing in this body is left to man himself. It is His Church and God orders the place of each and of all in that body. Therefore, self-choosing is excluded. How all this is marred, if not wholly forgotten, in the professing church, is only too evident. The conditions today, the divisions in the body, the false doctrines and unscriptural practices throughout Christendom, are plainly the result of having set aside the truth concerning the one body.

And those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. "And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our comely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked." As it is in the human body, so also is it in the body of Christ. There was to be no self-exaltation, as it undoubtedly was among the Corinthians on account of the gifts which they had so abundantly, especially the sign-gifts. They looked down upon other members who were less prominent. And this was responsible for the threatening division in the body. The blessed injunction is that the members should have the same care one for another, then there would be no schism in the body.

If one member suffers, all suffer, because they are in one body indwelt and united by the same Spirit; and if one member be honored, all rejoice with it. And this body is the body of Christ; He is the head of the body and wants to manifest Himself through His body. This is the church collectively, but the same are the members severally. The order of how God has bestowed gifts follows (verse 28). Again the gift of tongues, in which the Corinthians abounded, on account of which grave disorders and disturbances had come in, is put last.

"And the Corinthians then, as others of late, had to hear, whether they heeded or not, that those striking displays of power in which they found their childish surprise and delight, like the world without, were not the highest, that there were gifts relatively first and second and third, the last named being the very one they had been abusing to no small disorder and hindrance of edification in the assembly."

Verses 29-30 show another important principle. All cannot be apostles, prophets, leaders, workers of miracles, etc. God does not bestow all these different gifts upon one individual. They are distributed as it pleases Him, to each member as He sees fit. Ministry in the body of Christ is the exercise of a gift. The Corinthians in their puffed up condition had a selfish ambition to have all these gifts concentrated in every member.

"The Corinthians' folly was not greater in wishing all the gifts to be in each and all the saints, than the modern theory of arrogating all, as far as public ministration goes, to a single official. The one was ignorant vanity before the truth was fully revealed in a written form; the other is more guilty presumption in presence of the acknowledged word of God, which condemns every departure from His principles, and the great fact of the one body with its many members, wherein the Holy Spirit works to glorify the Lord Jesus" (W. Kelly).

He tells them to covet earnestly the best gifts and he would show unto them a more excellent way. This more excellent way is the way of love of which we hear in the next chapter.

3. The Need and Superiority of Love.

CHAPTER 13

1. The Preeminence of Love. 1-3.

2. Love described in its characteristics. 4-7.

3. Love never faileth; its Permanence. 8-13.

This chapter is a most blessed exaltation of love. The word "charity" is an unfortunate mistranslation. The Greek word for love used in the New Testament was never used by the Greek heathen classical writers. In its meaning it was unknown among the Gentiles. God is love. As His people, members of His body, we know the love of God manifested in the gift of God's well beloved Son. And this love is shed abroad in the hearts of the children of God. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another ... if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:7, 11-12.). The divine nature bestowed by the Spirit of God is a holy nature and a nature which possesseth in it the love of God. Love is therefore the divine nature in its manifestation. And this wonderful love, the divine love, is to be manifested in the body of Christ. It is the true motive for all ministry. The Corinthians in their worldly, self-seeking, ambitious spirit, in their use of the gifts, had not followed this more excellent way. The divisions among them and their self-exaltation and self-confidence were the result of not being governed by love. If love had been supreme in the Corinthian church, neither sectarianism, nor careless walk, nor indifference to sin of others and toleration of evil, nor going before a heathen judge, nor high-minded pretensions, nor the desecration of the Lord's supper, nor a false practice of Christian liberty, could have prospered. Love surpasses everything. It is a far better thing than any gift. Very significantly the Apostle begins with the gift, as already pointed out, of the smallest value. Speaking with the tongues of men and of angels without love is like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

(For a number of years movements have started which claim to be a new Pentecost. The gift of tongues is the leading feature. They go by different names--Apostolic Faith--Pentecostal Faith--Latter-Day Rain, etc. But is it the work of the Holy Spirit? The divisions which exist in these movements, the unscriptural teachings which are held by some of them and the lack of love, besides other characteristics are not the marks of the energy and power of God's Spirit.)

Prophecy, the understanding of all mysteries, all knowledge, all wonder-working faith and even the giving up of all things and martyrdom, are valueless without love. God looks for love; it is of God, and loving is conformity to God. It is a

solemn warning that true gifts may be possessed without a manifestation of love.

Many pages could be filled with a closer examination of the different characteristics of divine love as given by the Apostle. If we study the blessed life the Son of God lived down here we shall find how He manifested this love in His life among the children of men. The fifteen brief, but deep, descriptions of love should be the standing mirror of self-judgment for all God's children. To read these pithy sentences in His presence at the close of each day and apply them as a test, is a wholesome exercise.

The opening descriptions are all of a passive character, and show that love demands the renunciation of self. Long-suffering and kindness head the list. These are the attributes of our loving God and Father, and we are to imitate Him as His children and forbear one another in love. Love does not envy. God does not envy. Envy is of Satan; all self-seeking has its origin in pride, which is the crime of the devil (1 Timothy 3:6). Love vaunteth not itself. It never seeks the applause of men. Self-display is self-love. True love is not puffed up. Love doth not behave itself unseemly. Its ornaments are meekness, modesty and unobtrusiveness. It seeketh not its own; it is self-neglect and is expressed in devotion to others. Nor is it easily provoked, for self-consciousness and self-seeking being absent, sensitiveness becomes impossible. Love thinketh no evil. The better translation is, "does not impute evil." It rather hides than exposes. Furthermore, love "rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth with the truth." The last four characteristics show its positive energy. It beareth all things--it puts up with anything but that which is wrong and sinful; believeth all things; it does not suspect, therefore it hopeth all things and also endureth all things. Finally the permanence of love is stated. Prophecies, tongues and knowledge will fail, cease and pass away. Love never. It is abiding eternal, the greatest of all.

4. Prophecy and Speaking with a Tongue.

CHAPTER 14

1. Prophecy the better gift. 1-13.
2. Intelligibility demanded. 14-25.
3. Practical instructions for the public use of these gifts. 26-40.

It is evident from the contents of this chapter that the Corinthians had unduly magnified the gift of speaking in a strange tongue. It had a spectacular aspect which they enjoyed. He therefore shows them that the gift of prophecy is more to be coveted than speaking in an unknown tongue. The speaking in an unknown tongue is intelligible to God, but he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort. While the Apostle does not deny the value of speaking with tongues, he would rather that they prophesied "for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues." Speaking with tongues edifies the speaker alone but prophecy edifies the church. What is the profit in speaking with an unknown tongue to believers unless the tongue has a real meaning. Musical instruments, which give forth sound, like a pipe or an harp, have no meaning whatever unless there be distinction in the tunes. Thus he shows the uselessness of the gift of tongues for edification unless the tongue is intelligible to all. "Even so ye, for as much as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret."

What the speaking in tongues really was we do not know positively. It was probably an ecstatic form of speech, or some foreign language. As a distinctive gift it has passed away, notwithstanding the fact that from time to time the restoration of this sign-gift has been claimed. (During the middle ages; at the time of the Wesley's; during the days of Edward Irving, when it was proven to emanate from evil spirits; and in our own days, thousands claim to possess it.) But what is prophesying? , In the Old Testament prophecy, it was foretelling coming events. In the New Testament, it has a different meaning. It is not foretelling, but forthtelling. it is one who is speaking as from God and for God; the one who possesses this gift must therefore be in communication with God through the Spirit so as to be able to communicate to others His mind and His will. The exercise of this gift necessitates a close walk with God. This gift the Apostle desired the Corinthians to have. Instead the Corinthians had the inferior gift, which they valued on account of the display and perhaps the mysteriousness of it.

(The people in our own times who profess to have received this sign-gift claim that it is an evidence of having received the "baptism" of the Spirit, which, as we have already pointed out, is in itself unscriptural. They are on ground on which they are open to the subtle influences of Satan's power.)

The Apostle also states that he spoke with tongues more than they did. "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." From all these regulations and statements we learn that the use of this gift was rather tolerated than commended (see verse 39) to the churches because it was a hindrance rather than a help to the needed thing, which is edification in love. Furthermore, tongues were for a sign to the unbelievers. Prophesying is for the believers. "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place and all speak with tongues and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?"

It is a fact that in the meetings of the modern advocates of the gift of tongues often the greatest disorder prevails. Men and women falling down in convulsions, hysterical laughter, unpleasant shrieks and other demonstrations have not been uncommon, so that an unbeliever would be perfectly right to pass the verdict "they are mad." It is different With prophesying. "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or are unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, declaring that God is truly among you."

The meetings of the Saints of God coming together in His Name and gathered to that name must be characterized by quietness and order. "For God is not the author of confusion (tumult, unquietness), but of peace, as in all churches of the Saints." All things must be done decently and in order (verse 40). Another important instruction is given in verses 34-35. "let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is shame for women to speak in the church." Some have said that this demand of the Apostle was given solely to the Corinthians, because women were forward in the church and that it does not apply to our days. This is a serious mistake. Nor are these words merely the words of the Apostle Paul, as some have claimed. It is God's Word and the command is the command of the Holy Spirit. The public ministry of women is not permitted by the Spirit of God. The Word of God discountenances a prominent public ministry of women as inconsistent with the original law of creation, and with the modesty and meekness which are the woman's chief adorning in the sight of God. What mischief, confusion and worse things have resulted from disobeying this divine command. Woman leaving the sphere assigned to her by the Creator and the Redeemer is stepping on dangerous ground. In connection with the statement, "A woman suffer not to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence," the Apostle calls attention to the fact "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression" (1 Timothy 2:12-13). The originators and leaders of the most damnable heresies of the latter times such as Christian Science, Theosophy and Spiritism are women. But woman has a ministry and can exercise her gifts as a member of the body of Christ.

(Again we call attention to the modern gift of tongues, the Pentecostal movements. Women are prominent among them. The divine command "let your women keep silence in the churches" is disregarded by them, while they claim obedience to the Word and a return to apostolic faith and practice.)

"The woman's sphere of liberty, and, one may say, sovereignty, is at home; that is to say, it is private and not public. It must not be thought that this does not give ample scope for the exercise of gifts of whatever kind. If there were only more of the cultivation on the woman's part of that which belongs really to her sphere, how fruitful would be the exercise of the gift with which God has endowed her and how many places would be open to her which men, by reason of their being men, could not in the same way fill! This in relation to children, it is at once evident; with the younger children, the woman is still the best and the nature-ordained teacher. God has placed the babe in its mother's arms and not its father's; and this does not mean that the woman's sphere is only in her own family. There are countless families to which her sex will introduce her, and where she may find herself fully at home and abundant profit and recompense of her work. So, through the wives, women have access in this way to an indefinite sphere of occupation for varied blessing. The wife is the heart-center of the household, and the ability thus to reach the wife in a way that women certainly can do far beyond others is an immense privilege and responsibility entrusted to her. Would that there were more realization of this!" (Numerical Bible.)

III. RESURRECTION AND THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH AND CONCLUSION:

CHAPTERS 15-16

1. Resurrection and the Hope of the Church.

CHAPTER 15

1. The Gospel and the Resurrection of Christ. 1-11.

2. If Christ were not raised--then what? 12-19.

3. Christ the Firstfruits and what follows. 20-28.

4. Further practical arguments about Resurrection. 29-34.

5. Concerning the Resurrection of the Body. 35-49.

6. The Coming of the Lord and the Victory. 50-58.

The third section lifts us higher and brings us to the summit of this Epistle. We have seen the church in relation to the world, the church as the body of Christ and now we see the consummation, the destiny of the church in resurrection glory. From this chapter we learn that some members of the Corinthian church said "there is no resurrection of the dead" (verse 12). The denial of this fundamental doctrine of the faith brought forth this blessed portion of the Epistle concerning resurrection and the coming of the Lord.

The first thing mentioned in opening up this subject is the gospel which Paul had preached to the Corinthians, which they had received and wherein they stood. This is the order: The preaching of the Gospel, the good news, its reception by faith, followed by the standing in salvation and the enjoyment of it. By this Gospel is salvation as it is so fully revealed in the Epistle to the Romans. The Apostle Paul had delivered unto them, which he himself had received from the Lord (Gal. 1:11-19). The three great facts according to the Scriptures (the Old Testament Scriptures) are: (1) Christ died for our sins. The death of Christ, the cross and the mighty work accomplished there, is the great foundation. The entire Old Testament revealed in many ways this fundamental fact without which there would be and could be no redemption. (2.) He was buried. He expired as to the body on the cross. The death of Christ was real and not a deception. And His burial also has a meaning in the Gospel (Romans 6:4). And the third great fact of the gospel, "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." This is the great truth of this chapter, a truth, if denied, must result in the complete collapse of the gospel. And His resurrection had been foretold by Himself as well as by the Scriptures. (See Genesis 22:4 and Hebrews 11:17-19; Psalm 16). This great truth, the enemy has always hated. The lying inventions of the Jews are well known to every reader of the Gospel (Matt. 28:11-15). In Corinth this truth was being denied, and in our own days those who deny the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus are ever on the increase in the professing church. They occupy leading pulpits and are prominent in institutions of learning.

The Apostle brings forth a number of witnesses, but he does not mention the women who play such an important part in the resurrection account of the Gospel. He gives only a number of witnesses, all men, who furnish an unanswerable evidence. Unbelievers have often attempted to trace the belief in the resurrection of our Lord to the women. Cephas is mentioned first. "But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter," had been the angelic instruction on the resurrection morning. And Peter who had so shamefully denied Him had seen the risen One. "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon" (Luke 24:34). On the day of Pentecost he became the wonderful witness of the risen Christ. That He appeared first to Simon Peter shows His infinite grace. Then He was seen of the twelve. Luke 24:36-48 speaks of the eleven; the twelfth had gone to his awful place. But the passage in Luke also informs us that others were with them when the Lord appeared. The eleven were gathered together, and those that were with them. (Luke 24:33). Probably Matthias, the one added to the Apostolate (Acts 1:26), was in that company. "After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep." This was probably in Galilee. And

how could such a large number of men be deceived together, or concoct a falsehood? It is an impossibility. Sooner or later, if they had all agreed to deceive the world, the fraud would have been discovered. He was also seen by James and by all the Apostles. Last of all he was seen by the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, where as the blind persecutor of the church, the chief of sinners, He beheld Him in the glory light. He was like one born out of due season. He was an untimely birth. He was in his experience a type of the nation to which he belonged. As he saw Christ in glory so will the remnant of Israel behold Him at the time of His second coming. He was therefore a firstfruit of the nation.

(The correct meaning of the Greek word "ektroma" seems to point to a child born from a dead mother, by what is called the Caesarian operation. The dead Jewish system gave birth to the chosen vessel who was to become what Israel should have been, and yet will be, when the mystery of the present dispensation is complete.--Romans 11:25-27).

The Apostle Paul is one of the greatest witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The argument which follows (verses 12-19) is so clear and powerful that no comment is needed. If Christ is not risen from the dead, if it were true what some said in Corinth "there is no resurrection of the dead"--then what? The answer is fearful, for it strips the Christian of everything. "Your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins; your loved ones who died in Christ are perished, gone forever; we are of all men most miserable." And into this terrible pit the men who deny this fundamental doctrine are leading those who accept this damnable heresy (2 Peter 2:1).

But triumphant is the uncontrovertible fact, "Christ is risen from among the dead"; and more than that, "He is become the firstfruit of them that slept." As He was raised, not as we have it in the authorized version "from the dead," but "from among the dead," so will there be in the future an "out-resurrection from among the dead," which is the first resurrection of all those who are Christ's. A general resurrection is no more taught in the Bible than a general judgment. By man came death (the first Adam) by man also is the resurrection of the dead (by the last Adam, Christ). Verse 22 does not teach a universal salvation. Those who will be made alive are those who are "in Christ." But only such are in Christ, who have believed on Him and were born again.

Verses 20-28, unfold the successive stages in the accomplishment of God's purposes. (1) The Resurrection of Christ, then after the purpose of the present age is accomplished. (2) His second coming (verse 23). (3) The Resurrection of those who belong to Him. (4) The overthrow of all His enemies and the establishment of His kingly and glorious rule over the earth. (5) His delivering up the Kingdom to God that God may be all in all.

Verses 29-34 continues the reasoning on the fatal results if there were no resurrection. Verse 29 connects with verse 19 and what is between, verses 20-28, form a parenthesis. What then is the value of Christian suffering, self-denial, trial and persecution if there were no resurrection? This connection with the previous argument helps us to understand the much disputed statement "else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" It is said that some thirty different interpretations of this statement are in existence, most of them so fanciful and strained that they merit no further mention. Some say it meant those who were about to be baptized and others believe it has a meaning concerning those who had relatives who had died unbaptized. There is no need of inventing these theories. If we look at it in the most simple way the difficulty disappears. They had been baptized and taken the place as being dead with Christ. In this sense they had been baptized for the dead. But if the dead rise not, then this ordinance, which is so closely connected in a symbolical way with death and resurrection, has no meaning and value at all.

"Baptized, then, for the dead is to become a Christian with the view fixed on those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and particularly as being slain for Him, taking one's portion with the dead, yea, with the dead Christ; it is the very meaning of baptism (Romans 6). How senseless if they do not rise! As in 1 Thessalonians 4, the subject, while speaking of all Christians, is looked at in the same way. The word translated 'for' is frequently used in these epistles for 'in view of,' 'with reference to.'" (Synopsis of the Bible)

Then those who had been affected by these doubts about resurrection asked questions concerning the resurrection of the body and the process of resurrection. How are the dead raised? And with what body do they come? But he brands as folly their doubting reasonings. There are of course, difficulties for reason but none for faith. If God's omnipotent power is admitted and believed every difficulty vanishes. Their difficulties and objections were not of faith. Nature and God's works give abundant evidence of the resurrection of the body. There will be in resurrection a continuity of identity.

"They sowed but bare grain, whether wheat or any other, but they knew quite well that that grain was not to continue grain, but that it would soon be clothed with a body very different from that which it had when sown in the earth. God gave it the body that He had willed for it, and to every seed its own kind of body. Thus, the individuality of what was sown was maintained all through, in spite of disorganization. God in it, as in innumerable cases in nature, has stamped things everywhere with His own stamp of resurrection. Things are in His hand. You may call the process natural because you are so familiar with it, because it is so constantly taking place under your eyes. All the same, God is working in it and through it.

"And what advantage would it have, if there were no resurrection, by dying daily, denying self, passing through all kinds of trials, suffering persecution and fighting, as Paul had done at Ephesus, with wild beasts? If there were no resurrection, then man is like the beast: let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. That which looks so merely lifeless has, nevertheless, in itself the determination of its future life. No seed produces anything else, but its own kind, and yet how different is that which springs out of it from the seed out of which it springs!" (Numerical Bible)

True from all this we learn that the resurrection of the same body is promised and while its identity is preserved it will be a different body at the same time. So then is the resurrection of the dead.

(All through this resurrection chapter only the resurrection of believers is in view. Nothing is said about the resurrection of the wicked dead. They too will be raised as to the body to exist forever in the dreadful condition of eternal punishment.)

It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. What kind of a body will it be, this spiritual body? Scripture gives the answer. "Who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21). We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

Now our blessed Lord was not raised from the dead with an ethereal, airy body. His was a real human body of flesh and bones. He ate in the presence of His disciples; He was able to take food, though He needed none. He was capable of passing through closed doors and was in nowise limited by earthly conditions, such as space. And even so will be the spiritual body of the risen believers. Not a spirit phantom, but a spiritual body in its adaptation to the spirit. As we have now a natural body which is suited for an earth-life, so the believer shall have a body suited for a glory-life. We shall be like Him to be with Him in eternal glory and in these wonderful bodies we shall rule and reign with Him.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (verse 50). It simply means that man as he is here below cannot inherit God's kingdom. It does not mean the kingdom which will some day be established on earth in which converted Israel and converted nations will be the subjects. It means the kingdom of God on the other side of death. The kingdom on earth for a thousand years will be an earthly thing; the kingdom mentioned in this verse is the kingdom of God in glory.

"The blood applies to the present life. It is the vehicle of change. It is that which implies the need of continual sustenance and renewal. A body which needs no renewal cannot need blood to renew it, and thus the Lord speaks of Himself as risen from the dead, not as having flesh and blood, but as having flesh and bones. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones," He says, "as ye see Me have." He has poured out His blood and left it with the earthly life that He had lived. He has entered upon a new sphere, retaining all that makes Him truly man, but not the conditions of the old earthly life. The conditions are changed. Flesh and blood are not suited for the kingdom of God in this sense of it. He is not, of course, in the least implying that there is any evil in flesh and blood."

And what a change it will be for God's redeemed people to receive these wonderful bodies of glory and enter into the kingdom of God in glory! And when will it come? Paul writes of a mystery.

(The teachers who say that there is no such thing as a Coming of the Lord for His Saints may well pause at this word "mystery." They teach that this coming here, when the dead shall be raised and living believers shall be changed, is the visible Coming of Christ at the end of the great tribulation. But this visible Coming is the revelation which is found in the entire Old Testament prophetic Word. It was and is not a mystery. But the Coming of the Lord for His Saints, who are to

be caught up in clouds to meet Him in the air, is a new Revelation, unknown in former ages.)

We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall be changed. It will be a sudden thing. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It will be at the last trump. This trumpet has nothing whatever to do with the seventh trumpet in Revelation. Before any trumpet has sounded, before the Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, opens the seals, He comes for His Saints "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The trumpet is a military term. The first trumpet bade the armies to arise and be ready; the last trumpet commanded them to depart, it was the signal to march. When that shout (1 Thess. 4:13-18) comes from the air and He comes for His Saints, the dead (the dead in Christ, only those who believed) will be raised incorruptible. And "we shall be changed." The Apostle did not write "they" shall be changed. He expected not death, but the blessed Hope for himself and the Corinthians was the change in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, which means translation and not death. He speaks of the dead when he writes "for this corruption must put on incorruption." He speaks of living believers in these words: "this mortal must Put on immortality." This gives the true meaning of Romans 8:11. The coming of the Lord is the Hope of the church. And then we have the shout of victory. And what manner of lives we should live and what manner of service should be ours in view of such a destiny, such glory, which in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, may burst upon us! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."

2. Exhortations and Conclusion.

CHAPTER 16

1. Concerning Collections. (16:1-4)

2. Ministry. (16:5-18)

3. Greetings. (16:19-24)

First, in concluding this Epistle, he writes them about collections for the Saints. The same directions, he had given to the assemblies in Galatia. The collection for the Saints was to be taken on the first day of the week in connection with the remembrance of Him who had said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." He did not want to have any collections when he came, His presence might have influenced them in some way and he wanted to avoid this. How different is the collection-system in the professing church of today! No unsaved person should be permitted to give anything for the Lord's work; only the Saints can give acceptably. It is an unscriptural thing to go to the world, which lieth in the wicked one, and ask support and help from the unregenerated. God's blessing cannot rest upon this. (Other unscriptural methods are those which raise funds by entertainments, suppers, etc., and then the appeals which are often made by Evangelists and others, the influences which are used to obtain the largest results! All this is condemned by the simple and brief instruction about collections in this chapter.)

Then he writes of his plans. He was tarrying in Ephesus until Pentecost. A great and effectual door had been opened unto him and there were many adversaries. It is still so. Whenever the Lord opens a door and His Spirit works we may well expect the opposition of the adversary. But may we also remember His gracious promise to those who are in Philadelphian condition of Soul (Rev. 3:7). If we have a little strength, if we keep His Word and do not deny His Name, He will still open doors and no power can shut them. He will keep the door of service open as long as it pleases Him.

Solemn is the final statement after the greetings. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The words "Anathema Maranatha" mean "Accursed--Our Lord cometh." And accursed will be any man who has rejected the Love and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It shows that some in the Corinthian assembly may have been mere professing Christians without ever having tasted the love of Christ. Then the final word "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus."

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelin

Introduction

This second epistle is inseparably connected with the first Paul had written to the Corinthians. Its authorship is undoubted, for no other epistle bears such distinctive marks of the author and brings out all which characterized him as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. From critical sides it is claimed that between the first and second epistles, there must have been another letter of the Apostle, more severe in tone than the first epistle. This letter the critics maintain was lost. This supposition is mostly founded on chapter 2:3-4 and chapter 7:8. The statements made by the apostle in these passages, it is argued, cannot be explained by the message of the first epistle and the situation described is altogether too strong to have been created by the first epistle. But there is no need to invent an intermediate letter to explain the tone and burden of this second epistle. The first epistle contains sufficient material to produce the effects in the Corinthians and also in the mind and heart of the apostle of which he writes in the above passages. 1 Corinthians 4:18-21; 5:1-8; 6:5-8; 11:17-22 and 15:35-36, account fully for the great Apostle's solicitude and emotions.

How the Second Epistle Originated

After the first epistle had been written and delivered to the Corinthians, Paul seemed to have been greatly troubled in his mind about how the church in Corinth would receive and treat his inspired communication. The first epistle had been written with many tears and deep soul-exercise. He knew that it would make them sorry, yet he was in doubt and unrest about it all. Titus had evidently been sent by the Apostle to Corinth to ascertain the truth about this matter and to find out what effect the first epistle had upon the Corinthians. Others think that Timotheus had first returned from Corinth and had brought very painful news, which greatly increased the anxiety of Paul and he sent, therefore, another letter through Titus to the Corinthians (the letter which is claimed was lost). However, this is only a conjecture.

At the time of writing this epistle, Paul had left the province Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8) where he had been in some great peril. In leaving Asia he had come by Troas, where the Lord had opened a door for him to preach the Gospel (2 Corinthians 2:12). In Troas he fully expected to meet Titus and receive the much longed for report from the Corinthian Church. "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother" (2:13). He therefore sailed to Macedonia. It was in Macedonia where Titus met him and told Paul about his visit to Corinth. "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (2 Corinthians 7:5-7). The tidings which Titus brought were in the main good tidings. They had mourned over the wrong which the first letter had pointed out and they had repented; however, it is also clear that not all had been settled. There were still his enemies who attacked him and they became evidently more bitter against him on account of the strong letter he had written to the church. He wrote therefore, this second epistle in which he expresses the comfort which the news of their repentance had brought him, but in which he also very strongly defends his personal character and his apostolic authority.

This establishes beyond controversy the fact that the epistle was written in Macedonia. The exact place can hardly be ascertained. The note at the end of the epistle "written from Philippi" is simply traditional. It is more likely that he spent some time in Thessalonica. The time when this second epistle was written must have been the early autumn of 57, A.D.

The Contents and Characteristics

That in many ways there is a vast difference in the two epistles to the Corinthians cannot escape even a superficial reader. The second epistle is a far more personal one than the first and there is less doctrinal matter mentioned. One of the leading characteristics is the rapid transitions, which emanated not from the moods of the great man of God, but from the deep exercises of his soul. Anxiety, indignation, resentment, trust and love are linked together in rapid succession. A critic begins his remarks on this epistle with the following words "Of all Paul's epistles this is the most obscure. It is a veritable cloudland." But another writer expresses the value of this Epistle in a true way, when he says "What an admirable epistle is the second to the Corinthians! How full of affections! He joys and is sorry; he grieves and he glories: never was there such care of a flock expressed, save by the great Shepherd, who first shed tears over Jerusalem and afterward blood." Dean Alford remarks on this grand document: "In no other epistle are matter and style so various, and so rapidly shifting from one character to another. Consolation and rebuke, gentleness and severity, earnestness and irony, succeed one another at very short intervals and without notice." Still another gives a good summary of the contents of this epistle.

"Personal experience, and this used for the help of others in their trials; the work of the Lord in all its varieties, with the action of the Holy Ghost answering to it; the truth of God in its distinctive shape and highest forms, or the glory of Christ contrasted with the spirit; in former days hidden under the letter; the walk and service which befit such revelations of grace; the affections called into action by all this in the midst of sorrow and suffering, with evil abounding and grace much more abounding; the trials and wants of saints, calling out the loving remembrance of others; the opposition of self-seeking men, employed of the enemy to hinder the blessing of saints and to lower the glory of Christ, to distract the weak and give scope for unscrupulous activity; but on the other hand the energy of the Holy Ghost working not only to vouchsafe heavenly visions, and so give faith its object, but to manifest Christ in weakness and suffering where the power of Christ may rest, are all brought out with remarkable force and fulness."

The Apostle's Self-Defense

While the epistle to the Galatians is the defense of the doctrine of the Gospel against false teachers, the second epistle to the Corinthians is the defense of his own personal character, his apostolic authority, his motives and his ministry. His adversaries, Judaizing teachers and others, who were continuing the sectarian spirit, had charged him with many things, slandering his character and belittling his apostolic authority and efficiency. What they had spoken against him we learn from the epistle itself. They depreciated his person. "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (10:10). "Though I be rude in speech (as they had accused him) yet not in knowledge" (11:6). The reason why he speaks in this epistle so much of his self-sacrifice, his zeal, his sincerity, his manly courage, his untiring service and his many sufferings, is that he had been attacked and belittled in all these things. It is well known that Paul means "little." Saul had been changed to Paul, the little one. Unlike his namesake in the Old Testament, King Saul, whom Samuel had rebuked, with the words "when thou wast little in thine own eyes," the great Apostle was little and remained little in his own estimation, the mark of every true servant of Christ. He called himself "less than the least of all saints" (Ephesians 3:8). Yet in this epistle he is forced to boast in order to vindicate his character and ministry. In chapter 12:11 we read "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." Thirty-one times he speaks of glorying or boasting and that because he was compelled to do so. In this way we learn of some new things which happened in the life of the Apostle Paul which are unrecorded elsewhere. These are: his escape from Damascus in a basket (11:32-33); his great experience in being caught up to the third heaven (12:1-4); his thorn in the flesh (12:7, etc.); his remarkable sufferings and privations (11:23-27). The fact that these experiences were not mentioned by him till he was compelled to do so and to show that, if he wanted to boast in something, he had abundant reasons for doing so, manifests his great humility.

True Ministry

The epistle is a wonderful mine in spiritual and practical truths. The one great truth which may be traced throughout the entire epistle is the ministry in the body of Christ, the church. And the apostle himself in making his self-defense is a pattern of what true ministry in the body of Christ is and what it means. Here are blessed, spiritual lessons and principles which apply to God's true children at all times. All who desire to be devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ in these days, need these practical truths. May it please God to lead us into them and enable us by His grace to walk in His truth.

The Division of Second Corinthians

We divide this epistle into three parts, which is the most satisfactory division.

I. TRUE MINISTRY AS MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLE. Chapters 1-7

1. The Introduction. Chapters 1:1-7
2. Paul's Experience and Explanations. Chapter 1:8-24
3. His Deep Exercise Concerning Them. Chapter 2
4. The Ministry of the New Covenant as Contrasted with the Old. Chapter 3
5. The Character of the True Ministry. Chapter 4
6. Concerning the Future; The Ministry of Reconciliation. Chapter 5
7. Ministry in Connection with Testings and Trials. Chapter 6:1-13
8. The Apostle's Appeals and Rejoicing. Chapter 6:14-7:16

II. THE MINISTRY OF GIVING. Chapters 8-9

1. The Examples and Principles of Giving. Chapter 8
2. Exhortation and Encouragement. Chapter 9

III. THE APOSTLE'S SELF-DEFENSE AND VINDICATION. Chapters 10-13

1. The Defense of His Authority. Chapter 10
2. Answering His Adversaries. His Boasting. Chapter 11
3. Revelations in which He Might Glory. The Marks of His Apostleship. Chapter 12
4. Still Absent, Yet Coming. The Conclusion. Chapter 13

Analysis and Annotations

I. TRUE MINISTRY AS MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLE. Chapters 1-7

1. The Introduction

CHAPTER 1:1-7

1. The Salutation. 1-2
2. The Thanksgiving. 3-7.

After the opening words of salutation, the Apostle blesses God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. The Apostle had many trials and testings, as well as much suffering, and in all these depressing experiences, God had graciously ministered unto him. Therefore he blessed God in this outburst of praise. We

can only bless God as we know Him. Trials, afflictions, sorrows and sufferings make God a greater reality to the believer and display His gracious favor towards His beloved people. The Apostle had made this experience, "Who comforteth (or encourageth) us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." In all his distress and tribulation he had drawn near to God, and God had not failed him, but ministered to his need. The blessing and encouragement he had received from God fitted him to comfort those who are in trouble.

An important principle concerning true ministry in the body of Christ is made known in these words of thanksgiving. God must minister to our hearts first, and, through what we receive, we can minister to others. And so all true ministry is of Him. He knew the sufferings of Christ in an abundant measure, but while the sufferings of Christ abounded toward him, so did his consolation abound through Christ also. All he passed through and suffered as a devoted servant of Christ in an antagonistic world, were the sufferings of Christ. Of these sufferings he speaks more fully elsewhere in this Epistle. And both, the trouble and the comfort, were not exclusively for him, but for all Christians likewise. All was for their benefit and blessing. The Apostle states, that whether afflicted or comforted, it is for their consolation and salvation, and that the same result is wrought in them by their own participation in a like experience. The Lord in His gracious dealing would turn affliction to their blessing as well as the consolation. His heart had been encouraged by what he had heard from Titus about their godly sorrow and therefore he could express his confidence "and our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so are ye also of the consolation."

2. Paul's Experience and Explanations.

CHAPTER 1:8-24

1. His Experience. 8-14

2. His Explanations. 15-24

The Apostle speaks, first of all, of the trouble he had when he was pressed out of measure (or "weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power"), in so much that he despaired of his life. What experience did he mean? The question cannot be positively answered. It may have been the trouble in Ephesus (Acts 19) to which he refers in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts in Ephesus ." Others think that it was some severe attack of sickness or a powerful assault upon his life from some other source. Whatever it was, he had been in such a peril that he almost lost his life.

"But we had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us."

It was all permitted to come upon him for his own good. He learned by it his own utter helplessness; it destroyed in him all self-reliance; he had to cast himself upon God, whose power and faithfulness as a deliverer were blessedly manifested in this experience. It showed him his nothingness and God's power in deliverance. Every true believer will welcome any affliction or tribulation which produces such precious results. In the tenth verse, he groups together the fact of God's deliverance past, present and future. "Who delivered us from so great a death." This undoubtedly refers to the danger he was exposed to and out of which He had been delivered, but it may also be applied in a more general way. We are as believers delivered from so great a death, that is, eternal death. Then there is a present deliverance "who doth deliver." These are the trials and testings in the way, in which the believer learns anew that He is the God of our salvation.

"Salvation through a work wrought already for eternity is the daily lesson of a growing faith. Sickness, privation and trouble Of any kind are, with outward persecution, permitted as occasions of sustaining and delivering love. Grace knows how to deliver even from those snares in which our own folly or carelessness may have entangled our feet." (Pridham.)

And the Apostle expressed his confidence in a future deliverance. He who has delivered His people, saved them by Grace, who constantly delivers and keeps, will do so in the future till the final great deliverance comes and all His redeemed people will be gathered home.

But while the Apostle trusted in God for all this, as all true believers do, he also recognized the value of the prayers of others. God's children can be fellow-helpers in prayer for the servants of God "helping together by prayer for us." Prayer is therefore a very important part of true ministry in the body of Christ. And what had been bestowed upon him, would lead many to praise God in giving thanks on his behalf. He was rejoicing in the testimony of his own conscience, that in holiness (not "simplicity" as in the authorized version) and sincerity before God he had acted in the world and more abundantly towards them. (The word rejoicing is "glorying" or "boasting." As mentioned in the introduction this word is found thirty-one times in this epistle.) Only partly had they recognized him. He mentions "the day of our Lord Jesus." In that day the Corinthian saints would be the Apostle's glorying, and the Apostle was their glorying. The day of the Lord Jesus is not the Old Testament day of God. The day of the Lord will bring the visible manifestation of the Lord in great power and glory. Judgment for this earth follows as well as mercy in bringing righteousness, peace and the Kingdom. The day of the Lord Jesus is for the Saints of God and is celebrated not on earth but in glory. Often the Apostle refers to that blessed coming day when the Saints shall be gathered home. As a doctrine it is impressed continually on the memory of the church, while as a moral power it is a constant endeavor of the Spirit to bring it to bear directly on the daily walk of the believer, both as a regulator of conscience, an argument of patience, and an efficient stimulant of all true spiritual affection (Romans 13:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:7; 1 John 3:1-3).

His explanations follow. He intended to come to them long before this. His plan was to pass by them into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto them, so that they might bring him on his way toward Judea. He had not done so. They might accuse him therefore of having failed. The word "lightness" in verse 17 means fickleness. Was he fickle-minded? Was it merely the lightness and fickleness, a changing yea, yea, followed by nay, nay? He had stayed away from Corinth for other reasons; it was to spare them that he did not go there. Therefore, it was not fickleness on his part at all.

He did not purpose according to the flesh. What he earnestly desired was from love for them, and all his plans were under the guidance of the Lord. "But as God is true, our word toward you is not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him is yea. For whatever may be the promises of God, in Him is the yea, wherefore also through Him is the amen, unto the glory of God through us." They had been suspicious of him and his motives, and now after having denied the false charge of being fickle-minded he reminds them of his preaching among them which was not yea and nay. He turns from the accusations against him, to what he had preached. The positive doctrines of the Gospel had molded his character and controlled all his motives. He and his companions, Silvanus and Timotheus, had preached among them the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and the blessed truths of salvation and redemption which center in Him and flow forth from His Person. And the preaching of the Son of God has no doubt and uncertainty in it; it is the declaration of positive and final Truth. Men doubt and are fickle-minded about the Person of Christ and the Gospel in our days, but God's Word speaks in positive terms, which do not permit any uncertainty whatever. It is a wonderfully deep statement that all the promises of God, whatever they may be, are in Christ--in Him is the yea and through Him the amen likewise. All promises are made to Christ and are in Him and those who trust in Christ share them in Him. All came by Him, all is in Him, all will be accomplished through Him. "Whatever promises there had been on God's part, the yea was in Him, and the amen in Him. God has established--deposited, so to speak--the fulfillment of all His promises in the Person of Christ. Life, glory, righteousness, pardon, the gift of the Spirit, all is in Him: it is in Him that all is true--yea and amen. We cannot have the effect of any promise whatsoever apart from Him. But this is not all: we, believers, are the objects of these counsels of God. They are to the glory of God by us."(Synopsis.)

But how can we participate in it, if all is "in Christ?" Here is the blessed answer. God Himself establishes the believer in Christ, in whom all the promises subsist, so that the true Christian securely possesses in Him all that is promised. We have it all through God in Christ and can enjoy it in Him. And furthermore, God hath anointed us. We possess in Christ the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are sealed by that Spirit; God has put His seal upon us. And finally the Spirit also is in us the earnest of that which we shall possess with Christ in the coming day of His glory. "In whom ye also, after that Ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also believing, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of an inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

3. His Deep Exercise Concerning Them. Yet Overcoming.

CHAPTER 2

1. The Burden of his Soul. 1-4.
2. Concerning the Brother who had been Disciplined. 5-11.
3. Overcoming. 12-17.

In the previous chapter we read the reason why he had not gone to Corinth . "To spare you I came not to Corinth " (verse 23). He feared, that on account of their deplorable condition; exercising his God-given apostolic authority, he might appear as dominating over them. He had determined that he would not come again to them with sorrow. He might have hastened to Corinth with a rod (1 Corinthians 4:21), but he exercised patience and had waited, no doubt with much prayer to God, for the gracious effect of the first Epistle he had sent unto them. In all these statements so humble, so loving and so patient, we have the love exemplified which is described in the previous epistle (Chapter 13). He was not easily provoked; he hoped all things and endured all things. He also tells them in what state of mind he was in when he wrote his first Epistle. What deep soul exercise the fourth verse reveals! He was so much concerned that he wrote out of much affliction and agony of heart, while his tears flowed freely. But it was not done to grieve them; love for them was the only motive, "that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly towards you."

The case of the transgressor whose wicked deed had been exposed and rebuked in the first Epistle (1 Corinthians 5), whose discipline had been demanded by the Apostle, is taken up first. What had grieved him had grieved them also. This they had shown by the way in which they had treated this brother. Titus had brought him the information that they had acted and the transgressor had been put away from fellowship. He also must have told Paul of his deep and true repentance. He therefore exhorts them to receive him again and comfort him, who was in grave danger of being swallowed up with much sorrow on account of the discipline from the side of the mass of Christians. He tells them to assure this weak brother, who had been restored, of their own love, and while they had forgiven him, he also forgave. In assuring the disciplined brother of their love they would thereby prove their obedience in all things. They had previously shown their obedience by judging the evil doer for his sin. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." The brother in question who had been delivered to Satan was in danger of being driven to despair, and in this way Satan might get an advantage over them. This might have resulted in bringing about a division between the Apostle and the Corinthians. The course pursued by the apostle in forgiving love, prevented this.

When the Apostle came to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ, there was a door opened unto him by the Lord. His great business was to preach the Gospel, and the Lord had manifested His approval by opening a door. Yet Paul was restless. He had expected to meet Titus to receive the anxiously awaited news from Corinth . So he did not enter the door which the Lord opened to preach the Gospel, but he hastened to Macedonia . His own anxiety and restless haste were weaknesses. The door opened for service should have made him tarry at Troas to preach that Gospel, which he loved so well. Then, in due time, the Lord would have led Titus to him. From all this the Corinthians could learn his great love for them and his deep anxiety and concern. And yet his conscience must have been troubled in having lost so great an opportunity to preach the Gospel. Surely he was in a very trying position as a servant of Christ. On the one hand he valued the Gospel and loved to preach it, and on the other hand was his burdened heart for the Saints of God. And therefore he comforts and encourages himself by an outburst of thanksgiving. He knows that God is in it all; not he himself leads, but God always leadeth him in triumph in Christ, ("causes us to triumph" is a faulty translation), "and maketh manifest the odor of His knowledge through us in every place." It is an allusion to a Roman triumphal procession after the victory. Captives were led in these processions, but the victors were the prominent figures. So Paul declares, "God always leadeth us in triumph in Christ." He gives us the victory. All his anxiety for the Corinthians ended in triumph. This was always so. In connection with a Roman triumph incense was burned upon every altar. These aromatics pervaded the whole procession. Through the apostle the sweet smell of His knowledge was spread about. But he also applies this to the Gospel. The two classes are mentioned by him, those who are being saved and those who are perishing. Let us also notice the beautiful thought that the preaching of the Gospel is a sweet incense of Christ unto God. Independent of the results of the preaching of the Gospel, whenever that precious name is preached, which is as ointment poured forth (Song of Solomon 1:3), it delights the heart of God and is a sweet savor unto Him. But as to men, to some it is a savor (or odor) of death unto death and to others a savor of life unto life. (In the Roman triumphal procession were captives to whom the burning incense was a token of death; to others it was a token of life.)

And who is sufficient for these things? What great issues the Gospel ministry involves and how great the responsibility! The question is answered in the next chapter. "Our sufficiency is of God" (3:5). Upon Him the true minister of the Gospel is solely cast. And because Paul had his sufficiency of God as well as those who were associated with him, he could say, "for we are not as the many, corrupting the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." The word "corrupt" has the meaning of adulterating, trading. It has been strikingly translated "driving a traffic in the Word of God" and with this making merchandise of the Truth of God, the adulterating is closely connected. It began with apostolic days. How much worse is it in our times! Many who lay claim to the name of ministers of the Gospel are men-pleasers, covetous, aiming at their own popularity, seeking their own and not the things of Christ; and therefore they trade in these truths and handle the Word of God deceitfully as well as diluting it. A solemn description of a true servant of Christ is the concluding sentence of this chapter. He is of God, with a God-given message, and he speaks of God in the sight of God.

4. The Ministry of the New Covenant in Contrast with the Old.

CHAPTER 3

1. The Epistle of Christ. 1-3

2. The True Sufficiency. 4-6

3. The Old and New Ministry Contrasted. 7-11

4. The Glory in the Face of Moses and the Glory in the Face of Christ. 12-18.

It was customary in the church to give letters of commendation (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1). Did the Apostle need, as some others, epistles of commendation to the Corinthians, or such letters from them? Probably his enemies, the Judaizing teachers, who upheld the law and its ordinances, demanded such letters. They may have said, he did not come from Jerusalem; who then is Paul? Why has he not letters of commendation? His answer is, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart." It is a most beautiful and tender Statement.

The Corinthians were his letter of commendation, the proof of his blessed ministry, because under his preaching they had been saved and were walking well. After their obedience, he could rightly say so. it would have been impossible for him to make such a statement in the first epistle. Let all men read you as an epistle, and they will know what kind of a man I am. What confidence and love this expresses! It would also lead them to an earnest inquiry if they were really such a letter of commendation. When he speaks of "ye are the epistle of Christ" he describes the general character of the church and her responsibility. The church is the representative of Christ, or Christ's letter of commendation to the world. What a solemn responsibility to recommend in life and walk Christ to the world! Just as God had written once the law on tables of stone exclusively for Israel, so now the Spirit of the living God writes Christ on the hearts of believers, that the world may read Christ in the Church composed of all believers. ("Exodus 34:1; John 13:35; 17:21. The analogy is obvious. Jehovah was 'the God of Israel,' Christ is 'the Savior of the world.' The tables were Jehovah's witness to His people, the Church is Christ's living Epistle to the world. Israel heard but turned away; the world saw and read but refused, and yet refuses Him who thus speaks from heaven.

Lastly, in the former case, the law was made void by the commandments of men; in the latter, the Church, the power of whose testimony consists in her separation from the world, has by mingling with it become the betrayer, rather than the witness of the name by which she is called.") And this is true ministry, witnessing to Christ not alone in the proclamation of the Gospel, but in life and walk. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). And such was Paul's confidence through Christ to Godward. He trusted the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to accomplish this. In himself, he acknowledges, there is no sufficiency for anything, "all our sufficiency is of God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of letter, but of spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The latter statement is often wrongly interpreted. The word "letter" does not mean the entire written Word of God. Many have taken this view

and declare that the Bible must not be taken literally, just as it says. (This is mostly said in connection with Prophecy, the Second Coming of Christ, etc. More than once the word "the letter killeth" has been used to explain away the literal meaning of things to come.) It is not the question at all between the literal words and meaning of the Scriptures and the spiritual meaning, but it is a contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant, between the law and the gospel. The word "letter" stands for the law, which in its ministration kills and cannot give life. What the purpose of the law is and what it can do and cannot do is learned from the following passages: Romans 3:20, 5:20, 7:5-11, 8:3; Galatians 3:10, 19.

By the law no flesh can be justified; by the law the offence abounded; the law means death to man (Romans 7:10-11). It is weak and has no power to help man, and it curses man. In this sense the letter, the law, killeth. But the spirit giveth life. It means that the spirit of the Gospel is different from the law, for the Holy Spirit operates through the Gospel and quickens the sinner who is dead and under the curse. Here then we have the absolute incompatibility of law and gospel. The epistle to the Galatians makes this fact fully known. The contrast between law and gospel, the old and the new covenant, is introduced in this epistle because the teachers who magnified the law and preached the keeping of the law for righteousness, were also at work in Corinth (chapter 11:22). And the glory of the gospel and its ministry cannot be fully demonstrated except in its relation to the law. The contrast made is fivefold:

Law

Gospel

Letter

Spirit

Ministration of death

Ministration of the Spirit (Life)

Ministration of condemnation

Ministration of righteousness.

Vanishing glory

Abiding glory

Veiled glory

Unveiled glory

The law ministers death. It was written and engraved and came with glory. This refers us to the second giving of the law. Glory was connected with that, for Moses' face shone. Because grace and mercy were mingled with the second giving of the law (Exodus 34:1-7), glory was seen upon the face of Moses. They could not look upon that glory, and Moses, the Mediator, had to cover his face with a veil. It was a brightness which dazzled and repelled, but had no power to attract or to bring light, warmth and joy to the hearts of the people. But if glory was connected with the ministration which is death, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?

The Gospel is all-glorious and abiding; it is the ministration of righteousness which abounds in glory. The glory on the face of Moses has given way to the glory in another face, even in the face of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The glory on Moses' face was but the reflection of His glory who came and dwelt among men. It is now a remaining glory as well as a surpassing glory, "the glory that excelleth." And the sinner can behold that glory. "Righteousness is now ministered unto us, not worked out by us; and thus, indeed, the glory of God is revealed as nothing else could reveal it. His inmost heart is told out in righteousness, but love is righteousness, and love, how marvelous, as shown in the gift of Christ for men! So

that which was made glorious in the time past had, in itself, no glory compared with this surpassing glory" (Numerical Bible).

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness (literally: boldness and confidence) of speech." With such blessed assurance and knowledge of the ministration of righteousness and the Spirit, the true minister can use great plainness of speech in the proclamation of the Gospel. "To make the marvelous truth of God's gospel as clear as daylight to the human conscience is the first duty of those whom the Lord now sends forth as heralds of His grace. Whatever is recondite or enigmatic is not now of God. Babes receive that which, when digested, makes them men. It could not be thus with Moses, who was indeed the open minister of the law, but the veiled prophet of grace. The action of Moses in covering his face is here described as something intentional, and in keeping with his office as the minister of that which he knew to be imperfect in character, and therefore not of permanent effect. The lawgiver was a witness also of a better thing than law. To deliver his present message to the people he lifted the veil, which was again replaced when the commandment was uttered. Before God he was unveiled, and looked with open vision on the mystery of Jehovah's ways, but to Israel his covered face was an emblem of the incomplete and unsatisfying nature of the ministry committed to his charge." (A. Pridham)

But Israel has been blinded. The people who boast in the ministration of the law did not believe, and as a result their minds were blinded (Isaiah 6:9, 10; Matthew 13:14; John 12:40; Acts 28:26; Romans 11:8). They read the Old Testament, but the veil is unremoved; yet the day of grace is coming when the veil shall be taken away, and that will be when they turn to the Lord during the coming time of great tribulation, ending with the glorious coming of Him whom they once rejected (Hosea 5:15; 6:1-3).

And those who believe look upon the unveiled, the unhidden glories of the Lord, and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. It is through faith. And all is through the blessed life-giving Spirit of Christ, who works in believers as the Epistle of Christ. "The power to enjoy Him is the power to reflect Him. The reflection is no effort, but the necessary effect of enjoyment." May we enjoy Christ by being more and more occupied with Him through His Word and then make Him known by walking even as He walked. This is a part of true ministry so much needed.

5. The Character of the True Ministry.

CHAPTER 4

1. The Gospel of the Glory of Christ. 1-6

2. The Treasure in Earthen Vessels; Weakness and Power. 7-12

3. Resurrection and Coming Glory. 13-18.

This ministry which the apostle mentions is the ministry of the Gospel. And those who know it by having received mercy are to be the witnesses. Every Christian who has obtained mercy, who is saved by grace, is called to witness to this blessed fact in some way. "We faint not"--we are not discouraged, but encouraged to go on in its proclamation, knowing that it is a sweet savor unto God and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The hidden things of shame, the methods of the flesh, craftiness, the deceitful handling Of the Word of God, were renounced by the apostle: he avoided those things. All carnal things, all artifices, human wisdom and rhetoric, by which men's minds might be captivated and their applause gained, were unknown to the apostle. His commendation to every man's conscience in the sight of God was by the manifestation of the truth. He had implicit confidence in God's Word and in the Gospel of the glory of Christ. This confidence is sadly lacking in our days among the professed preachers of the Word. As a result the methods of the flesh are used and the holy things are dragged down into the gutter. What abominable methods are used by professional "evangelists" to gain notoriety, secure large crowds and large collections! And the falsifying of the Word, the deceitful handling of the Scriptures, which go along with those methods! No wonder the world applauds such methods and the defense of the cross lies ceased.

And the gospel is here called "the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." And this gospel shines in all its radiancy. In the first epistle we had a blessed definition of what the Gospel is (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). There we read of His

death for our sins, His burial and His resurrection. But here we are lifted higher; the Christ who died and rose again is in heaven crowned with glory and honor. He is there at the right hand of God as our representative, and all the love, the grace and power which are for His people shine out in His blessed face. A glorified Christ in all His fulness and glory, is the gospel in its highest meaning. But if this gospel, which Paul calls "my gospel" is hid, that is, veiled, it is in those that are perishing. They are unbelieving, and unbelief puts them under Satan's power. He is called here the god of this age (the word world means age), that is our age. The age rejected Christ, and that has made Satan the god of the age, a title which he did not possess in the previous age. And he blinds the eyes of them that believe not. As they refuse to see the light which now shines in the gospel of the glory of Christ, they become blinded by the father of lies by various methods and means. He blinds the eyes by the age itself over which he domineers. He makes it appear as if this age is fast making for better things. Righteousness and peace are impossible during the present evil age; this age is one of darkness, ending in a complete manifestation of the mystery of iniquity in the person of Satan's man, the Antichrist. Righteousness and peace can only come through the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ and by His enthronement as King over this world. Satan hides the real character of this age and this is one of the ways by which he blinds the eyes of them that believe not. He leads man to exalt himself, and nourishes self-trust and self-exaltation.

But what is the message of the true servants of Christ? Do they exalt man, or themselves, or the age with its boasted progress? "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. Because it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, who hath shined in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." As it was in the hour of creation when darkness covered all, so it is in redemption. God hath shined in His grace into the hearts of them who believe. And He hath shined, in that, through us, the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ may shine forth to others. This unspeakable treasure and glory is in earthen vessels that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of us. As the ancients kept the most valued treasures in earthen jars, so all those glorious things God has given in the gospel, as well as the ministry of it, are deposited in earthen vessels. The believer, with a body of humiliation, weak and frail, though no longer in the flesh, yet the flesh, the old nature, still in him, is the earthen vessel. The term reminds us of Gideon and his men with the torches in earthen pitchers (Judges 7:16-29). The pitchers had to be broken to pieces so that the light could shine, and thus in that dark night the victory was won. The old man has to be kept constantly in the place of death, self must be judged and broken to pieces, that the light may shine forth. This is a truth which is more than suggested by this statement, though the outward man in his weakness and frailty, subject to affliction and suffering in the world is principally in view.

Then follow statements which illustrate the earthen vessels in their weak and helpless condition, and the exceeding greatness of the power of God. The power is manifested through the earthen vessels in trial and affliction. The earthen vessels may be troubled, afflicted on every side, but the power keeps them from being straitened or distressed. Perplexed, persecuted, smitten down--such is the condition of the earthen vessels. But God's gracious power is manifested in all these earthly and trying circumstances.

"Always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus (made like Him, in that the man as such was reduced to nothing), in order that the life of Jesus, which death could not touch, which has triumphed over death, should be manifested in his body, mortal as it was. The more the natural man was annihilated, the more was it evident that a power was there which was not of man. This was the principle, but it was morally realized in the heart by faith. As the Lord's servant, Paul realized in his heart the death of all that was human life, in order that the power might be purely of God through Jesus risen. But besides this, God made him realize these things by the circumstances through which he had to pass; for, as living in this world, he was always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, in order that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh. Thus death wrought in the apostle; what was merely of man, of nature and natural life, disappeared, in order that life in Christ, developing itself in him on the part of God and by His power, should work in the Corinthians by his means. A thorough trial of the human heart, a glorious calling, for a man to be thus assimilated to Christ, to be the vessel of the power of His pure life, and by means of an entire self-renunciation, even that of life itself, to be morally like unto Jesus. What a position by grace! What a conformity to Christ" (Synopsis).

How little of all this is known experimentally in our easy-going days among God's people! In verse 12 we read, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you." Different explanations have been given of this statement. True ministry in self-denial and self-forgetfulness works death to the servant. His self-forgetting love brought him constantly hardships and suffering; he followed the Lord in all this and knew the fellowship of His sufferings. But through it the people of God were helped, comforted and blessed. In this sense life worked in them through the self-sacrifice of the apostle.

And what sustains in all this? It is faith. And faith reckons on God who raiseth the dead. "Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also with Jesus, and shall present us with you." The faith of the believer and the servant looks forward to the glorious consummation when Christ comes for His saints and the great presentation (Jude 24) takes place. This is the glorious goal when we shall no longer see in the glass darkly, when we shall know as we are known, when we shall see Him as He is and be like Him. Therefore, "we faint not; but if our outward man be consumed, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Faith always looks upon things seen as temporal. Unseen things, the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, are eternal; with these faith is to be occupied. But who is able to say what awaits us there? Who is able to tell out the meaning of that wonderful sentence, "A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" There is a surpassing, an unspeakable, an indescribable, an unfathomable and eternal glory for the Saints of God. In ages to come God will display the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

6. Concerning the Future. The Ministry of Reconciliation.

CHAPTER 5

1. The Earthly and the Heavenly House. 1-8.

2. The Judgment Seat of Christ. 9-12.

3. The Constraint of Love. 13-16.

4. The Ministry of Reconciliation. 17-21.

The certainty of the future things is brought more fully in view. The apostle had given the great doctrines concerning the resurrection of the body, the coming of the Lord and the blessed hope in his first epistle (chapter 15). In the closing verses of the preceding chapter, he mentioned again the fact of the believer's resurrection and presentation in the presence of the Lord (verse 14) and spoke of the eternal things, the coming glory. And so he continues: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The earthly house of this tabernacle is the body of the believer, the earthen vessel in the previous chapter. It is called a tabernacle (a tent) because it is only the temporary lodging of those who are by grace but strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Yet in this earthen vessel, this frail tabernacle, there is a divine indweller, the Holy Spirit. The apostle speaks of the dissolution of our earthly house, "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved." He does not say "when we die," but only states the possibility that the tabernacle might be dissolved. The dissolution of the mortal body of the believer is not presented therefore by the apostle as a certainty, but only as a possibility. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" was the blessed mystery revealed through the apostle in his first epistle (1 Corinthians 15:51). The change of the body of the believer is the certainty, but its dissolution is not. But if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved "we know we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What do these terms mean? What is the building of God, the eternal house in the heavens? Some have identified it with the Father's house and its many mansions of which our Lord speaks. But this house of which the apostle writes cannot be heaven, the Father's house, for it is said to be from heaven and in the heavens. Others have invented a temporary body. They teach that when the believer dies he gets at once a kind of an ethereal body which he will possess between death and resurrection. This is a speculation contradicted by the word "eternal." Nowhere in the Word of God is it taught that the disembodied spirits of the redeemed are to be clothed with a body before resurrection takes place. The body of the believer in its present state is compared to a tabernacle; the building of God, the house not made with hands, refers to that which the believer shall possess in the future, no longer an earthly house, a tabernacle, but something permanent, of supernatural origin. It is quite evident that the apostle means by way of contrast the spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44), which is in store for the believer. This fact is stated once more, but the purpose of these words is not to convey the thought that this house is to be possessed immediately after death: the emphasis is upon "we know" and "we have." The Spirit of God assures us of the certainty of it. Thus positively every child of God can speak.

"For in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." The groaning is not on account of

infirmities, hardship, privations or unsatisfied desires. It is deeper than that. It is the longing for the promised glorified condition with which we shall be invested. "It is the groaning not of a disappointed sinner, nor of an undelivered saint, but of those who, assured of life and victory in Christ, feel the wretched contrast of the present with the glory of the future." If we, beloved fellow-believer, live close to God, enjoy the fellowship with His Son into which grace has called us, then even in the fairest scenes and in the most attractive earthly conditions, we shall know something of this groaning and longing to be clothed upon with that which is from above and which will fit us to be the vessels of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. (The knowledge that at any moment one may change the prison garments of mortality, and as a chosen companion of the King of Kings be found in the likeness of the Lord of Life, must generate a longing for that moment to arrive. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus.")

"If so be that being clothed upon we shall not be found naked." This again is another warning corresponding to the one at the close of 1 Corinthians 9. All human beings will be clothed upon with a body, for there is a resurrection of the bodies of the just and the unjust. The wicked dead, standing before the great white throne, will be clothed upon, but, not having Christ, they will be found naked for their eternal shame. And so the apostle warned of the possibility that even among the Corinthians there may be some who, destitute of Christ, only professing to be Christ's, would then be found naked.

Then again the apostle speaks of the groaning in this tabernacle, the body of our humiliation. His desire is not to be unclothed, that is, unclothed in death, when the body is put into the grave; he desires to be clothed upon, to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. For this the apostle groaned; and this is what we wait for and not for death. When the shout comes from the air and His voice opens the graves of His saints, we who are alive and remain shall be changed (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). No death then but mortality will be swallowed up of life. Then our mortal bodies will be quickened. And God has wrought us for this very thing; the evidence of it is the indwelling Spirit, who has made the body of the believer His temple. Then the apostle describes a twofold condition, "at home in the body (the tabernacle) we are absent from the Lord"; and "absent from the body, present with the Lord." The latter statement is a complete refutation of that evil doctrine called "soul-sleep," i.e., an unconscious state between death and resurrection. The believer who dies goes into the presence of the Lord and is consciously present there, waiting with the redeemed of all ages, "to be clothed upon with the house from heaven."

Linked with all this blessed teaching is the judgment seat of Christ (verse 10). All, whether saints or sinners, will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ; certainly not at the same time. There is no universal judgment, when the righteous and the unrighteous appear together before the judgment seat of Christ taught in the Bible. The Saints of God will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, when He has taken them from earth to glory, not at death, but when He comes with the shout in the air. But for His blood-bought people, who constitute His body, who will then be clothed with the house from heaven (the glorified body), there is no more judgment in the sense of condemnation. His own blessed lips have given us the assurance of this. (See John 5:24--that blessed word!) Nevertheless, there is a judgment seat of Christ for believers. The word "appear" in verse 10 is "manifested". We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Our works and our ways as Christians will then be brought fully into view; all will be brought into the light. Nothing can be concealed, and the believer receives the things done in the body.

"But there is more than this. when the Christian is thus manifested, he is already glorified, and, perfectly like Christ, has then no remains of the evil nature in which he sinned. And he now can look back at all the way God has led him in grace, helped, lifted up, kept from falling, not withdrawn His eyes from the righteous. He knows as he is known. What a tale of grace and mercy! If I look back now, my sins do not rest on my conscience; though I have horror of them, they are put away behind God's back. I am the righteousness of God in Christ, but what a sense of love and patience, and goodness and grace! How much more perfect then, when all is before me! Surely there is great gain as to light and love, in giving an account of ourselves to God; and not a trace remains of the evil in us. We are like Christ. If a person fears to have all out thus before God, I do not believe he is free in soul as to righteousness--being the righteousness of God in Christ, not fully in the light. And we have not to be judged for anything: Christ has put it all away" (Synopsis).

And thus the believer has no more fear of death, for he knows what awaits him; and the judgment seat of Christ has also no terror for him. But the words of the apostle apply equally to unbelievers. The occupant of the great white throne (Revelation 20) before which the wicked dead appear and will be manifested, is the Lord Jesus Christ. They will be judged according to their works and condemned to eternal darkness and conscious punishment. In view of this the apostle states, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

And how can we persuade men to flee the wrath to come, unless we preach the Gospel to them? Beautifully linked with this is the constraining power of the love of Christ (verse 14). In his ministry, service, walk and everything else, the great apostle knew this mighty constraint of love. And the cross and its glorious work looms up before his vision, in view of that love manifested there. In Him who, died and who liveth, we are called as well as equipped with power to live unto Him. In faith, as dead with Christ and risen with Him, we look to a risen and glorified Christ in whom we are a new creation, "old things have passed, behold all things are become new."

Having reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, He has also given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Having brought us into this blessed position through grace, He calls us to make it known to others and lead others to Him. What we have received we are to use in our ministry. And every reconciled one is called into this service to exercise the ministry of reconciliation and be a soul-winner. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin, He hath made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This is the great message of the true minister, and all believers can be true ministers and proclaim the message in Christ's stead and point sinners to the cross, where He who knew no sin was made sin for us, where redemption full and free is offered to all.

7. The Example of the Apostle Paul; His Testings and Trials.

CHAPTER 6:1-13

He beseeches the Corinthians as coworkers, in view of the ministry of reconciliation, not to receive this grace of God in vain. This is not a contradiction of the doctrine of the security of a true believer. The apostle evidently was uneasy about some of these Corinthian Christians and feared that some had not received the grace of God in their hearts. Their conduct led him to this questioning. If the grace of God comes to man it may be received in vain and lead not to the blessed results in quickening power and real salvation for which it is given. "The security of His children is unquestionable, not so much through their perseverance, as men say, but by His power through faith; but the Corinthians needed and received faithful entreaty, for their ways were not such as became the gospel. They were compromising His glory, who had called them to the fellowship of His Son; and the apostle instead of comforting them with the blessed assurance of the close of Romans 8, would here exercise conscience as well as affection in presence of God's grace" (William Kelly).

Interesting is the quotation from Isaiah 49. A careful examination of Isaiah 49:4-8 is suggested. It is a prophecy concerning the Messiah. His rejection by Israel is there predicted, and the words of the eighth verse, quoted here, "I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation I have succored thee" are addressed to Christ, whom Israel rejected. God raised Him from the dead, and though Israel is not gathered, He becomes the power of salvation for the Gentiles. This is the meaning of "behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." "Now" means this present dispensation when salvation is offered to the Gentiles. But grace rejected, neglected or perverted, as it is the case in this age in which grace reigns through righteousness, will bring judgment, followed by the blessings for Israel and the earth.

The apostle speaks once more of himself and describes negatively and positively the moral features which he manifested in his life as a true minister of God. He knew nothing of inconsistency in life, which is so detrimental to the ministry of the Word. "Giving no offence in anything that the ministry be not blamed." Well has it been said, "Christianity is real and living, not dogmatic only, still less official, else it becomes of all things the most contemptible." The apostle's life in every detail was a comment on his ministry. He practiced what he preached, The opposite undermines any preaching or teaching. "But in everything commending ourselves as the ministers of God." There was more than the avoidance of offence; in anything, in all conditions and under all circumstances he behaved himself as becomes the minister of God, the ambassador of Christ. In much patience, never impatient, but always enduring in afflictions of various kinds when the world and the god of this age pressed him hard; in necessities and straits, when there seemed to be no escape. Then there were sufferings: in stripes, in prisons, in tumults. Of these we read more in chapter 11. Then there are named things he took upon himself willingly and gladly as the minister of God, namely: labors, watchings and fastings. By these he manifested his devotedness. Well may we ponder over each as they are given in verses 6 and 7. Then follows a series of contrasts. By glory and dishonor. He experienced these opposite extremes, both among the Saints, and also in the world. He was shamefully entreated and also revered. He was beloved and honored by God's people and dishonored by the slandering tongue of false teachers. But throughout he proved himself as the minister of God. By evil report and good

report, as deceivers and yet true. "Woe unto you if all men speak well of you." If the servant of Christ follows Him, the world will hate him and brand him a deceiver as it was done with the Lord (Matthew 27:63). It would take many pages to follow the paradoxes as given by this model and master servant. Nothing more beautiful and attractive than verse 10, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." Oh, blessed life! May God's grace and God's Spirit enable us to manifest Christ as this servant of Christ did.

8. The Apostle's Exhortations and Rejoicings.

CHAPTER 6:14-7

1. His Exhortations. 6:14-7:1. 2. His Rejoicing and Confidence. 7:2-16.

The first exhortation is to separation from evil, without which no true fellowship with God can be enjoyed. It is one of the most important exhortations in the Pauline epistles, and greatly needed in our days of laxity and worldliness among Christians. God calls His people to holiness. "But as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." He has separated us from the world which lieth in the wicked one and separated us in Christ to Himself. Believers are not of the world as He is not of the world (John 17:14). The cross of Christ makes us dead to the world and the world dead unto us (Galatians 6:14). Furthermore God's Word tells us not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15), and "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). And the world is that great system over which Satan domineers, built up and developed by him, to give the natural man a sphere of enjoyment. True faith not only joins the believer to the Lord, but also separates him in heart and practice from the world which crucified the Lord and still rejects Him.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" is often quoted as a prohibition of a mixed marriage. This is no doubt included, but the exhortation means more and includes every form of alliance with the world and ungodly principles. It also includes the so-called "religious world" with its unscriptural practices and denials of the truth. The apostle shows that the believer going along with unbelievers and the world, is indeed in an unequal, a strange, yoke. What fellowship can there be between righteousness and unrighteousness? What fellowship hath light with darkness? Each has a different head; Christ is over His people, they belong to Him; Belial is the head of those who believe not. What could there be for a believer to enjoy with an unbeliever? And believers are the temple of God. How then is association with idols possible? "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Blessed statement! But God's presence demands holiness, separation from evil. Fellowship with evil shuts out God in His gracious manifestations. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing."

"God must have His own holy, for He is holy; and this not only in an inward way, without which all would be hypocrisy, but in outward ways also to His own glory, unless He would be a partner with us to His own dishonor. He will have us clear from associations which are worldly and defiling; He will exercise our souls in order to free, them from all that denies or despises His will. He commands those that believe to come out from those that believe not, and to be separated. Indeed the union of the two is so monstrous that it never could be defended for a moment by a true heart. It is only when selfish interests or strong prejudices work, that men gradually accustom and harden themselves to disobedience so flagrant and in every way disastrous. For as the man of the world cannot rise to the level of Christ to be together with His own, the Christian must descend to the level of the world. God is thus and ever more and more put to shame in what claims to be His house, with a loudness proportioned to its departure from His Word" (William Kelly).

And in connection with this exhortation to separation from unbelievers the Lord declares His relationship to us. Interesting is the use of the name Lord Almighty in verse 18. "And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." In the Greek the definite article before "Lord" is missing. It is simply "Kyrios," Lord. It is the same as "Jehovah." By that name He revealed Himself to Israel. To Abraham he spoke as the El Shaddai, the Almighty. The Lord who revealed Himself to Abraham, called Him to separation, "Get thee out from thy country." To Israel God spoke as Jehovah and they became His people, separated by Him and to Him. And the same Jehovah-Shaddai declares now a new relationship, He will be a Father and we His sons and daughters. In Christ we know God as our Father; "we are all the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ." But to enjoy this relationship practically is only

possible if the believer walks in separation. Real communion with God as Father without separating from evil is an impossibility.

"God will not have worldlings in relation with Himself as sons and daughters; they have not entered into this position with regard to Him. Nor will He recognize those who remain identified with the world, as having this position; for the world has rejected His Son, and the friendship of the world is enmity against God, and he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. It is not being His child in a practical sense. God says, therefore, "Come out from among them, and be separate, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters" (Synopsis).

May we heed these important truths. God cannot compromise His own holy and righteous character. His demands upon His people are the demands of separation. And, as we are obedient, we enjoy in faith the blessed relationship into which His grace has brought us.

The second exhortation is closely linked with this. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Holiness in our walk is God's demand. God looks for practical holiness in His people. If we walk thus, habitually cleansing ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, we perfect holiness, a practical, daily separation, in the fear of God. While we are, as born again, "clean every whit" (John 13:10), our calling is equally to purify ourselves as He is pure. The defilements of the flesh are the things mentioned in Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:19, and elsewhere. What are the defilements of the spirit? It means the license of the natural mind, the whole sphere of thought and will, when unregulated by the truth and fear of God. Read Chapter 10:5. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The words which follow tell us again of the affectionate concern which the apostle had for the Corinthians! How he loved them and how considerate he was. His whole soul yearned for them. He had wronged no one, nor had he corrupted any, nor did he make personal gain through them. He was filled with comfort. He had fightings without and fears within, but now all was changed. He had met Titus in Macedonia, and through his report and the encouraging news he brought from Corinth, God had comforted him. He knew his former letter (the first epistle) had grieved them, but it had worked for them the godly sorrow which was the aim of the messages sent to them through his inspired pen. "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that in nothing ye might be injured by us." But he also states that for a moment at least he regretted that he had written his first epistle of rebuke (verse 8). But was not that letter inspired? The power behind his pen was the Holy Spirit, yet he regretted for a time that he had written. How is this to be understood? It shows the difference between the individuality of the apostle and divine inspiration.

His heart was filled with so much love, that it obscured his spiritual discernment and he forgot for a moment the character of his epistle, that not he was responsible for what he had written, but that the Spirit of God was the author. The regret was an evidence of weakness at the time when no tidings reached him from Corinth and when his loving heart was so burdened for the Corinthians. (The same weakness is manifested in his journey to Jerusalem. He loved Jerusalem and Israel in such a way that he went there even against the solemn warnings given by the Holy Spirit.) And what he writes now is a loving apology and great joy over what the epistle had wrought, an earnestness to clear themselves of the reproach, indignation on account of sin permitted, yea, zeal for God, and what revenge (or vengeance--righteous wrath)! And so he rejoiced therefore that his confidence had been restored in them in all things.

II. THE MINISTRY OF GIVING. Chapters 8-9

1. The Examples and Principles of Giving.

CHAPTER 8

1. The Grace of God Manifested in the Churches of Macedonia. 1-7

2. The Great Example. 8

3. The Advice, Principles and Administration. 9-24.

There is to be a practical ministry in giving, especially in remembering the poor of the flock. He is anxious now to lay this responsibility upon their hearts. In the first epistle he had written them that his glory was in giving the gospel gratuitously. He would not take anything from the Corinthians for himself, but he wants their gifts for others. He was making up a collection for the poor saints in Judea and Jerusalem; of this he writes to them. Thus Gentile believers were to show their appreciation for the blessing which they had received through the Jews, for salvation is of the Jews.

We also see in this an illustration of the oneness of the body of Christ, how the members are to minister to each other. Great grace in this ministry had been bestowed upon and manifested by the churches in Macedonia. They were themselves stricken with great affliction. They were very poor, but their deep poverty did not stint their gifts; they joyfully gave and abounded in the riches of liberality. These poor, afflicted Macedonian saints had even prayed the apostle with much entreaty to receive the gift from their hands. And the secret of it was that they had given themselves first to the Lord. All else was the outflow of this self-surrender. In all this the apostle rejoiced greatly, and therefore he exhorts the Corinthians to abound in this grace also. But the greatest example, which should constrain to abundant giving is the Lord Jesus Himself. He was rich and became poor, even for such as the Corinthians were, "that through His poverty ye might be rich." ("His Riches--Our Riches," by A.C.G., unfolds the three leading truths of this precious word. The eternal Riches of the Son of God; His deep poverty in our behalf, and His Riches in resurrection-glory.)

What confidence the apostle had in the Corinthians that they would indeed abound in this grace. They had begun a year before not only to do, but to forward also. He urges them to act now in performing what they had begun. It depends upon the willing mind: without this giving has no value at all. But if there is the willing mind, one is accepted according to what he has, and not according to that he hath not.

And in all this ministration Paul exercised great caution, "avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us, providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." There is always danger of reproach in these matters. Messengers were chosen to travel with the apostle "with this grace (the collections) which is administered by us to the glory of the self-same Lord, and for a witness of your ready mind." The apostle knew the devices of the enemy and therefore watchfully guards against suspicion and mischievous insinuations. Alas! what havoc the filthy lucre, the love of money, covetousness, which is idolatry, has worked in the professing church, and what offenses have been given by it to unbelievers.

2. Exhortation and Encouragement.

CHAPTER 9

1. Further Exhortations to Liberality. 1-5

2. The Blessings Connected with Giving. 6-15.

Again he exhorts them to liberality in giving. He knew their willing mind and had boasted of it to them in Macedonia and told them they were ready a year ago. This had stimulated many. He hoped that they would measure up to this report and fall not behind in this expectation "lest our boasting should be in vain in this behalf." To encourage them in giving and carrying out what they had purposed, he speaks of the blessing: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." There is, then, blessing according to faithfulness in this ministry; as any other faithful ministry is not forgotten of God. Giving must not be grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. God Himself delights to give. In infinite love He gave His only begotten Son, and He delights in all who imitate Him in His ways. There is no compulsion in giving save the constraint of His love.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Such a loving ministry is not an unremunerative service. He is able to make up to all who, out of love, minister to the needs of poor and suffering and afflicted brethren. The apostle shows that thanksgiving to God would be the result of their loving ministry in giving. Three causes are specified:

1. Their subjection to the gospel.
2. Their liberal gifts to the Saints of God.
3. "By their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you" - that thanksgiving and glory to God for the fervent and longing prayers of other Saints, who received their ministry.

This section ends with thanksgiving unto God, "for His unspeakable gift." There is no need to add what that gift is, for every saint knows, God's unspeakable gift is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. THE APOSTLE'S SELF-DEFENSE AND VINDICATION. Chapters 10-13

1. The Vindication of His Authority

CHAPTER 10

The apostle now turns to vindicate the authority, which he had received from the Lord. This had been brought into question by the enemy. In doing this Satan aimed at three things: He attempted to discredit him as a true minister of God; he tried to damage the great truths the apostle preached, and he endeavored also to bring about a separation between the apostle and the Corinthians. Assuredly the great man of God was troubled and did not want to speak much of himself and his authority. But he was forced to do so in this epistle and also in the epistle to the Galatians, for the truth of God and the honor of the Lord were at stake. The defense of his apostolic authority stands in the foreground in Galatians; here he puts it at the close of his letter, for it was necessary to deal with other matters first, and to assure the Corinthians of his deep concern for them and thus pave the way for an answer to the accusations brought against him.

He begins by entreating them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The three words "Now I, Paul," were to remind them of his own person. It was the Paul who had come amongst them to preach the gospel, and through his preaching wonderful results had been brought about. And now attacked and belittled among the same people, who, next to God, had to thank him for everything, he begins to entreat them and vindicate his authority and character. He states, "Who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you." These words make partly reference to his personal appearance, which was not of a character which appealed to the Corinthians, who admired the athletic physique of the Greeks. Not alone was his outward form lowly, but he was equally so in his manner and conduct. From this we learn that his accusers, who tried to influence the Corinthians against him, had thrown contempt on his person and character. We shall find that he takes up repeatedly their false charges and insinuations, to meet and refute them. When he writes, "but being absent am bold toward you," he has in mind what his enemies had said about the epistle he had written them; they belittled his personal appearance and his character, and sneeringly said, he is bold when he is absent; he knows how to write strong letters when he is away, but otherwise he is a coward. He answers by saying,

"But I beseech you that I may not be bold when I am present with the confidence with which I think to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walk according to the flesh."

He beseeches them that he may not be obliged to use his authority as an apostle when among them, against those who had wronged him by their false charges. He had written in boldness, yet he could also act in boldness and with authority when he was present with them. They had accused him that he was walking on the same level with them, that is, "according to the flesh." This he repudiates by saying that he walks in flesh, (note in the Greek the word flesh is without the definite article; not "in the flesh", but "in flesh"), which is quite a different thing. He was a man like other men; but when it came to warfare, he waged no fleshly conflict. He acknowledges that he has no wisdom in himself; as to flesh he is powerless, he is cast upon God. How different from these false teachers, his accusers who walked in pride and boasted of wisdom and were governed by selfish motives. The weapons he used were not fleshly, but mighty through God; the weapons which the Holy Spirit supplies. And this spiritual warfare means "the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Well has it been said, "repression of the natural will, which is the seat and vehicle of Satan's machinations, is the true aim of spiritual warfare." Mere fleshly, independent "reasonings" and "imagination" are inconsistent with a real subjection to God. The natural man thinks his own thoughts and follows his own imaginations, but not so the believer: he abandons his own thoughts and imaginations; he casts down all that exalteth itself against the true knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. The Corinthians had not done this; they walked in a carnal way and the enemy got an advantage over them. And so it is largely today among God's people.

After stating that he was ready to avenge all disobedience, in virtue of his apostolic authority, when their obedience was fulfilled, he asks, "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" This is what they had done. "For his letters," say they, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." But he answers that just what he was in his letters when not with them, so would he also be when he is present with them. He speaks of his authority given to him by the Lord for edification and not for their destruction; he wanted them to know that he was not terrifying them by his letters. He did not dare to do as others did, commending himself. Those who opposed him constantly measured themselves among themselves, and not in God's presence. He acted differently. "But we will not boast of things without measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you." He disavowed all connection and comparison with those whose glory was of themselves, and though he had greater gifts bestowed upon himself than others, yet he would not boast of it. The measure which God had given to him had reached unto the Corinthians, for they were the fruit of his labors. He did not boast of other men's labors, and hoped that with an increase of their faith there would also be an increase of his labors even to the regions beyond.

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." If there is any glorying it must be in Him, who is the only proper object. He must be glorified by the true minister; He must be praised and exalted, and not the instrument. Self-praise and self-commendation do not mean approval from the Lord, but the opposite. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." Self-commendation, the love of human praise in some form, disguised or undisguised, are prominent characteristics with many who preach and teach a great deal of truth in our days of boasting. Happy is the servant who hides himself, whose aim is to please the Lord and who looks to Him for approval.

2. Answering His Adversaries. His Boastings.

CHAPTER 11

1. The Danger Through False Teachers. 1-6

2. Answering His Adversaries. 7-15

3. His Boastings of Labors and Sufferings. 16-33.

Inasmuch as he did not want to boast, he tells the Corinthians to bear with him a little while he acts foolishly in speaking of himself. It had become necessary to do so in order to answer his adversaries, who were making havoc among the Corinthians, but he looks upon his vindication and boasting as nothing less than folly. He is about to do what he had exposed in others in the previous chapter (verse 12). He therefore asks their indulgence. What he did he asked them to look upon as being folly, but to remember that it was for their sakes. He was jealous over them, not with a jealousy which originated in the spirit of a natural emulation, but with godly jealousy. He had espoused them to one husband, so that he might present them a chaste virgin to Christ.

The church is the bride of Christ. He as God's messenger by the preaching of the Gospel of Grace, and the acceptance of it by the Corinthians, had betrothed them as an assembly to the Lord. His jealous desire was to present the Corinthian church to the bridegroom in the coming day. He had his grave fears that as the serpent had beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so their minds might also be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Eve was for Adam, and so the church is for Christ and for Him alone. Eve was deceived by listening to another voice. Even so the Corinthians were listening to other voices and their simple faith was being corrupted by false teachings. Behind it stood the same enemy who had deceived Eve. Was there another Christ, which these teachers preached, than the Christ he had preached? Or were they receiving another and a better Comforter, another Holy Spirit, than the One they had received in believing the Gospel Paul had preached unto them? Or, have these men brought you a better gospel? If such were the case, they could bear with it. But how could there

be another Jesus, or a better Comforter or a better gospel? He was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles; though he had, for the gospel's sake, abstained from excellency of speech, yet in all things had he been manifest among them.

Evidently the great apostle searched his heart and life to discover the cause of the alienation of the Corinthians. Was the offence perhaps in taking nothing from them and preaching the gospel freely, without money? It was his boast that he took nothing from them, as the brethren in Macedonia had ministered to his needs. But his boast was that he had preached the gospel in Achaia gratuitously. But why? Because he loved them not? God was his witness that such was not the case. It was to take away from these false teachers the boasting of preaching for nothing, so that they could not say, we labor gratuitously while the apostle receives money for his services.

And who were these teachers? The Holy Spirit now exposes the true character of these men. They were not apostles at all, but deceitful workers, who transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ. They were the instruments of that sinister being who was once an angel of light and whose most powerful tactic is to assume this character, to which he had lost all claim by his fall. These false teachers posed as ministers of righteousness. They made high pretensions, yet denied the true righteousness of God. We see much of this in our own days, especially in systems like Christian Science and others.

From dealing with the deceivers, he turns now to those who had become ensnared by them (verse 16). Reluctantly he speaks of himself again. To boast of anything except the Lord was a foolish thing to Paul. "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also." Inasmuch as they compelled him to glory (12:11), he is therefore ready to show what reasons he had for boasting. These Judaizing teachers boasted much of being Hebrews, of the seed of Abraham. But so was Paul. They boasted of being ministers of Christ. And here the apostle marshals his wonderful proofs of how much he excels in his ministries and labor. What other one could say what he rightfully said of himself? "In labors exceedingly abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." Then follows the remarkable record. If it had not been for these evil teachers who had invaded the Corinthian church, we would never have known of these experiences of the great man of God, for the historical record, the Book of Acts, does not give us a full account of his devotedness and trials. And most likely even this list is not complete.

"Troubles and dangers without, incessant anxieties within, a courage that quailed before no peril, a love for poor sinners and for the assembly that nothing chilled--these few lines sketch the picture of a life of such absolute devotedness that it touches the coldest heart; it makes us feel all our selfishness, and bend the knee before Him who was the living source of the blessed apostle's devotedness, before Him whose glory inspired it" (Synopsis).

And if he must needs glory, he would glory in his infirmities, in his helplessness. Why should he mention the otherwise unrecorded incident of his escape from Damascus? It was an inglorious experience. There was nothing to glory in, for no miracle took place to preserve him, nor angelic interference. Anyone who gloried in himself would never have mentioned so humiliating an experience.

3. Revelation in which He Might Glory. His Apostleship.

CHAPTER 12

1. Caught up to the Third Heaven. 1-6
2. The Thorn in the Flesh. 7-10
3. The Marks of His Apostleship. 11-15
4. His Continued Deep Concern. 16-21.

In the previous chapter the apostle gloried in that which in the eyes of man has no glory at all. From the ignominious experience of being let down in a basket he turns to another experience in which he was caught into the third heaven. "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." Of these he undoubtedly had many, given to him by the Lord, to comfort

and strengthen him. We would never have heard of this great spiritual experience he speaks of now, if he had not felt the need of boasting on account of the deceiving teachers among the Corinthians. He had kept it as a secret to himself for fourteen years; an evidence of his humility. (What a contrast with a certain class of people in our own times who claim to have returned to apostolic faith and apostolic power. They also speak much of visions and revelations, but they constantly make them known, print them in tract form, etc. Often they think themselves more advanced in spiritual things than others and give sad evidences of being puffed up.) In telling us of this experience he does not speak of himself as the apostle, but "as a man in Christ." It was therefore not a distinction put upon him on account of his calling as an apostle. As a man in Christ, that is, a heavenly man, for such every believer is, he was taken up in a marvelous, unaccountable way, into the heavenly sphere.

"Paul was in a state neither intelligible to himself nor explicable to his brethren. Yet he knows well the man, and can attest the visions which he is unable to describe. It was himself, but in a condition equally distinct from nature and from ordinary spiritual experience. He had while in this state a faculty of perception independent of both bodily and mental organs." He was in this state, undefined by himself, caught up into the third heaven and being caught up into paradise, he heard unspeakable words, which it is not allowed to man to utter. The word "paradise" is found but three times in the New Testament. The Lord used it first in speaking to the dying thief (Luke 23:43) promising him that he would be with Him in that blessed place that very day. Once more our Lord uses this word, promising the overcomer to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).

The passage here is the third in which this word is used. It is the wonderful place above in His glorious presence, and Paul, being caught up to that place, had a foretaste of the joys and blessings of the redeemed. But he does not tell us anything he saw, but only what he heard. And the words he heard were unspeakable; they were unutterable --he had not the ability nor the permission to make them known. Thus the apostle, to whom the great truth concerning the church and her heavenly destiny was especially committed, passed through this great experience. And all who are "in Christ," who constitute the body of Christ, will ultimately be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air and be forever with the Lord. Then we shall know the unspeakable words. Surely the heart burns within us when we think of such a destiny. And Paul saith, "Of such a one will I glory, but of myself will I not glory." It was of himself as in Christ he gloried; as he looked to himself as a man, the earthen vessel, he could not glory, save in his infirmities. But was there not danger of being exalted on account of this great experience? Linked with the revelation, is the thorn in the flesh.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through this abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

There was danger of pride of heart after such a vision, and so the Lord permitted a messenger of Satan to buffet the apostle for his own good. Here we have one of the most interesting evidences, that the flesh, the proud, old nature, is still in the believer and not eradicated as some claim. He had perhaps the greatest experience a human being ever had, and yet, though he did not exalt himself, in view of the tendency of the old nature to lift itself up, there was given him this thorn in the flesh. ("Alas! what is man? But God is watchful; in His grace He provided for the danger of His poor servant. To have taken him up to a fourth heaven--so to speak--would only have increased the danger. There is no way of amending the flesh; the presence of God silences it. It will boast of it as soon as it is no longer there. To walk safely, it must be held in check, such as it is. We have to reckon it dead; but it often requires to be bridled, that the heart be not drawn away from God by its means, and that it may neither impede our walk nor spoil our testimony."--Synopsis.)

What was this thorn in the flesh? Numerous answers have been given to this question. It is evident that it was not something sinful as some suggested, but it must have been some affliction in his body, which made him contemptible in the eyes of others and in his preaching. The exact nature of this affliction in the flesh cannot be determined. And he had gone to the Lord with this thorn in his flesh. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." And the answer came to him. The thorn was not taken away but something better he hears from his Lord. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The assurance of the sufficiency of divine grace was to comfort his heart in the affliction, and that the power of God needed his weakness for its display, was to encourage him as the servant of the Lord. He at once understood the divine message. It enabled him not only to bear with infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, but to take pleasure in them, for he knew all these things were the things which enable God to manifest His power. He therefore gloried most gladly in infirmities.

They had compelled him to become a fool in glorying. It should have been different. Instead of his self-defense and vindication in writing all these things to them they should have commended him, for in nothing he was behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, yet he adds "though I be nothing." He speaks of the signs of an Apostle which were wrought among them by himself. What love and tenderness he manifests once more towards his weak and wavering Corinthian brethren! And still he has deep concern about them. "For I fear lest, perhaps when I come, I find you not such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be strifes, emulations, wraths, contentions, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults; and lest when I come again, my God should humble me with regard to you, and that I shall bewail many who have sinned before, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed." What a Christ-like servant he was!

4. Still Absent - Yet Coming. The Conclusion.

CHAPTER 13

1. Being Absent; Expecting to Come. 1-10.

2. The Conclusion. 11-14.

He speaks in conclusion of his coming to them. "This third time I am coming to you." And when he comes again he will not spare them. He reminds them once more of their doubtings about Christ speaking in him and using him as an apostle. They themselves were proof of this. If it were that Christ had not spoken to them through him (by preaching the Gospel), then Christ also did not dwell in them. But if Christ really was in them then it was an evidence that Christ had spoken by him. Notice that part of the third verse and the fourth verse are parenthetical. Leaving out the parenthetical words gives us the correct argument. "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me--examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. Do ye not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" What he wished was their perfecting. Why had he written this second epistle? "I write these things being absent, but being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

"Finally, brethren, rejoice." (Not farewell, but rejoice.) And the believers joy as well as glorying is in the Lord. "Be perfected; be of good comfort; be of one mind; be at peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelien

Introduction

This epistle was addressed to the churches in Galatia. The authorship of this document has never been doubted and it has been well stated that "whoever is prepared to deny the genuineness of this epistle, would pronounce on himself the sentence of incapacity to distinguish true from false." Like the Corinthian epistle this Galatian epistle has in every way the characteristic marks of the Apostle Paul.

Galatia was a prominent province of Asia Minor. The leading cities were Ancyra, Pessinus and Tavium. The inhabitants of Galatia were not Orientals, but Gauls or Celts. They had pillaged Delphi in the third century before Christ and had settled in the central parts of Asia Minor, which was then named Gallograecia or Galatia. Classical writers give a description of their character. "The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves and fond of change, and not to be trusted." The leading characteristic seems to have been fickleness, which is also prominent in the opening chapter of this epistle. The apostle was greatly surprised by it. "I marvel that ye are so quickly changing from him who called you in the power of the grace of Christ unto another Gospel." When the apostle had visited them for the first time, they had received him with open arms and had shown him much kindness. But when afterwards false teachers appeared amongst them, who preached another Gospel, they listened willingly to them and became cold and indifferent towards the Apostle Paul and the Gospel he had brought to them. They had received the Gospel and experienced its blessed power, but they were so unstable that they were about ready to give up the Gospel of Grace and to turn back to the weak and beggarly elements, to the law and its ordinances.

Paul had been in Galatia (Acts 16: 6). He had preached the Gospel in this province and God had blessed the preaching, so that many were saved and a number of churches were founded. From chapter 4: 13-14 in this epistle, we learn something additional. "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you, at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." It seems he was then troubled with the thorn in the flesh. They had received him as a messenger of God and sympathized with his affliction that if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to Paul (4: 15). From this statement some have concluded that Paul's affliction was the well-known oriental eye-disease, ophthalmia. Later he visited Galatia again and strengthened the disciples (Acts 18: 23).

The Work of Judaizing Teachers

The men who had gone to the Galatian churches and disturbed them were Judaizing teachers. Their evil teaching consisted in a denial of the Gospel of Grace, so blessedly unfolded in the epistle to the Romans. They taught that a simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not sufficient for salvation, that in order to be saved the keeping of the law is necessary and that a Christian must observe the precepts of the law of Moses. Circumcision was especially emphasized by them. They had been to Antioch and taught "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15: 1). They had also constrained the Galatians to submit to circumcision (5: 2; 6: 12). In order to establish themselves, they tried to undermine the apostleship of Paul and they attacked his authority. Peter evidently was in their eyes the great apostle of authority and as Paul was independent of Peter in his ministry and apostleship, as he had not been sent by Peter, they belittled him. It seems as if the fable of an apostolic succession was invented by these perverters of the Gospel of Grace.

The Object of the Epistle

The object of this epistle is the defense of the Gospel which Paul had received by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In order to

do this successfully the apostle had first of all to defend his own apostolic authority. After he had done so he fully exposed the evil teachings by which the Galatians were being deceived and showed them the perniciousness of the doctrine to which they had listened. The work of Christ on the cross was at stake, "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The exposure is made by a number of contrasts between law and grace in which the apostle shows what the law could not do and what grace has done. The object of the epistle therefore is to defend the gospel, as he writes in the second chapter "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you;" to point out the seriousness of the false teaching which was, through Satan's power, bewitching them, and in warning them to lead them back upon the foundation of grace from which they had fallen.

The Practical Value and Importance

From critical sides it has repeatedly been stated that the Epistle to the Galatians contains a controversy of the church in the first century which has no longer interest for us, as there is no danger of Christians becoming Jews. Who would think in the twentieth century of submitting to circumcision in order to be saved? Or who would keep the ordinances of the law and Jewish holidays to obtain righteousness? And so this epistle is looked upon by some as having little value for our times. But the opposite is true. The perverted gospel which is so severely condemned in this epistle, upon which the anathema is pronounced, is the very gospel which is almost universally preached and accepted in our days. Christendom is thoroughly leavened with the leaven of legalism. And even a little leaven of it leaveneth the whole lump (5: 9). To begin with, ritualism, so prominent in Christendom, is Galatianism. In fact ritualism had its beginning in the Judaizing teachers, who mixed law and grace and taught that ordinances are necessary for salvation. Their fatal error was the principle that works are needed to justify a sinner before God and that blessings can only come through ordinances. And this is the error in ritualistic Christendom. These Judaizing teachers looked to man and human authority; they acknowledged Peter as the apostle of authority. Ritualism teaches human authority and believes in a succession which has its source in Peter. Ritualism in denying the gospel of grace and teaching the necessity of law--keeping ordinances, keeping of holidays, has become corrupt in doctrine and practice. The all-sufficiency of the work of Christ is no longer believed and Christ Himself is dishonored. Romanism is the great and powerful Galatian system. It is branded in Revelation as the great whore, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Protestantism also is leavened by this evil leaven of legalism. Works and ordinances are in many denominations looked upon as being necessary to obtain righteousness and blessings from God. There is hardly any denomination which is free from the Galatian error. It is often present in a very subtle form. Most prominent today is that evil doctrine which maintains that salvation is by character. They speak of Christ and believe in Christ helping man, but that salvation is by grace, and that an eternal and perfect salvation is the free gift of God bestowed upon the believing sinner, on account of the finished work on the cross, is denied. This also is a perverted gospel, which is exposed in this epistle. We shall point out more fully in the exposition of the text the different errors and phases of legalism. The epistle, in view of the present day drift away from the gospel of grace, is of great importance. This great defense of the gospel should be much studied and obeyed by all who stand for and love the faith delivered unto the Saints.

The time when the epistle was written and where it was written cannot be positively determined. It is probable that Paul wrote the epistle while he was at Ephesus (Acts 19) from autumn 54 till Pentecost 57. The subscription "written from Rome " is incorrect.

The Division of Galatians

The Epistle consists of three parts. In the first part (chapters 1 and 2) the apostle defends his apostolic authority and that he was absolutely independent of those who were apostles before him. He shows how he became an apostle and traces his own experience. Then he speaks of his visit to Jerusalem and what took place there at that time. The gospel he preached had been acknowledged by James, Peter and John, a fact which these Judaizing teachers had kept from the Galatians. A third fact is brought by Paul to their attention. Peter had been made prominent by these false teachers; they made it appear as if all the authority was invested in Peter. Perhaps they spoke of him as almost perfect. But Paul shows that Peter had no authority whatever over him. Paul had rebuked him when he had done wrong and committed a most serious mistake.

The second part (chapters 3 and 4) contains the defense of the truth of the gospel itself. The Holy Spirit leads deep into the blessed truths of Christianity, and by a number of vital contrasts between law and grace shows what the law cannot do and what grace has done. Not ordinances, the works of the law make a sinner righteous before God, but it is faith which justifies. Why the law was given and how the limit of the law is reached when faith has come, as well as the blessed fact

that those who are of faith are sons and heirs of God, indwelt by the Spirit of sonship, is all unfolded in this section. Here we learn that the law cannot give righteousness and that the justified believer is no longer under the law. "We are no longer under the schoolmaster." The third part (chapters 5 and 6) shows how a believer who is justified by faith, no longer under the law, but under grace, should walk. It is the walk in the Spirit and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. The division of this epistle is therefore as follows:

I. THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL CONCERNING HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY. Chapters 1-2

II. CONTRASTS BETWEEN LAW AND GRACE. Chapters 3-4

III. THE WALK OF THE JUSTIFIED BELIEVER, AS NOT UNDER THE LAW BUT UNDER GRACE. Chapters 5-6

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL CONCERNING HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND THE GOSPEL

CHAPTER 1

1. The Introduction. 1-5

2. The Rebuke. 6-10

3. Paul's Gospel Given by Revelation. 11-12

4. How Paul became an Apostle Independent of Jerusalem. 13-24

The introductory words of this Epistle are brief and of deep significance. He speaks of himself as an apostle not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father. His apostleship had been called in question and the gospel he preached branded as lacking authority. This opening statement of how Paul became an apostle is more fully developed in the main part of this chapter (verses 11-24). He did not receive his apostleship through any man; his authority was neither successional nor derived. The Judaizing teachers who had sown their evil seed among the Galatians, had spoken of Peter as the apostle with authority and probably demanded that he should be recognized as the ecclesiastical head. Inasmuch as Paul had not been constituted an apostle through Peter's authority, they said that he was no apostle at all. With their wrong doctrines about the law as a means to obtain righteousness, they evidently attempted to foster upon Christian ground an ecclesiastical authority, corresponding to the successional priesthood of the law covenant. What was begun by these false teachers has become the curse of Christianity, for any priestly assumption in the church is the corruption of Christian doctrine.

The Apostle Paul declares therefore that the source of his authority and his ministry was higher than man. He received his commission "through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from among the dead." On the way to Damascus the risen Christ appeared to him in glory and made him an apostle. God the Father, who had raised His Son from the dead and gave Him glory (1 Peter 1: 21) also made Paul an apostle. To be one of the twelve apostles it was necessary to have been an eyewitness of His deeds and a listener to His words (Acts 1: 21). Matthias met this requirement and was therefore divinely chosen to fill the place of Judas. Some teach that Paul should have been put in the apostolate as the twelfth. But Paul could not have been one of the twelve apostles for he did not follow the Lord Jesus during the days of His earthly ministry. He did not know Christ after the flesh, but his acquaintance with Him began when he beheld Him in resurrection-glory. All his ministry, the gospel he preached, the glorious truths he taught, had their blessed source in the risen and exalted Christ. He therefore owned no other source, no other authority, but God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he mentions in these introductory words "all the brethren which are with me." This means that the brethren with him endorsed all he was about to write to the Galatians in his great, God-given defense of the gospel. None of them could have any sympathy whatever with the most serious errors, aiming at the very heart of true Christianity, to which the Galatians had been willing listeners.

Another important fact is that the epistle is not addressed "to the church in Galatia " but "to the churches." The Spirit of God in the Corinthian Epistles addressed the Corinthians as "the church of God, the sanctified in Christ, called Saints" (1 Corinthians 1: 2). In spite of their carnal walk and their spiritual declension the church in Corinth is recognized as being the church of God and its members as Saints. In writing to the Galatians, who were relinquishing the essential truths of the gospel of grace, departing from it and going back to the law as a means of justification, the Spirit of God does not make use of these distinguishing terms. He does not recognize as the church of God those who fall away from grace. From this we may learn that doctrinal evil is even a more serious matter than moral evil. How serious a thing a perverted gospel is we shall soon discover. "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to Whom be glory forever and ever, Amen." The great truth in these concluding introductory words the Galatians had forgotten. Righteousness cannot come by the law, to which the Galatians were turning again. Man destitute of all righteousness, helpless to obtain any kind of righteousness, is a lost and condemned sinner. But Christ came and gave Himself for our sins and to deliver us from this present evil age.

The words of introduction are followed by words of rebuke and painful surprise. The Apostle marvelled at their strange behavior, that they were so quickly changing from him who had called them in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel. From his lips they had heard the glad tidings of the grace of Christ when they were serving idols (4: 8). And now suddenly they were abandoning the gospel which had brought them such blessing, peace and power, and had saved them from the degradation of idolatry. They were accepting a different gospel, which was not another. Though another gospel was preached unto them, it was no gospel at all, for there can be no other gospel. There is but one gospel and that is the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, the love-gift of God, who became incarnate in order to die for sinners and be the propitiation for our sins. He finished the great work on the cross, a work which has glorified God and which enables Him to be a just God and a justifier (Romans 3: 26) of all them that believe in Jesus. And He who finished this work is at the right hand of God. Therefore God has not another gospel, nor can He tolerate the perversion of His gospel. This is what the false teachers among the Galatians were doing as Paul writes: "but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." They were perverting the gospel by teaching that the finished work of Christ was not sufficient for salvation, but that man must add his works, keep the law, and become circumcised. It was a God-dishonoring denial of the completeness and perfection of the work of Christ. And this perversion of the gospel, and more than that, the setting aside of that gospel altogether, is the almost universal thing in Christendom in our times. We hear much of "salvation by character," which is Satan's invention. Ritualism which makes ordinances the necessary means of salvation is another perversion of the gospel of grace; and so is the teaching of Seventh Day Adventism. The phrase one hears so much, "God has done His part and we must do our part," is another phase of a perverted gospel. Man is a lost sinner, helpless and hopeless in himself; he can do nothing, for he is without strength (Romans 5: 6). The doing is all on God's side; all the sinner can do is to accept what the grace of God in Christ offers to him. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2: 8-9).

"But though we, or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any other gospel than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (anathema). As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any other gospel than that ye did receive, let him be accursed." These are strong and solemn words. Some have suggested that Paul was carried away by his passion, when he heard that his authority had been impeached, and that he wrote unwisely. They forget that it was not Paul who penned these words but the Spirit of God. The anathema upon the perverters of the gospel of Christ is fully justified when we consider what is at stake. The perversion of the gospel touches the unspeakably blessed work of Christ on Calvary 's cross. If in any way righteousness is through the law, by what man does, then Christ died in vain (2: 21). Behind every perversion of the gospel, be it Ritualism, Christian Science, Seventh-Day Keeping, the new theology and other systems, stands the enemy of the truth of God, who always aims at the Person and Work of Christ. God, and it is a solemn truth, can do nothing else than put His curse upon those who reject, pervert and falsify the gospel of His Son. The ardent words of the apostle are very remarkable. The Holy Spirit has given us God's own testimony, that if an angel came to teach what the apostle had not taught, he would be anathema. It little mattered who he might be, if he contradicted the testimony of God. Paul well knew that he had received it from God Himself, and he who opposed or falsified it, opposed the authority of God, and the truth which He in His grace made known.

Let Christians take heed to the solemn words of the apostle. We possess them in this Epistle, as well as in others which he wrote. They are the touchstone for all teaching; and we need to study them in order to know if he who speaks, tells us the truth of God. So solemn was this point, so deeply was it felt by the apostle, that he again repeats what he had before said--

that whoever should preach any other gospel than that which the Galatians had received from himself, should be anathema.--J. Nelson Darby.

Nor must we forget that a day is coming when the divine anathema pronounced here will be executed. God will surely not tolerate forever the rejection of His Son and the work He accomplished. The vengeance of God is in store for all who do not obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1: 8). The doom of an apostate Christendom is pre-written in God's Word; and the apostasy is the rejection and perversion of the gospel. Let God's people everywhere witness against the spurious gospel as positively and solemnly as the great servant of Christ did in these words.

In his testimony and service he was not a man-pleaser, "for if I were pleasing men, I should not be the servant of Christ." He did not seek the applause of men and of the world. If he accommodated himself to men, seeking to please them, he would not be Christ's servant. Characteristic of the preachers of a perverted gospel is that they are catering to the wishes of men. When sound doctrine is no longer endured, then after their own lusts do they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears (2 Timothy 4: 3). And Jude describes these "men-pleasers" as follows: "Their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16).

The words of rebuke are followed by an historical account of his ministry, how he received the gospel and how he became an apostle independent of Jerusalem. The gospel he preached was not according to man, by which he meant, that he had not received it from any man, nor had somebody taught it to him. He did not get his instructions from those who were apostles before him. He had received it all by the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ. It is then incorrect to speak of a "Pauline theology" and "Pauline gospel" as if his mind had somehow put it all together and constructed a gospel-scheme. No Mind of man could have ever invented or discovered the marvelous truths of the gospel. It is supernatural in its revelation and in its power. He then traces his remarkable experience once more, what a religious, zealous, law-keeping Jew he was. And where did all his zeal, his law-keeping lead him? It made him a persecutor of the church of God. (Legalism is harsh like the law which can only curse man. The great legalistic and ritualistic system, Rome, is the persecutor of the Saints of God. Wherever grace is denied and the legal principle is made prominent harshness and intolerance are the results, if not actual persecution.) On the road to Damascus the God who had separated him called him by his grace, and the Son of God in His glory was revealed to him as well as in him, so that He might preach Him to the Gentiles. And he did not confer with flesh and blood after his conversion, neither did he go to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before him. To go up to Jerusalem would have been for him a natural thing; to go back to the city where he had wrought such havoc as a persecutor and there to confess his guilt and testify of Christ, may have appealed to him as manly. But he did not confer with flesh and blood; he did not follow his own reasonings. And why should he go to Jerusalem to consult with the other apostles? Should he go there to report to them of what had happened, ask their council and gain their sanction? All this was unnecessary for he had received his call and commission from the Lord, and there was no need to go and consult any man about it. His independence of Jerusalem and his dependence on the Lord as His servant is thereby established. Jerusalem did not make him an apostle; the Lord had done this. Instead of going to see the apostles and put himself under them he went under the Lord, into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. After three years he went up to Jerusalem to visit with Peter. What happened during that visit? The apostles did not meet in council to examine Paul about his experience and fitness to preach the gospel. He did not seek the sanction or authority of Jerusalem, but he abode there with Peter for only fifteen days, to become acquainted with him. The other apostles he did not see at all, not even the beloved disciple, save James, the Lord's brother. All this proves his claim "an apostle not from men, nor through man." Afterwards he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, everywhere preaching and teaching his God-given gospel. The many churches of Judea did not know him by face, but heard that the erstwhile persecutor now preached the faith he once destroyed. He tells the Galatians how little he had to do with Peter and the other apostles. The false teachers had brought this against him and had challenged his authority as an apostle on account of not being linked with Peter. He fully avows all this and shows that his apostleship was entirely independent of Jerusalem and the twelve apostles. And here we have the character of true New Testament ministry. It is from the Lord, independent of man and human, ecclesiastical authority. Its message is the message of God.

CHAPTER 2

1. How Jerusalem had Confirmed the Gospel Paul Preached. 1-10
2. Peter's Failure; Paul's Rebuke and Testimony. 11-21

Fourteen years passed by before he ever saw Jerusalem again. What wonderful years of service these years were! The great servant of Christ had preached the divine message in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The day of Christ will reveal the blessed results of these years. Acts 15 must be read to see why Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem. The same false teachers had visited the great Gentile center, Antioch, and taught "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Then Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go to Jerusalem to lay this question before the apostles and elders. Here the additional information is given that Paul went up by a direct revelation from God. It shows his dependence on the Lord. They also took Titus with them, who was a Gentile believer and not circumcised. He was acknowledged as in Christian fellowship and not compelled to be circumcised. This, in itself, was sufficient evidence that the apostles in Jerusalem did not sanction the teaching that circumcision is necessary for salvation. Paul communicated to the leaders in Jerusalem the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. He did so privately first, for there was grave danger of a division in the body of Christ which he wanted to avoid; he did this so that he might not run in vain. In all this he manifested a gracious spirit. But when the false brethren introduced their perverted gospel to bring him and his fellow-laborers into bondage, he did not yield to them for a moment, but contended earnestly for the faith "that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you." The result was the full confirmation of the Gospel Paul preached, by James, Cephas and John, who gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. The pillars of the church, as these three Apostles are called, recognized the fact that the gospel of the uncircumcision had been committed unto Paul, as the gospel to the circumcision was Peter's calling and ministry. Both apostleships were from God and depended upon His gift. Thus the Apostle Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, to whom was also committed the truth concerning the church, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, one body with Christ as the Head.

"It is evident that these facts are of great importance in the history of the church of God. How often have we not heard Peter spoken of as head of the church. That Peter, ardent and full of zeal, began the work at Jerusalem, the Lord working mightily by his means, is certain; we see it plainly in scripture. But he had nothing to do with the work carried on among the Gentiles. That work was done by Paul, who was sent by the Lord, Himself, and Paul entirely rejected the authority of Peter. For him, Peter was but a man; and he, sent by Christ, was independent of men. The church among the Gentiles is the fruit of Paul's, not of Peter's work, it owed its origin to Paul and to his labor, and in no way to Peter, whom Paul had to resist with all his strength, in order to keep the assemblies among the Gentiles free from the influence of that spirit which ruled Christians, who were the fruit of Peter's work. God maintained unity by His grace; had He not kept the church, it would have been divided into two parts, even in the days of the Apostles themselves" (Darby, Epistle to the Galatians).

This confirmation of Paul and the gospel he preached was a complete answer to the false claims and accusations of the enemies of the apostle.

A more serious matter is next brought to our attention. It shows the failure of Peter and how he had compromised the truth of the gospel. This exposure was necessary, for the false teachers claimed for Peter a special place of authority as if he were the perfect apostle, whose words and actions were next to infallible. The perverted gospel which teaches law-keeping and ordinances as necessary means for salvation, puts up man as authority and looks to man and not to the risen and glorified Lord. The Judaistic claims of Peter's superiority was the starting point of the Romish system, which asserts that Peter occupied a place as the visible head of the church in Rome, and which has culminated in the wicked assumption that the popes are the infallible vice-regents of Christ on earth.

Peter had visited Antioch and Paul had to withstand him to the face, for he was blameworthy.

Coming to Antioch, where Peter found a large Gentile church he there enjoyed his liberty in Christ; he ate with the Gentiles, realizing that the middle wall of partition was broken down (Ephesians 2: 14) and that believing Jews and Gentiles were one in Christ. All went well till some from James in Jerusalem showed themselves in Antioch. Then Peter, afraid of opposition, not because he thought in the least that he was wrong, separated himself, leaving them which were of the circumcision. His example led the other Jewish believers to dissemble likewise with him and even Barnabas joined in and, as a result, the unity of the Spirit was given up and the truth of the gospel marred. And Paul when he saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, rebuked Peter before them all. The leaven of the Pharisee, hypocrisy, is manifest in Peter's action. He wanted to appear before those who were still Jewish in their customs and sentiments as being in sympathy with them, and therefore he gave up his liberty in Christ, which he knew was according to the truth of the gospel. Paul rebuking Peter in public shows that Peter had not the least authority over Paul.

"If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" These are the words Paul addressed to Peter. Why should Gentiles be forced to live as Jews, when Peter, being a Jew, had lived as the Gentiles? Verses 15-18 reveal the fatal consequences of Peter's action. He shows that Peter was a transgressor by building again what he had destroyed (verse 18). How had Peter done so and what suggested the question "Is, therefore, Christ the minister of sin?" (verse 17). When Peter refused to eat with the Gentiles he went back to the law and was thereby attempting to be justified by works; he was building again the law. But, previous to that, he had abandoned the law as a means of justification before God and he had believed in Jesus Christ to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law. He had found out that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." By building again the system of the law, which he had given up as unable to justify him, he made himself a transgressor, because he had left it. Inasmuch as it was Christ who had led him to do this--was, then, Christ a minister of sin? God forbid. It was the doctrine of Christ which had made him a transgressor in giving up the law; for in building it again and going back to it he acknowledged that he was wrong when he had rejected it as a means of justification. This is the argument of these verses.

The concluding verses of this chapter give the truth of the position of a believer in Christ who is justified by faith. It is Paul's individual testimony which every believer in Christ may repeat, for what was the apostle's position is ours also. "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live unto God." The law had pronounced the sentence of death and condemnation upon him and, through the law he had died to the law. But the sentence of the law was executed upon him in the person of Christ, who took the curse of the law, the condemnation, upon Himself, and believing in Christ he had died as to the old man. The law had slain him, but Christ had died in his stead, and thus he had died to the law, for the law only has dominion over a man as long as he lives. Death, the death of Christ, had freed him from the dominion of the law. As having died with Christ, he was dead to the law. (Romans 6-7 gives us the doctrine concerning these blessed facts of being dead to the law and delivered from the power of sin.)

All this is true of every believer. The great and precious truth of being dead with Christ and living unto God is blessedly stated in Paul's triumphant declaration, "I was crucified with Christ." (Not "I am crucified"; not in the sense of living as crucified with Christ, etc., but "I was crucified," put to death as to the old man, when Christ died.) The death of Christ has not only set the believer free from the guilt of sins, but has also put him to death as to the old man and delivered him from the power of sin in the flesh. "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin" (Romans 6: 6). Then follow the other equally blessed statements: "Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Dead to sin and the law, the believer no longer lives in his old life, but he has another life, which is Christ--"Christ liveth in me." It is that life which we receive, believing on Him.

The principle which governs this life is not the law principle, but it is a life lived in the faith of the Son of God. "All life in the creature has an object--we cannot walk without one. If the Lord Jesus is our life, He is also, personally, the object of the life, and we live by faith in Him. The heart sees Him, looks to Him, feeds upon Him, is assured of His love, for He gave Himself for us. The life that we live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Happy certainty! Blessed assurance! It is a new life, the old man is crucified, and Christ, whose perfect love we know, is the sole object of faith and of the heart."

"It is this which always characterizes the life of Christ in us: He Himself is its object--He alone. The fact, that it is by dying for us in love that He who was capable of it, the Son of God--has given us thus freed from sin this life as our own, being ever before the mind, in our eyes He is clothed with the love He has thus shown us. We live by faith of the Son of God, who has loved us, and given Himself for us. And here it is personal life, the individual faith that attaches us to Christ, and makes Him precious to us as the object of the soul's intimate faith." (Synopsis)

And then the conclusion. "I do not frustrate (set aside) the grace of God; for if righteousness is by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (or: has died for nothing). If righteousness can be obtained by works, by a self-made character, or through keeping ordinances, then the death of Christ was superfluous and the grace of God is set aside. Christ is dead in vain if there is any other way to obtain righteousness than by faith in Him and through the grace of God.

II. CONTRASTS BETWEEN LAW AND GRACE

CHAPTER 3

1. The gift of the Spirit not by the works of the law, but by hearing of faith. v.1-5
2. Righteousness not bestowed by the law, but by faith. v. 6-9
3. The law curses; the curse born by Christ. v. 10-14
4. The law cannot annul the covenant of promise, v. 15-18
5. Wherefore serveth the law? v. 19-22
6. Faith having come--no longer under the law, v.23-25
7. Sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, v. 26-29

What the law could not do and what grace has done for the believer in Christ is now unfolded. Paul addresses them as foolish, and asks, "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Who was responsible for the awful error they were following so destructive to the whole truth of the gospel? It was the witchery of Satan; as he tells them later, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you" (chapter 5: 7-8). As Christians, they possessed the Holy Spirit, as all true Christians receive Him and are sealed by the Spirit. They also enjoyed the ministry of the Spirit through the different gifts. And now he asks the question "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" There is no promise in the law that if it is kept in obedience, that God would send His Spirit to the heart of man to be the indwelling guest and make the obedient keeper of the law the temple of the Holy Spirit. The law does not promise even the Spirit. In Ezekiel 36: 27 the promise is made, "I will put My Spirit within you", but, as the context shows, this promise refers to the future when the remnant of Israel will turn to the Lord and the promised spiritual and national blessings are given to them through grace. The Galatians knew nothing of the law and were not under the law, for they were, by nature, idolaters. They had received the Spirit by hearing of faith. Before this great gift could ever be bestowed the Son of God had to die on the cross and be glorified (John 7: 39). And all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, also receive the great gift of grace, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship. They had received the Holy Spirit by simply believing. They were sealed by that Spirit and knew thereby that they were redeemed and the sons of God. If they possessed this seal of divine righteousness why should they add to it the works of the law? They acted, indeed, foolishly.

(Strange, unscriptural doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit are taught in different sects and parties. Some teach that the Christian should earnestly seek this gift, and the baptism with the Spirit. They claim that each individual must make a definite experience of receiving the baptism with the Spirit. This seeking includes, what they term, a full surrender, etc., and after enough seeking, surrender, giving up and praying, they claim to have received the power of the Holy Spirit. The argument here refutes this teaching. The Holy Spirit is given to every believer in Christ.)

The second argument is concerning righteousness. These false teachers made much of Abraham and the Jews honored him as the father of the nation. How did he obtain righteousness? It was not by the works of the law, for there was no law and no ordinances. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." He believed and grace imputed this to him for righteousness.

This took place before his circumcision. "How was it, then, reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also" (Romans 4: 10-13). Thus, righteousness is apart from the law and circumcision has nothing whatever to do with salvation; neither has baptism or any other ordinance. These Judaizing teachers and perverters of the gospel probably told the Galatians about being linked with Abraham and the privilege of being the children of Abraham. Paul writes them that, as believers, they are without the works of the law and circumcision, the children of Abraham. "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same

are the children of Abraham." And the Scriptures, the Word of God, had anticipated this. The Word of God foresaw that, ultimately, in God's gracious purpose, the Gentiles were to be justified by faith. The Word of God had, so to speak, preached the gospel unto Abraham, the very gospel Paul was heralding among the Gentiles. This gospel-message, preached by the Scriptures, is the announcement, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." The logical conclusion, therefore, is "they which be of faith are blessed with believing Abraham."

The law cannot give righteousness, but it gives man something and that is the curse. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The law demands obedience, but it has no power to give a nature which delights in the law to keep it, nor can it bestow the power to fulfill its demands. Nothing can the law give to the sinner, but the curse. (See quotation from Deuteronomy 27: 11-26. Six tribes were put on Mt. Gerizim to bless and six upon Mt. Ebal to curse. The six tribes on Gerizim were silent; they could utter no blessing, for the law cannot bless. But the tribes on Mt. Ebal uttered twelve times the word "Cursed." This is what the law does.)

But grace had also stated the faith principle in the Old Testament. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is manifest, for the just shall live by faith." But redemption has come. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." If a believer then goes back to the law and puts himself under that law, tries to live by it, he puts himself under the curse. He slights the precious work of Christ, who took the curse upon Himself, so that it can no longer fall upon us. And the result of Christ having removed the curse of the law is that the blessing of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Him, so that all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, should receive the promised Spirit.

In verses 15-18, the priority of the grace-covenant is shown and that the law-covenant which came 430 years after cannot disannul the former covenant nor make the promise of none effect. If a covenant is made and confirmed, it cannot be rightly disannulled nor can anything be added to the same. The promises were made to Abraham; they were unconditional promises with no "if" attached to them, grace is the foundation of them. These promises were, afterward, confirmed to his seed. And that one seed (not seeds) is Christ. Isaac was a type of Him. And the original promise that all nations should be blessed in Abraham (Genesis 12: 1-3) had been confirmed after the promised seed, Isaac, had been upon the altar (Genesis 22: 18). Isaac, upon the altar and taken from the altar, was a type of Christ, His death and resurrection (Hebrews 11: 19). The law-covenant can, therefore, not disannul the promise nor add to it. If the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

If, then, the law cannot give the Spirit of God, if it cannot give righteousness, if the law has no blessing for man, but pronounces a curse upon him, if it cannot, in any way, affect the original grace-covenant made with Abraham, confirmed in Isaac, then the logical question which follows is "Why did God give the law?"--"Wherefore, then, serveth the law?" (verse 19). The answer is "It was added because of transgressions." It was added not that sin might be curbed, or man might be saved by it, but that man might be constituted a transgressor and his hopeless and guilty condition fully demonstrated. It was introduced as a parenthetical thing, between the original promise and its fulfillment in Christ, in order that the moral condition of man might be manifested. (See also Romans 3: 20; 5: 13; 5: 20; 7: 7-9.) Therefore, it was a mere addition "till the seed (Christ) should come, to whom the promise was made." And the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. "Now, a mediator is not of one; but God is one." Angels in glory were present at Sinai (Psalm 68: 17); God did not reveal Himself in His glory and a mediator was needed, that is, Moses. The statement "a mediator is not of one" means that mediatorship necessitates two parties. So there were God and Israel, Moses between as the mediator. But in the promise, the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, God was the only One who spoke. Its fulfillment is not (as in the law-covenant) dependent upon a faithful God and Israel's obedience, but on God's faithfulness alone; all depended upon God Himself. The mediatorship of the Lord Jesus Christ is a different thing and not in view here at all. But the law is not against the promises of God. Man needed life; the law could not give that, neither can it give righteousness. All--Jews and Gentiles--were shut up under sin, so that the promise made to Abraham might be fulfilled to all believers through faith in Jesus Christ.

"Before faith came--that is, before Christ had died and faith, as the great principle for the fullest blessing, had been made known--we, the Jews, were kept under the law, shut up to the faith which should, afterwards, be revealed." The Apostle writes of the condition of the Jews before the cross of Christ and before the faith in Him was fully revealed. Therefore, the law was their schoolmaster unto Christ, that they might be justified by faith. The law was, for the Jews, a pedagogue, just

as a pedagogue in a Greek household had charge of the children during their minority. The authorized version, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," is not correct. Upon this the statement is often made that the law is like a whip to bring us to accept Christ. But that is not the meaning. The law was the schoolmaster for the Jews unto Christ, until Christ came--the schoolmaster up to the time of Christ. Verse 25 makes this clear. "But after that faith is come"--faith being fully made known after the finished work of Christ and preached in the Gospel--"we are no longer under the schoolmaster." A great change has come since the faith has been made known through the gospel. Not alone are believers no longer under the schoolmaster, but they are Sons of God. "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ." Life and righteousness, the life from above and the righteousness of God are needed for divine sonship. The law cannot give life and righteousness, but grace bestows both on the believer and makes him a son of God. Being baptized unto Christ, they had put on Christ and had assumed in profession the name of Christ; a new place given to all, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Inasmuch as they were Christ's, heirs of the promise, they could not be under the law. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

CHAPTER 4

1. Under the law in the state of minority. 1-3
2. The Son revealed to redeem. 4-5
3. Because ye are Sons; the Spirit of Sonship. 6-7
4. The backsliding Galatians. 8-20
5. The sons of the bondwoman and of the free woman. 21-31

Jewish believers were, before Christ had died, the children of God, and as such they did not differ from servants. They were in a state of minority, as children who do not know the father's thoughts, nor could they fully know God as Father.

"He compares the believer before the coming of Christ to a child under age, who has no direct relation with his father as to his thoughts, but who receives his father's orders, without his accounting for them to him, as a servant would receive them. He is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Thus the Jews, although they were heirs of the promises, were not in connection with the Father and His counsels in Jesus, but were in tutelage to principles that appertained to the system of the present world, which is but a corrupt and fallen creation. Their walk was ordained of God in this system, but did not go beyond it. We speak of the system by which they were guided, whatever divine light they might receive, from time to time, to reveal heaven to them, to encourage them in hope, while making the system under the rule of which they were placed yet darker. Under the law then, heirs as they were, they were still in bondage."--Synopsis

But a great change had taken place. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem those under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." God sent His Son from His bosom to become man and "made under the law." He took His place down here in two relationships. First with man, through the woman, and with the Jews, as born under the law. Sin and death came in by the woman; Christ came into this world by woman also. Through the law, man is under condemnation and Christ came as under that law. But that law was no bondage for Him. He fully worked out the righteousness of the law. Yet his righteous and holy life could not redeem those under the law. Redemption from the curse of the law was accomplished in the death of the Cross. And the glorious result of the coming of the Son of God and His finished work is for all believers in Him "the adoption of sons"--that is, placed, through grace, before God as sons. And because believing Jews and Gentiles are sons, through the efficacy of the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ, God sent the blessed proof and power of sonship. "He sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The Holy Spirit was given as the seal of redemption, and as the joy of sonship. "Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

"Was it possible, then, that any could desire to put the Gentiles under the law, when they (the Jews) had been brought out from it themselves by the will of God, the work of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Spirit? What a gross inconsistency!

What a subversion, not only of the truth of God revealed in the gospel, but also of redemption, which is its basis! For Christ bought off those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, bringing them, by grace, into a place of known salvation and intelligent joy in relation with our God and Father, out of that bondage and nonage which the law supposes."--W. Kelly

Then follows the appeal of the apostle to the backsliding Galatians, who were fast falling away from grace and turning to the weak and beggarly elements. Verses 8-10 are of much interest and significance. They were heathen, and knowing not God, they served idols. Now, as being converted, they had known God, or rather God had known them. Turning to Judaism, to the law with its ordinances, meant, for them, a turning back to the weak and beggarly elementary things in which they were as heathen. They were, practically, turning again to that which they had left--"how turn ye again?" As heathen they had ceremonies, different offerings, and they observed different days by which they tried to please their supposed gods. Ritualistic observances upon Christian ground are more than a perverted gospel: they are heathenish in principle. Some African fetich-priest attires himself in a fantastic costume. He takes a rattle, dances and mumbles something in an unintelligible way. Then he declares what he does will induce the gods to send rain. In a magnificent edifice caged "church" stands a man who wears different colored robes. This man goes through different ceremonies, bows and crosses himself, mumbles something in a foreign language, then lifts up a receptacle before which the people bow in worship. He claims that, through him, blessing comes upon the people. Both, the African heathen-priest and the ritualistic-priest follow the same principle, and the practice of the so-called "Christian priest" is as much heathenish as the practice of the other. And so as to the observance of special holy days, months and years. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." The gospel knows nothing of the observance of days and seasons such as saint-days, Lent, etc. All these special saint-days and most of the feast-days kept in Christendom were taken from the heathen.

Then what a tender appeal follows! He reminds them of the former days when he preached first the gospel unto them. In the infirmity of the flesh, physical weakness, they had not despised nor rejected him, but received him as an angel of God, as the Christ whose blessed ambassador he was. Then they enjoyed great blessedness and would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him. But where was their blessedness now? Had he become their enemy in speaking the truth to them? He addresses them as His little children "of whom I travail in birth again."

He needed, so to speak, to travail in birth afresh with them till Christ should be formed in them. Nevertheless, he calls them his children: his love inspired him with confidence, and yet filled his heart with uneasiness. He would have desired to be with them that he might change his voice, suiting it to their state; not only teaching them the truth, but doing whatever their need required. Mark here the deep love of the apostle. Moses, faithful as he was, grew weary of the burden of the people and said: Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers? (Numbers 11: 19); but the apostle is willing to travail in birth with them as his children a second time, in order that their souls might be saved.

Verses 21-31 give an interesting, typical foreshadowing and contrast. As they were abandoning grace, he wants the law to speak to them. Abraham had two sons, one by Hagar, the bondmaid, born after the flesh; the other son was Isaac, the son of promise, born by Sarah, the free woman. Both illustrate the covenants of God. Mount Sinai, the law-covenant, which gendereth to bondage, is represented in Hagar and her son; the other, the covenant of promise, "Jerusalem which is above"--the mother of us all--it is the true church of God viewed in her heavenly state; she is free. He quotes Isaiah 54: 1, "Rejoice thou, barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for the desolate has many more children than she which hath an husband." These words are addressed to Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom, in the time of her promised restoration. Then Israel, redeemed and blessed, will look back and find that, during our age, this gospel-age, many more children were begotten by the gospel, during the time when Israel was cast off and Jerusalem trodden down by the Gentiles than at the time when Jerusalem flourished and enjoyed the favor of Jehovah. "Now, we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Those who believe and are saved by grace are, therefore, the true children of promise. But, as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted "him that was after the Spirit, even so it is now." The Jews persecuted Paul for preaching the gospel. They opposed the gospel and all those who believed in Christ. But what was said about the bondwoman and her son? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the free woman." This has happened to Israel; she, for a time, is disowned and their house is left desolate. "So then, therefore, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." It would be impossible

to be children of both. Equally impossible is it to be under law and under grace. The two cannot exist together. We are children of the free woman and of her only and have nothing whatever to do with the law-covenant. We belong to a risen Christ, with whom we have died, who has borne the curse for us and bestowed upon us life and righteousness, and, therefore, we are free from the law, from its service and ceremonies.

III. THE WALK OF THE JUSTIFIED BELIEVER, AS NOT UNDER THE LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE

CHAPTER 5

1. Stand fast! Be not entangled! 1-6
2. Exhortations and the law of love. 7-15
3. Flesh and Spirit. 16-21
4. The Fruit of the Spirit. 22-26

The first exhortation is to maintain, by faith, the liberty which is found in Christ, to stand fast in that liberty where with Christ has made the believer free and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. The believer has perfect liberty in Christ; he is absolutely dead to the law and the law is not to be used by him in any way. But verse 13, where the apostle speaks again of this liberty, must be brought in connection with the opening statement of this chapter. "For, brethren, ye have been called into liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." The liberty the believer has in Christ is to be used for holiness. When God redeems from the curse of the law it is a redemption unto holiness, to live a righteous and holy life; the holy Spirit indwelling the believer does not give license to live after the flesh.

But as being in Christ, dead to the law, if they become circumcised Christ would profit them nothing and they were bound to fulfill the whole law. Going back to the law for righteousness, they had fallen from grace. This is the only time "fallen from grace" is used in the Bible. It has been strangely misapplied by a certain system of theology to deny the security of the believer in Christ. It is generally used to describe a Christian who has fallen in sin and, as it is claimed, lost his relationship as a child of God and is, therefore, once more under judgment. Falling from grace does not mean this; it means to give up the grace of the gospel in order to satisfy the requirements of the law. To go back under the law and its bondage is falling from grace. Verse 5 does not mean that a believer hopes for righteousness; he possesses righteousness by faith. Indwelt by the Spirit, the believer waits not for righteousness, but for the hope of righteousness by faith. And the hope of righteousness is the coming glory, when all those who are saved by grace will be glorified and be like Christ.

Then the earnest pleadings and warnings. They had run well; who hindered them? It was Satan who had led them astray. Once more leaven is used. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Even so it is today in Christendom. The leaven of a perverted gospel has well nigh leavened everything. He was deeply concerned about the spiritual condition of these Galatian Christians. But while he was in doubt about them and he was overwhelmed with grief because they abandoned grace, his heart, after all, was also in peace about them. "I have confidence in you through the Lord that ye will be now otherwise minded." He cast them as his burden upon the Lord and he knew the Lord, who loveth His own, would after all bring it about that they would surely not be otherwise minded.

He who troubled them and bewitched them with that spurious gospel, whosoever he would be, would bear his judgment; and he wishes that these troublers were cut off. "And I, brethren, if I preach yet circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then is the offence of the cross ceased." He had probably been charged by some of endorsing circumcision and preaching it. If such were the case, what further excuse was there for the Jews to persecute him? If he were still preaching circumcision the offence of the cross would have been done away. Circumcision stands for the religion of the natural man. The religious spirit of the natural man is always in opposition to the true gospel. Difficulties will cease and the world will even applaud the preaching if the religion of the flesh, the "do-religion" -- "observe" -- "keep" -- "reform", etc., is proclaimed. Of this we see much today. The true gospel of grace, proclaimed upon the finished work of Christ, with nothing to do and nothing to pay, is still the same stumbling-block.

The believer possesses in Christ true liberty (verse 13); a liberty, as already stated, not to sin, but to walk and serve God in holiness. It is the liberty of the new nature, the divine nature, which gives power over sin. The law seeks to constrain the old nature, which is impossible; but it is the mighty constraint of love, given by the Holy Spirit. And that love is the fulfillment of the law. The law, as a rule, for the believer's life is, therefore, not needed. The gospel of grace sets the believer free and makes him happy in the assurance of God's love and his own salvation; and the Holy Spirit is there. Under His guidance and power, walking in the Spirit, the lust of the flesh will not be fulfilled. And the believer, walking thus, has the blessed assurance that sin shall not have dominion over him. "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6: 14). The law had not the power to do this, but grace has delivered us from the law of sin and death (Romans 8: 1-4).

In the preceding part of the Epistle he had set forth Christian justification by faith, in contrast with works of the law. He here shows that God produces holiness. Instead of exacting it, as did the law with regard to human righteousness, from the nature which loves sin, He produces it in the human heart, as wrought by the Spirit.

"This life, produced in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word, is led by the Spirit who is given to believers; its rule is also in the word. Its fruit is the fruit of the Spirit. The Christian walk is the manifestation of this new life, of Christ our life, in the midst of the world. If we follow this path--Christ Himself--if we walk in His steps, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is thus sin is avoided, not by taking the law to compel man to do what he does not like; the law has no power to compel the flesh to obey, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. The new life loves to obey, loves holiness, and Christ is its strength and wisdom by the Holy Spirit. The flesh is indeed there; it lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusts against the flesh, to prevent man from walking as he would. But if we walk in the Spirit, we are not under the law." (Notes on Galatians--J. N. Darby)

The works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit are given in verses 19-23. In a more literal rendering, the works of the flesh, sixteen in number, are as follows: Fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, factions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revels and things like these. Such is the old nature of man and such the fruit it bears. They that do such things, living according to the flesh, shall not inherit God's kingdom. And only the power of the Spirit of God can deliver from the outworking of this fallen nature, the flesh, which is still in the believer. The Holy Spirit is in the child of God to manifest this power, but it means subjection to Himself.

The Spirit also produces His own blessed fruit in the life of the believer. The first three parts: Love, joy and peace. These give the blessed consciousness the believer has in his heart of his relationship to God, which consciousness comes through the Spirit. The other six parts: "long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control," witness in the believer's walk to the fact that the love, the joy and peace of God are realities in the soul. The believer who walks according to the Spirit manifests in his walk the fruit of the indwelling Spirit and against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh and its lusts. They have accepted the sentence of the cross which has put the old man with its lusts into the place of death. God declares us as dead with Christ and looks upon us thus (Colossians 3: 3). And this great truth must be lived. The believer lives in the Spirit and is called upon to walk in the Spirit so that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in him. "Let us not be desirous of vain-glory (the law fosters such a spirit, but grace humbles), provoking one another, envying one another"--which is the sad effect of vain-glory, provocation and envy.

CHAPTER 6

1. Concerning the Restoration of a brother. 1-5
2. Concerning Reaping and Sowing. 6-10
3. The conclusion. 11-18

Practical exhortations conclude the defense of the gospel. The previous chapter stated that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh and its lusts. In the beginning of this chapter the treatment to be accorded to a man (a brother) who has been overtaken in a fault is given. The law would demand the cutting off of such a one. It is harsh and merciless. But grace bears a different message. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit

of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The sin of a believer does not put him out of the true church, the body of Christ, but it interrupts communion with God. The erring brother is to be treated in a spirit of meekness and to be restored. Then law is mentioned, but not the law of Moses, but the law of Christ. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." He is the great burden-bearer for His people and to bear the burdens of others is to act as the Lord Jesus does. None is to think of himself to be something when he is nothing; the legal spirit puffs up. Every man is to prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. "For every man shall bear his own burden"--this is in reference to the judgment-seat of Christ when each must give an account of himself.

Another instruction is concerning ministry to those who teach. "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." This is the way a loving and gracious Lord has appointed. The believer who receives the ministry of the Word through one of the gifts in the body of Christ has a personal responsibility towards him who ministers. He is to communicate to him in earthly things, and thus have a part in his ministry. How different in Christendom, with its fixed salaries, pew-rents and, worse still, when evangelists appeal to the unsaved, to Catholics and Jews, to swell the collection. Important is the principle of verses 7-9. We quote from another:

"We may repeat again that the toleration of evil is never grace. It would be a perversion of the very thought of grace to imagine this. 'Be not deceived,' he says, therefore, 'God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' These are principles of absolute necessity. Nothing can alter them. If a man sows a certain seed, he knows, or he should know, that he can get of that seed nothing but what is proper to it. If a man sows to his flesh, he sows, in fact, the corruption which he reaps. The very principle of self-will which must, of necessity, be in it, is a principle which is essentially that of sin. Every form of sin will come under this, and God may allow, in fact, such seed to come to harvest, in order that we may recognize its character, as we otherwise would not do. In the opposite way to that of the man who, bearing good seed, goes forth even weeping, but returns with joy, a man in this way may sow his seed rejoicing, but it will be the return that will be sorrowful. It does not follow that God cannot come in and deliver us from what would otherwise be the necessary fruit of such sowing, if only there be the true self-judgment of it in the soul; for to a Christian, the reaping of it is but in order to self-judgment, and if we will judge it first, there may be no need of reaping at all. Judge it first or last we surely must, or the thing will develop for what it is and be manifest, not to ourselves alone it may be, but to others also. On the other hand, 'He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' Blessed and wonderful reaping! The life is looked at here, Of course, in its practical character, in its fruits and activities. The life itself, the life which produces this, is no matter of reaping at all, it is what we must have to be Christians. Nevertheless, we can reap it as a practical thing, and the witness of it is that, even though reaped here upon earth, it is something which has eternity in it."--Numerical Bible.

Verse 11 tells us that he had written this letter with his own hand and that in large letters. It seems as if the energy of the Holy Spirit came upon him in such a degree that he had to dispense with the usual amanuensis he employed. Then he reverts to the great controversy once more. These false teachers, the proselyting teachers, wanted to boast with the Galatians, but he knew only one boasting or glorying, "in the cross of our Lord Jesus, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The cross meant everything to him and thus it should be with every believer, saved by grace.

But what does he mean when he speaks of bearing in his body the marks--the stigmata--of the Lord Jesus? The Romish conception of the supernaturally imprinted scars of the nails in the apostle's body does not need to be investigated, for it is a superstition. The expression simply means the trials and sufferings he underwent for Christ's sake and which left their marks on his frail body (2 Corinthians 11: 24-33). What the Galatians needed the most is the final word of Paul to the Galatians. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit, brethren."

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

Introduction

The city of Ephesus was situated in Lydia on the River Cayster, about forty miles from Smyrna. It was a place of considerable commerce and also noted for its magnificent temple of Artemis, which was from very ancient times the center of the worship of that goddess. This temple was burnt down by Herostratus 355 B.C., but rebuilt at immense cost, and was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Pliny tells us that it was 425 feet long and 220 feet in breadth. All Asia contributed to its erection, and 127 magnificent columns were bestowed by so many kings. Little models of the temple in silver, with the image of the goddess enshrined in them, were made for sale, and sold in large quantities (Acts 19:24-29).

From Acts 18:19-21 we learn of Paul's first brief visit to that city. He was then hastening to Jerusalem to be there at Pentecost. After his visit to Jerusalem he returned to Ephesus (Acts 19:1) and remained there laboring for about three years, so that he could say later to the elders of Ephesus, "therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). During this time the Ephesian assembly was founded, composed of Jews and Gentiles, who heard and believed the gospel. On his last journey to Jerusalem he did not visit Ephesus, but called the elders of the church to meet him at Miletus, where he said farewell and exhorted them (Acts 20:18-35).

The Epistle Written by Paul

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul when he was a prisoner (chapter 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). There can be no doubt that the Colossian Epistle and the Epistle to Philemon were sent by Paul the same time as the Ephesian Epistle. The date was about 62 A.D. Tychicus and Onesimus, the runaway slave, but now through grace "a brother beloved" (Philemon 16) were sent to Colossae by Paul (Col. 4:7-9). Tychicus carried the letter addressed to the Colossians to correct the evils which had arisen in that church, and to warn them against the wicked doctrines which were being promulgated amongst them. Onesimus the slave carried that beautiful little Epistle addressed to his master Philemon. And at the same time when Tychicus and Onesimus left Rome, Paul handed to Tychicus the Epistle to the Ephesians. Never before and never after were such weighty and blessed documents entrusted to human messengers. The reception of the authorship of Paul has been almost universal; only in very recent times has the Pauline authorship been foolishly questioned by some rationalistic critics.

Some scholars claim that the words "at Ephesus" should be omitted and that the Epistle was not addressed to the Ephesians at all. The chief objection is, that if this Epistle is addressed to the church at Ephesus, it would be inexplicable that Paul should not have sent a single message of personal greeting to the Ephesians, amongst whom he had spent so long a time, and to whom he was bound by ties of such close affection. But there are also other Epistles written by Paul which do not contain such personal greetings; for instance, first and second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, first and second Thessalonians and first Timothy. Other objections have been raised. Dean Alford states rightly "there is nothing in its contents inconsistent with such an address" (to the Ephesians). We find in it clear indications that its readers were mixed Jews and Gentiles (2:14; compare with Acts 19:10). It would seem quite improbable that the apostle should not have sent an epistle to Ephesus, where the Lord had so largely owned his testimony and where the Lord had so miraculously delivered him when he fought with beasts (1 Cor. 15:32). But while this Epistle was undoubtedly first sent to Ephesus, it may have been used as a kind of circular letter, being sent to and read by other assemblies. The Epistle mentioned in Col. 4:16 was probably this Epistle.

Its Deep and Blessed Message

In the Epistle to the Colossians Paul makes the statement, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God" (Col. 1:25). To fulfill the Word of God does not mean, as often stated, that Paul fulfilled his ministry and was faithful in it. It means rather that to him was given the revelation which makes full, or completes, the Word of God. The highest and most glorious revelation, which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has been pleased to give, He has given through the Apostle Paul. The two prison Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians embody this completion of the Word of God. The Ephesian Epistle holds the place of preeminence. The revelation which is given in this Epistle concerning believing sinners, whom God has redeemed by the blood of His Son, and exalted in Him into the highest possible position, is by far the greatest revelation. God is revealing His own loving heart and tells out by His Spirit how He loved us and thought of us before the foundation of the world. He shows forth the riches of His grace and now makes known the secret He held back in former ages. How rich it all is! Like God Himself, so this revelation, coming from His loving heart, is inexhaustible. We may speak of Ephesians as the rich Epistle of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, rich in mercy, tells us of the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. But even this definition does not tell out half of all the glory this wonderful document contains. It is God's highest and God's best. Even God cannot say more than what He has said in this filling full of His Word.

In the Psalms we read: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19: 1). We lift up our eyes and behold the wonders of God's creation, which He called into existence by His Son and for Him (Col. 1: 16). Here in this Epistle another heaven is opened. If the heavens of creation are so wonderful and their depths unfathomable, how much more wonderful are the heavenlies into which Christ has entered, where He now is seated, far above all principality and power and might, and into which God's grace has brought us in Christ! The first three chapters contain this great revelation. What God has accomplished in His Son, to the praise of the glory of His grace; how He makes believers one with His Son, sharers of His glory, is told out in these chapters. The church, the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; the one body in which believing Jews and Gentiles are united; the building growing into an holy temple, the habitation of God by the Spirit, and the ultimate destiny of that body, are further revelations in these great chapters.

The central verse of the first three chapters is found in chapter 2:10, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them." The word "workmanship" is in the Greek "poiema," from which our word "poem" is derived. It is a beautiful thought in itself to think of those who are saved by grace, and united to Christ, as "the poem of God." But the word "poiema" may also be rendered "masterpiece" or "masterwork."

Only once more is the same word found in the original language of the New Testament Scriptures. In Rom. 1:20 it is used in connection with the physical creation. God has produced two great masterworks in which He manifests His power. He called the universe into existence out of nothing. What He, as the omnipotent One can do, is seen in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the sustenance of His creation. His eternal power and Godhead are revealed in creation (Rom. 1:19-20). But the creation of the universe out of nothing is not the greatest masterpiece of God. God has done something greater. He has produced a work, which reveals Him in a far higher degree. That greater masterpiece is the redemption of sinners. God took only six days to bring order out of the chaos of the disturbed original creation and to call into existence the present earth and heavens, but He spent forty days with Moses in directing him to build the tabernacle, because the work of redemption is more glorious than the work of creation.

God's creation and also the Bible, His revelation, may be studied by the telescope and the microscope. A telescopic sweep of this wonderful Epistle is hardly sufficient. The microscopic examination brings out its wonders. "The student of Ephesians must not expect to go over his ground too rapidly; must not be disappointed, if the week's end finds him still on the same paragraph, or even on the same verse, weighing and judging--penetrating gradually, by the power of the mind of the Spirit, through one outer surface after another, getting in his hand one and another ramifying thread, till at last he grasps the main cord whence they are diverged, and where they all unite--and stands rejoicing in his prize, deeper rooted in the faith, and with a firmer hold on the truth as it is in Christ. And as the wonderful effect of the spirit of inspiration on the mind of man is nowhere in Scripture more evident than in this Epistle, so, to discern those things of the Spirit, is the spiritual mind here more than anywhere else required." (Dean Alford, Prolegomena.)

And the more we read and study this Epistle, the more we will be impressed with the greatness and the glory of the revelation it brings to our hearts. It is a theme for eternity. How needful the study of this Epistle is for us in these days! The truths revealed will keep us in the days of apostasy and lift us above the materialistic spirit of the times. Without earnest and continued meditation on the great truths made known in this Epistle, spiritual growth and enjoyment are impossible. May it please the Holy Spirit to lead the writer and the reader into a better and deeper heart knowledge of His wonderful grace.

The Division of Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians has two clearly defined sections. Chapter 4 begins with the following words: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." What the calling is wherewith the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has called those who believe in His Son, is revealed in the first three chapters. As stated in the introduction, God's great masterwork, the redemption of sinners, is blessedly told out in the opening chapters of this Epistle. The last three chapters contain exhortations and instructions to walk worthy of this high calling, to manifest in every way the great Work of God.

I. THE MASTERWORK OF GOD (1-3)

1. The Godhead at Work (1)
2. The Production of the Masterwork and its Destiny (2:1-10)
3. The Mystery now made Known (2:11-3:21)

II. THE PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER (4-6)

1. Walking worthy of the Calling (4:1-6)
2. The Ministry and its Purpose (4:7-16)
3. The Walk in Holiness and Righteousness (4:17-5:21)
4. Manifestation in the Family Relationship (5:22-6:4)
5. Exhortations to Servants and Masters (6:5-9)
6. The Warfare and the Panoply of God (6:10-20)
7. The Conclusions (6:21-24)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE MASTERWORK OF GOD (1-3)

1. The Godhead at Work

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1-2)
2. The great doxology (1:3)

3. The work of the Father (1:4-6)
4. The work of the Son (1:7-12)
5. The work of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)
6. The parenthetical prayer to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory (1:15-23)

In the brief introductory words to this Epistle, Paul speaks of himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. It is to be noticed that the will of God is repeatedly mentioned in this first chapter. All blessings mentioned in this Epistle flow from the will of God. What God hath done for us in Christ is "according to the good pleasure of His will" (verse 5). Then we read also of "having made known unto us the mystery of His will" (verse 9) and "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (verse 11). This will of God goes back to eternity, before the foundation of the world. This will made the erstwhile persecutor of the Church, the apostle of Jesus Christ, the instrument through whom that blessed will of God is now fully revealed. The Epistle is addressed "to the saints and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." This does not mean two classes of believers. All believers are saints--separated ones. Yet a saint may not be faithful. Many who are saved by grace and are constituted saints in Christ are unfaithful in their walk and testimony. The words "to the saints and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" correspond to the two divisions of the Epistle. In the first three chapters we learn that God has made us His saints in Christ; in the last three chapters we are exhorted to walk in obedience and be faithful.

The doxology (verse 3) marks the beginning of the epistle. When we reach the end of this first section we find another doxology (3:20-21). Between these two doxologies are found the unsearchable riches of God's grace in Christ. The third verse is in itself the key to the great and deep revelation which follows in this chapter. It is the bud which the Holy Spirit gradually unfolds. The Godhead in blessing believers is revealed in the doxology. First we find the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the author of all blessings. In the second place we learn that the blessings are in the Son of God, in Christ. Then thirdly, we read what kind of blessings we receive in Christ, "every spiritual blessing," that is, blessings communicated by the third person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. The phrase "in the heavenly places" (or heavenlies) is peculiar to this Epistle. We find it five times: chapters 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10 and 6:12. It means both the nature of the blessings which we have in a risen and glorified Christ, and the locality, where our Lord is in glory. The three persons of the Godhead are mentioned in the third verse. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us; these blessings are in the Son and are communicated by the Holy Spirit. What follows is very interesting. In verses 4-14 we have the three persons of the Godhead revealed and their work in the redemption of sinners. Read verses 6, 12 and 14. Each is an utterance of praise--"to the praise of the glory of His grace" (verse 6); "that we should be to the praise of His glory" (verse 12); "unto the praise of His glory" (verse 14). Each of these verses marks the close of what is said about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In verses 4-6 we read what the Father has done; verses 7-12 reveal what we have and are in the Son, in Christ; verses 13-14 reveal the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

Three great facts are mentioned of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.
2. He hath predestinated us unto the Son-place in Christ.
3. He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

What wonderful statements these are! We are in them face to face with the deepest revelation. To deny this would stamp these words as the imaginations of a deceiver. Only revelation can make known that which happened before the foundation of the world. Whatever is in God's eternity, that unfathomable existence without beginning, is beyond man's ability to grasp and therefore unrevealed. But here the great truth is made known that God, before there was a world, planned His masterwork. With Him in His bosom was His blessed Son, the Son of His love. In Him, by Him and for Him all things were called into existence. Yet before this creation was effected, God knew the outcome. Surprise is an impossibility with God. He knows the end from the beginning. The whole story of man's fall and its results were not hidden from Him. And before it ever came to pass God made provision. And those who would accept Christ, as their Savior, He willed should be before Him holy and without blame, become partakers of His own divine nature. This God willed before the foundation of

the world, and this is now, through grace, the portion of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, furthermore, He predestinated all who believe in Christ to the Son-place.

A brief word on "predestination." This word, which means "marked out" is nowhere found in connection with the Gospel, nor does it say anywhere in the Word, what some have said, that God has predestinated human beings to be lost. But while we do not read that He ever predestinated any one to be lost we read "God would have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4). God has nothing to say to a lost world about predestination. His grace, bringing salvation has appeared unto all men. God's offer of salvation is therefore to all.

The Authorized Version speaks of "adoption of children." This hardly expresses it correctly. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are not adopted into the family of God; they are born into the family. The Greek has only one word "Son-place." We are placed into the position of Sons. Not alone hath God given to us His own nature, but He gives us, because we have that nature in and through His Son, the place as Sons. Think of what God might have done for those, who by wicked works are His enemies. He might have given us the place of unfallen angels, the wonderful ministers of heaven. What mercy that would have been! Or He might have lifted us to the dignity of an archangel, full of beauty and power. But even that would not have been the very best He could have done in the riches of His grace and love. He has made us Sons, like the Son, whom He raised from the dead and seated at His own right hand.

And then He hath accepted us in the Beloved One. All this God planned and willed before the foundation of the world. The Beloved One having been mentioned, we read at once of His work. Three facts are given of the work of the Son of God:

1. He redeemed us by His blood.
2. In Him we received the revelation of the mystery of His will.
3. In Him we obtain an inheritance (verses 7-12).

He came from the bosom of the Father to this earth to redeem us, so that God's eternal will might be accomplished. Redemption, the taking out of the condition in which we are by nature, is a necessity, and has been accomplished by the blood of the Son of God, which was shed on the cross. He paid the price and has set us free. The riches of His grace by the redemption through His blood includes all our needs as sinners; the forgiveness of sins, mentioned here, is, so to speak, the foundation.

"Whosoever will" and "whosoever believeth" are the glorious terms of God's good news to all alike. But when we believe, we know that we are chosen and predestinated. Those who have believed on Christ are predestinated and they possess the Son-place. Then having believed, we know that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

The words which follow put before us some blessed and deep truths. Redeemed through His blood, having redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of grace, He hath made known unto us the mystery of His will. God wants His elect, His Church, to know the secret things of His will and what He hath purposed in Himself Therefore He hath made the riches of His grace abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence. God has been pleased to make known in Christ the mystery of His will. It is the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25), so that we know in Christ and through Christ the fulness of His purpose. That mystery of God is Christ, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

Christ, who has redeemed us by His blood, was raised from the dead. God "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies"--"He hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (1:21-23). This is the mystery: that Christ risen from the dead, seated at the right hand of God, is the Head and those who believe on Him constitute the Church, His body. This body is destined, according to the eternal purpose of God, to share the glory of the Head. This purpose is still in the future. The administration (or dispensation) of the fulness of times has not yet come. When it comes all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, will be headed up in Christ.

And in Christ we have an inheritance. In Him we have obtained an inheritance; it is equally true, that we are redeemed by His blood, His inheritance. And our inheritance in Christ is that we shall be like Him; be joint-heirs with Him and be forever with the Lord.

The work of the Holy Spirit is revealed in verses 13 and 14. Three things are also mentioned of Him and His work:

1. Hearing and believing resulting in the quickening by the Spirit.
2. The sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise.
3. The Holy Spirit the earnest of our inheritance.

These words are of great importance. The Son of God came to this earth to redeem us and because He has finished the work the Father gave Him to do, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, has come to do His work.

Three words are prominent in the thirteenth verse, the words "heard," "believed," and sealed." They go together. The Word of Truth, the gospel of salvation must be heard and believed; the hearing and believing results in the sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit indwelling the believer is the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession takes place. (For a more complete exposition we refer the reader to our larger work The Masterpiece of God.)

A brief restatement of the work of the Godhead will be helpful:

1. We found God the Father has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. God the Son came down from Heaven's glory and redeemed us by His blood. God the Holy Spirit quickens those who hear and believe. He is here because Christ finished His work on the cross.
2. God the Father has predestinated us unto the Son-place. God the Son reveals, to all who are sons with Him, the mystery of His will, concerning the future of the new creation. God the Holy Spirit because we are sons, possesses us and keeps those whom He possesses. He is the Spirit of Sonship.
3. God the Father has accepted us in the Beloved. God the Son has given us in Himself an inheritance. God the Holy Spirit is the earnest of that inheritance.

Surely this is revelation from God. So blessedly simple, so profound that all the eternal ages will not suffice to sound its depths. No man could have ever discovered or invented such a plan. Let us bow before it in worship and yield our lives "to the Praise of the glory of His grace."

In verses 15-23 we have the first prayer in this Epistle; the second prayer is found at the close of the third chapter. Let us notice that the greatest revelation of God as given in this Epistle has two prayers connected with it. The revelation is given to His people that they might know it and enjoy it. Prayer is needed for this. First, there is thanksgiving (verses 15-16).

The prayer here is addressed to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." The prayer in the third chapter is made to "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This corresponds most beautifully to the blessed revelation in the first fourteen verses of this chapter. "God and Father" are the blessed words, which stand in the foreground of this Epistle. God is light and God is love. The first prayer is a prayer for light, that His redeemed people may know, be enlightened; therefore it is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The second prayer in the third chapter is for love, and therefore addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we find three petitions: 1. "That ye may know what is the hope of His calling." The hope of God's calling is that we shall be one with Him, whom He raised from the dead and to whom He gave glory. 2. That we may know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The riches into which God, the Father of glory, has brought us through Him, who laid His glory by, is told out in this Epistle. It is the rich Epistle of our riches in Christ. "The riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7); "the riches of the glory of His inheritance" (1:18); "rich in mercy" (2:4); "the exceeding riches of His grace" (2:7); "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:8); "according to the riches of His glory" (3:16); these are the passages in which we read of His riches towards us and our riches in Him.

And what is the meaning "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"? We have an inheritance, and He has us for His inheritance. He is our inheritance, and we are His inheritance. The glory of Christ's inheritance are the saints, for whom He died, the many sons He brings to glory. The Church is the fulness of Him, who filleth all in all.

3. And the third petition is that we may know the exceeding greatness of His power which is to us-ward who believe." It is resurrection power, the power which raised Him from the dead and seated Him on God's right hand, which is to us-ward who believe. We can count on it. Ultimately the same power which raised Him up and carried Him through the heavens, will bring all the redeemed into glory.

In the presence of the words of verse 23 one feels more like worshipping than trying to expound their meaning. Marvelous words! They tell out the blessed masterpiece of God. Christ the Head; the Church, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, the body. The Head is in glory; the body not yet joined to the Head. He waits in glory; the saints wait on earth. The body needs the Head, but the Head also needs the body. "The Christ" will be complete when the body is joined to the Head by the mighty power of God. The Church as His body is His fulness; it makes Him complete. And when that is reached, when Head and body, Christ and the Church, are united in glory, then will the hope of His calling be realized and He will have the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and we shall know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward.

2. The Production of the Masterwork and its Destiny

CHAPTER 2:1-10

1. What we are by nature (2:1-3)
2. What God does--rich in mercy (2:4-6)
3. The destiny of the masterwork (2:7)
4. Saved by grace (2:8-10)

After the great revelation of the first chapter and the prayer which followed, the production of the masterpiece itself is now brought more fully into view. We have before us a revelation concerning our state by nature and how God takes us up and produces out of such material His masterpiece. The first ten verses of this chapter give us this story. They contain one of the richest portions of the whole Word of God.

The first verse tells us that we are by nature in the state of death--"dead in trespasses and sins." Man is dead spiritually; he is dead towards God (John 5:24-25). This fact that the unregenerated man is dead is much denied in our days. We hear of "the better self," or "the good spark" which is in everybody, and the truth God has revealed concerning man, that he is dead in trespasses and sins is but little believed. The next verse states the walk of the natural man. It fully shows the awful place in which man is as dead in trespasses and sins. The walk is according to his fallen nature; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are the governing principles of this walk. We are enemies of God by wicked works. And behind all there stands the prince of the power of the air, Satan. He works in the children of disobedience, which here means the Jews. Of this our Lord spake when He said, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). And again it is written, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. (1 John 3:8). It is a solemn truth, which God has revealed concerning our condition as fallen beings, that we are in the grasp of the prince of the power of the air; that man is under this mighty being of darkness. To what a place of degradation man has been brought by sin! This likewise is disbelieved by the great majority of professing Christians. A personal devil is ridiculed and his existence is denied.

In the third verse another description is added, "children of wrath." The "you" of the first verse is addressed to the Ephesians, showing what they were in their former condition. The "we" in the third verse means the Jews "among whom we also had our conversation." The apostle shows that the Jews were in the same condition; and he adds "and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Jews and Gentiles are dead in trespasses and sins, are the enemies of God and children of wrath. And this truth is also increasingly denied. The Word of God is most positive, and tells us "that he that

believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). The denial of a future, conscious and eternal punishment of the wicked is becoming wide-spread; it is one of the marks of the latter day cults like Christian Science, Russellism, the New Theology, Spiritism and others. But the believer who knows the gospel and knows that he is "saved by grace" does not deny the truth of these first three verses of this chapter. It is our true photograph. Such material, God has to produce out of it His great masterwork.

After this dark picture of death, ruin and wrath, we read what God has done and does, for all who believe on His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. "But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love, wherewith He loved us" (verse 4). This is the blessed bridge, which leads out of the dark and dreary, hopeless condition. But God! Man is guilty and lost. But God! God now comes in and makes known the riches of His mercy. Yet a righteous, holy God cannot be rich in mercy unless His righteousness is fully met and maintained. His mercy must have for a foundation His righteousness. And this is blessedly the case. He is rich in mercy for the great love wherewith He loved us. He gave His only begotten Son. He made Him who knew no sin, sin for us. He made full atonement on the cross and now God can be rich in mercy. And what does He do with such as we are? Verses 5-6 tell the blessed story.

These verses in which we read of the believer's quickening, his resurrection with Christ and being seated in Christ in the heavenlies, take us back to the time when our blessed Savior Lord was quickened and raised from the dead and seated in glory. It is plain what God did for Him, who died on the cross, He has done for all, who believe on His Son. Many Christians are ignorant of this great truth, while others have difficulty in grasping it. Yet it is quite Simple. Every Christian believes that when the Lord Jesus suffered on the cross He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. With the Apostle Paul every believer is entitled to say in looking back to the cross, "He loved me, He gave Himself for me." We know all our sins were paid for by Him; all the punishment we deserved fell upon Him, our substitute. In Him we died. All this happened when we were not in existence at all. The sins He bore were not yet committed. God knew all about us and all about our sins and shame, the punishment we deserved, and His ever-blessed Son took all upon Himself. In the same sense God hath quickened us with Christ, raised us up and seated us in Him, when He did this for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. This is simple, yet so wonderful and deep, that it is incomprehensible. It was all done for us, who believe, when it was done for Him. God in His marvelous counsels in redemption has associated us with Christ. He has made all, who believe on Him, sharers of His life and nature; He brings us into the same relationship as sons, and finally into the same glory and inheritance. Let us bear in mind that all this was done for us in Christ. He is the first one who was quickened, raised up and exalted in glory, and associated with Him are all His members; we share it with Him.

And all this becomes our blessed portion by faith in Jesus Christ. As we believe on Him, we are quickened, that is, we receive life, even eternal life and are saved by grace. Then we are risen with Him. We are now in Him, risen from the dead, the sons of God. Likewise in Christ (not with Christ) we are seated in the heavenly places. Now it is "in Him"; when He comes again we shall be "with Him" and share His glory. Here we have the summit of Christian position. We are not along representatively, but also virtually seated in Christ in the highest glory.

It is worth the while to review in a brief word the blessed revelations given in the first six verses of this chapter.

We saw first what man is by nature. Dead in trespasses and sins. Enemies of God under the prince of the power of the air, this is the result of such a condition. Children of wrath, because we are dead, His enemies and linked with Satan.

And now God has come in with His mighty power in the production of His masterwork. He gives life so that the dead condition is ended. Instead of enemies, we are constituted, by the resurrection of His Son, beloved sons of Himself. And in Christ Jesus, He makes of us children of glory, instead of children of wrath. Marvelous masterwork of God! May we praise Him for it all.

But one must ask in view of such riches of grace, as revealed in the preceding verses, What is the purpose of all this? The verse which follows gives the answer. We find ourselves face to face with the destiny of His masterpiece.

"That in the ages to come He might show (or display) the exceeding (surpassing) riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (verse 7). This is one of the richest and deepest statements in the Bible. Two ages follow the present age. The millennial age, and after that has lasted for a thousand years, the eternal state begins. In the coming age and in all eternity, God is going to make known His glory through and in His masterwork. All His redeemed will be with Him in

glory. When He comes again He brings many sons to glory; and we shall reign and rule with Him over the earth.

But this is not all. in the eternal age, from eternity to eternity, God is continuing in this. He will bring forth something new in glory, new riches of Himself for those who are one with His well-beloved Son. From eternity to eternity He displays the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. How one is overwhelmed in the presence of such a statement! And how little after all we can understand all those coming riches in glory. What a destiny! The heart may well cry--nothing but glory! What is the little suffering, the little while down here, in comparison with such never ending glory!

Fittingly this great revelation ends with the blessed statement that we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; and that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

3. The Mystery Made Known

CHAPTERS 2:11-3:21

1. The condition of the Gentiles (2:11-12)
2. But now in Christ Jesus (2:13-19)
3. The new and great relationship (2:19-22)
4. The Mystery made known and Paul's ministry (3:1-13)
5. The prayer (3:14-19)
6. The doxology (3:20-21)

With the eleventh verse of the second chapter we reach a new division in this Epistle. The great mystery of the masterwork of God, the Church, is next revealed by the Holy Spirit. We saw in the first chapter of this wonderful Epistle how God planned His masterpiece. Then we learned in the first ten verses of the second chapter how God deals with us individually and fashions lost sinners, who trust in Christ, into His masterwork. And now we are led higher, and the fact is made known that all believers are united into one body. This truth was briefly mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter (1:22, 23).

First, the condition of the Gentiles, the uncircumcision, as called by the Jews, is briefly described. They were without Christ; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; strangers from the covenants; and without hope and without God. Such was the condition of the great Gentile world.

Well may we remember in the dreadful days of apostasy, which are upon us, that Gentiles, who have had the gospel preached unto them, are turned once more from the light, yea, from God's best. Christendom in denying Christ is rapidly waning, and must eventually plunge into a greater darkness than the darkness of the Gentile world before the cross. Without Christ, without hope, and without God! Fearful and solemn words these are! When Christ is given up, His deity and His blood rejected, when men deliberately turn away from Him, and deny His person and His glory, they rush into the outer and eternal darkness "without hope and without God."

But now Christ being preached and believed in, Gentiles who were once far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. The little word "now" is of importance.

This present dispensation of grace in which He makes known the mystery, which in other ages was not made known, that the Gentiles, once without Christ and without God, should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, is the "now" in which the surpassing riches of God's grace are made known. Now, after Israel rejected the King and the Savior, now, when He is upon the Father's throne, now, when the Holy Spirit is on earth to do His appointed work, now, during the present age, God makes fully known what He had planned before the foundation of the world. He is producing His masterwork, taking

the material from Israel, and reaching out with His mighty power after the Gentiles, to put them into one body. The poor, miserable, naked beggar upon the dunghill, the Gentile, is taken up to sit among princes and inherit the throne of glory.

And all who believe are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Then we find three statements in verses 14 and 15: 1. He is our peace, making of both one. The parties mentioned here as made one are Jews and Gentiles. 2. Broken down the middle wall and abolished the law of commandments. Between these two there stood a middle wall of partition, which separated them. This wall is the law. God Himself had put it up. But now in the cross of Christ, God has broken down this middle wall and made an end of the enmity which existed between Jews and Gentiles. And the law of commandments and ordinances finds its end in the cross. 3. Making in Himself one new man.

Jews and Gentiles, believing, trusting in Christ, made nigh by His blood, are made both one and constitute one new man. This is what God has accomplished, taking believing Jews and believing Gentiles, gathering them into one. This is the masterwork of God, He does during this age. When the kingdom age comes the Jews will receive their place of blessing and glory in their land, and the Gentiles will be greatly blessed and enjoy righteousness and peace. Both Jews and Gentiles will be in the kingdom then, but not as one body. In the present age a body is forming "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11). This new man is the church, and Christ is the Head of that new man. Grace flowing from the cross of Christ, where peace was made in the blood, takes up Jews and Gentiles and makes them one. When our Lord prayed in His high priestly prayer "that they may all be one as we are one," He must have thought of this great truth, now fully revealed in this Epistle by the Spirit of God.

In verse 16 we have two similar statements as in the preceding verses: 1. Both (Jews and Gentiles believing) reconciled unto God in one body. 2. The enmity slain by the cross. And furthermore He came and preached peace to both, to those afar off (Gentiles) and to those that were nigh (the Jews). Then follows the blessed result. "For through Him we both (believing Jews; and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Jew did not know anything in Old Testament times about "access unto the Father." He had a tabernacle and the way into the holiest was not yet made known. And the Gentile was without God altogether. But now believing Jews and Gentiles belong to the family of God, indwelt by the same Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship.

In verse 19 we hear of the new relationship into which believing Gentiles are brought in Christ. "Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." In verse 20 the Church comes into view, and we hear that Gentiles saved by grace and made nigh by blood "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone." The Church is compared to a building.

In the Old Testament God had a building in which He manifested His presence and His glory. The tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple of Solomon were shadows of the Church, which God is now building. The foundation upon which the Church as the house is built, we find mentioned first. One of the common mistakes concerning the foundation upon which the Church is built, is that, which claims that the foundation are the prophets of the Old Testament. According to this view the Old Testament saints belonged to the Church, and the Church itself was therefore in existence throughout the previous dispensations. This view is often based upon the words we have under consideration, that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Now if the prophets were mentioned before the apostles, there might be a possibility that the prophets of the Old Testament are meant. But it says "apostles and prophets." They are the New Testament apostles and prophets. Chapter 3:5 gives positive evidence on this whole question. The Church is called a mystery "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

"Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" does not mean that the apostles are the foundation. The apostles are the foundation through their inspired teachings as Paul wrote, "I have laid the foundation." But he also adds "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:9-11). The Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Christ is the foundation. This the apostles taught. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone (Isa. 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Matt. 21:44; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:4-5). "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (verse 21). The building, the true Church is fitly framed together, which means that God puts it together in His own marvelous way.

Solomon's temple gives a little illustration of this. When that temple was building, hammer, axe and tools of iron were not heard. "And the house, when it was building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was building." Every stone was prepared beforehand and fitted into the place where it belonged. How beautifully it illustrates the fitting together of the house, His Church! He chooses and prepares the material and puts each in its proper place (1 Cor. 12). What a contrast with man's methods in trying to increase "church membership"! The divine revelation is forgotten. Christendom has departed from the faith in these revelations concerning the one Church and its architect. But all the confusion, the wrong conceptions and attending evils, cannot frustrate the purpose of the Lord. He is building His Church. He takes the material and puts it as living stones in the place where it belongs. This is the work of His Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit dwells there. He dwells in the true Church, because He indwells every individual member of the body of Christ. We are the habitation of God. As He dwelt of old in the tabernacle, so He dwells in the Church through the Spirit. God does no longer dwell in an earthly house. The conception of a church building being a "holy place" which we must call "the house of the Lord" or "a temple" is absolutely wrong. It is the Jewish idea. God does no longer dwell in an earthly house and yet He has His habitation here. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst; that is a Church and the habitation of God through the Spirit. "Even now in the state of imperfection, by the Spirit dwelling in the hearts of believers, that God has His habitation in the Church; and then when the growth and increase of that Church shall be completed, it will be still in and by the Holy Spirit, fully penetrating and possessing the whole glorified church, that the Father will dwell in it forever." (Dean Alford, Greek New Testament.)

In the first verse of the third chapter Paul speaks of himself as "the prisoner of the Christ, Jesus, for you Gentiles." He became a prisoner on account of the Gentiles, when on his last visit to Jerusalem (Acts 22:21-22). And to him was made known the mystery which was hidden in other generations. And the mystery is "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel."

That Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with Jewish believers in a distinct body is a new revelation. The Old Testament abounds in promises for the Gentile nations. These promises speak of righteousness and peace, which the nations of the earth are to enjoy. But they all stand connected with the age which is yet to come. That age is introduced by the visible manifestation of the Lord. At that time the people Israel will receive the place of headship among the nations. The Gentiles will join themselves to Israel, and Israel has the promise that the nations will seek the light and glory revealed in their midst. "And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee. Thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then shalt thou see, and be filled with delight; and thine heart shall thrill, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the nations shall come unto thee" (Isa. 60:3-5).

Many other passages could be quoted, but in not one of them is it said that Gentiles should be joint-heirs. In this mystery of the Church there is revealed an inheritance which is far greater than any blessing promised to earthly Israel during the coming kingdom. Both, believing Jews and Gentiles are joint-heirs of Christ, and in the coming day of glory they will reign and rule with Him.

Then "of the same body" joint-members. The believing Jews on the day of Pentecost were formed into one body by the Holy Spirit. They became then one spirit with the Lord, and that marvelous organism, the body of Christ, had its beginning. Gentiles are joint-members of the same body; they are united with all the saints in one body. And therefore believing Gentiles are joint-partakers of His promises in Christ by the gospel. These promises do not concern the earth, but they concern the glory to come. Israel's promises will be fulfilled, and they will be under Christ as King, when He comes to reign. But the body of Christ has far greater promises in Christ. The body will be joined to the head, share the glory of the head and be where the head is. The Head, Christ, and the body, the Church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, joint-heirs, joint-members, joint-partakers--this is the mystery.

And of all this the Apostle Paul was the minister. Beautiful words, "Unto me, whom are less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The great revelation had made him very humble.

He might have made much of his superior knowledge, of the great revelation given to him, and he might have paraded a

kind of an official pride as the apostle to the Gentiles. But the high calling, the mystery made known unto him, the blessed ministry given to him, produced far different results. It humbled him into the dust before God. it could not be otherwise. Grace, such wondrous grace, as revealed through Paul, reaching down to such as we are, lifting so high with such an unspeakable calling and destiny, will ever humble us into the dust to give Him the glory. Grace necessitates this. The more we know of the blessed mystery of God's masterpiece, the less we shall think of ourselves and delight to take the lowest place. Truth learned or knowledge gained in spiritual things, which does not humble us and make us think less and less of ourselves, is a dangerous thing. Truth, must ever break us down and lead into self-judgment and self abasement.

The purpose of preaching the mystery concerning the church (verse 9-13) is twofold: 1. To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery; to make it known among men. 2. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. The heavenly hosts look on (1 Cor. 11:10) and behold by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

That which no prophet ever saw, what no human being could have imagined, what no angel ever knew, what was known alone to God, took place. The Church, the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, began on earth with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. They see how this body is being built, fitly framed together, and they know the glory which awaits that body. Therefore now is made known unto angels by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.

And because the angels possess this knowledge, they rejoice over one repenting sinner (Luke 15:7). They know what it means to the sinner, and more so to Christ, when another member is added to His body. Nor must we lose sight of another statement. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). We do not know how they minister to our need, but we know they do minister.

The second prayer in this epistle (verses 14-21) is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The petitions of the prayer are five: 1. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. 2. That Christ may dwell in your heart. 3. To comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height. 4. To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. 5. To be filled with all the fullness of God. The Holy Spirit who gave this prayer wants God's people to know more of Christ, to feed on Him and by knowing the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, to be filled unto all the fullness of God. Think of the dimensions of this love! We are to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height. But who can know all this? It will take eternity to comprehend it all. Look at the outstretched arms of the blessed One on the cross! Here we behold the breadth. "Come unto Me all"--that is the breadth of His love. The length is from eternity to eternity. The first chapter told us of the fact that before the foundation of the world He thought of us. He loved us before we ever existed. His love has no beginning and no end. it is an eternal love with which He loveth us.

And the depth! How deep, oh! how deep did He go down! The manger? The boyhood days in Nazareth? The manhood when He had not where to lay His head? The life that spent and was spent? Ah! the depths are far deeper. Let the hours of darkness give the answer, when He descended into the deep, dark waters of judgment and God's face was hidden from Him. Shall we ever know the depths of His love?

The height takes us into the heaven of heavens. Look into an opened heaven! See the glory-light! Behold there on that throne, there sits, not an angel, but a man! "We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." And into that glory He has taken us. His love could never stop short of that. Where He is there the objects of His love shall ever be with Him. "The glory Thou hast given me I have given them." Oh! the breadth, the length, the depth, the height!

"To know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." We are to know something which passeth knowledge. It is a paradox. We know that love, and the more we know it the more it passeth our knowledge. Shall we ever know fully the love that passeth knowledge? This ever must be our blessed occupation to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. And what are the consequences? "That ye may be filled unto (not with) all the fullness of God." In the measure in which we know the love of Christ and comprehend the dimensions of this love, in the measure in which we have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith and are rooted and grounded in love, in that measure shall we be filled unto all the fullness of God.

The blessed doxology ends this wonderful section of God's highest revelation. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church, in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." What assurance and what encouragement to pray. Let us ask much in spiritual things and He will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

II. THE PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER (4-6)

1. Walking worthy of the Calling

CHAPTER 4:1-6

1. The walk in lowliness and meekness (4:1-2)

2. Keeping the unity of the Spirit (4:3-6)

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." This marks the beginning of the second part of the epistle. It is obvious then, to walk worthy as a Christian, one has to know the calling wherewith God has called us. This calling, as we have seen, is revealed in the first three chapters. The first exhortation is to walk "with all lowliness and meekness." He does not speak of doing some great work, or to seek special gifts and special power. Lowliness and meekness are to be manifested by the members of the body of Christ. These two words remind us of the Lord Jesus and the words which came from His blessed lips. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). He who had laid His glory by, thus emptying Himself, lived down here in lowliness and meekness. And we are called to walk even as He walked (1 John 2:6). "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The Holy Spirit tells us then that the first thing in the walk of the believer is to manifest the lowliness and meekness of the Lord Jesus. Walking in meekness produces gentleness towards the brethren, the fellow-saints. And as we walk "with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" we manifest practically that we are members of the one body. Love is to be the governing principle towards all the saints of God.

In the second place we are to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We are not told to produce the unity of the Spirit, but to keep it. What is this unity of the Spirit? It is the unity which God in His infinite grace has made Himself. All believers are members of the body of Christ, the Church. The Holy Spirit dwells in each and He has put us into that body as members; the one body, and believers members of that body, constitutes the unity of the Spirit. We are to own it by keeping it in the bond of peace. This unity can never be destroyed for it is the work of God. But it may be denied and the expression of it completely lost. Alas! this is the common thing about us. Sectarianism is a denial of this unity of the Spirit. We keep the unity of the Spirit when we recognize in every true believer a member of Christ and of His body. What will enable us to keep this unity and this walk worthy of our calling? We must constantly feed on the glorious realities of our redemption in Christ. What God has wrought for us and for all His saints, the fact that all are indwelt by the same Spirit, and that all have the same glorious destiny, must never be lost sight of.

The unity of the Spirit is revealed in verses 4-6. Again, the three persons of the Godhead are seen only in reverse order, the Holy Spirit first, the Son of God the second, and the God and Father third.

The Holy Spirit

1. One Body

2. One Spirit

3. One Hope

The Son of God, the Lord

4. One Lord

5. One Faith

6. One Baptism

The God and Father

7. One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all

The one body, which stands first, is the Church, the body of Christ. The fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The one Spirit is the Holy Spirit. He came on the day of Pentecost and the Baptism of the Spirit then took place, by which the body of Christ is formed. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). The one hope is the hope of the Church, to be with the Lord in glory, to be like Him and share His glory. The next three linked with the Lord and are likewise connected with the Church. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, presents the aspect of public profession. The one Lord, is Christ; all Christians own Him professedly as Lord. The "one faith" is the faith in the Lord and the "one baptism" is water-baptism, which is both, the initiatory rite of Christian profession and an expression of that faith in the one Lord. And God is the "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Of course this applies only to believers.

2. The Ministry and Its Purpose

CHAPTER 4:7-16

1. Ministry according to the measure of the gift of Christ (4:7-10)

2. The needed and permanent gifts (4:11)

3. The purpose and the goad (4:12-16)

Each member in the body of Christ has a specific place for a specific work. See Romans 12:4-5 and 1 Cor. 12:4-5. And the bestowal of gifts for service in the body is in His hands. He ascended upon high and triumphed over all enemies. He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. He triumphed over the devil, who has the power of death and stripped him of that power. And all who constitute His body share in His triumph. They are no longer under the power of Satan, but delivered from the power of darkness, they are His trophies. "He led captivity captive," i.e., those who were in captivity, or "a troop, a multitude of captives." The view held by some that the Old Testament saints are meant, whom He led forth from Hades is incorrect.

Psalm 68 is quoted. But we discover an omission. Psalm 68:18 reads, "Thou has received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The last sentence is omitted, for the rebellious are the Jews; they are as the rebellious nation not in view in Ephesians, though the day will come when Israel will be converted and the promised gifts will be bestowed upon that nation. And He who ascended also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. It means the deepest depths of suffering, the shameful death of the cross and that He was buried. (This passage has nothing to do with 1 Peter 3:18- The meaning of this Scripture will be fully explained in our annotations of the First Epistle of Peter.) As the Ascended One He has given gifts for the ministry in the body. These gifts are "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers." Other gifts are mentioned in First Corinthians such as the gift of healing, the gift of tongues, etc. These were not permanent gifts, and not absolutely necessary for the perfecting of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ.

The gifts mentioned here in Ephesians abide to the end until the Church is complete and removed from the earth. The apostles are the apostles of the beginning. The apostolate of Mormonism and similar cults is an invention. Nowhere does it say that Paul, Peter or John should have successors; all who lay claim to the title of apostle in the church are deceivers (Rev. 2:2). The doctrines of the apostles are in our possession as the supreme gifts of the exalted Lord to His body. New Testament prophets are such who speak the message of God for the comfort and exhortation of God's people. The

evangelist preaches the gospel. The pastor and teacher are practically one. The teacher expounds the Word and teaches the doctrines of the Bible. And these gifts remain till the Lord comes for His saints. The gifts are for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. And each gift is not for a certain part of the church, but for the whole body. "Till we all come unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." This measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ will be reached when the body is joined to the Head. When the Church enters into His presence and He presents the church to Himself (Eph. 5:27), then this completion has come. Till then He will give the gifts to the Church, His body, for the upbuilding of that body. And He puts this body together and ministers unto its needs (verse 16).

3. The Walk in Holiness and Righteousness

CHAPTERS 4:17-5:21

1. Not as the Gentiles walk (4:17-19)
2. The putting off and putting on (4:20-32)
3. Followers of God (5:1-2)
4. Exhortations (5:3-21)

At this point the exhortations to walk in separation begin. The "therefore" of verse 17 refers us to the "wherefore" of chapter 2:11-12. What Gentiles are in their natural condition is here once more put before us. The grace of God takes the believer out of these conditions and puts power on our side to walk "no longer as the Gentiles walk." And how solemn is the description of what Gentiles are by nature! Nor must we overlook the fact, that beneath the thin veneer of our boasted civilization, which rejects Christ and the gospel, there is the same darkened understanding, the same alienation from God, the same blindness and the uncleanness of which these words speak.

Saved by grace these Gentiles had heard Christ and had been taught by Him. To walk according as the truth is in Jesus is the responsibility of all who know and follow Him. He is our pattern. The old man is put off and the new man is put on. We are not told to put off the old man by all kinds of endeavors and resolutions; it is already done. The old man was put away by the cross of Christ (Rom. 6:6). This is the blessed truth which delivers from doubt and bondage. And then we receive something in Christ, the new man, the new nature. Grace unclothed us and clothed us. Grace made an end of the old man and put upon us the new man. And this new man, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, which calls for a corresponding walk. But there is also a practical putting off and putting on. Of this we read in verses 25-29. In verse 26 there is a command to be angry and sin not. There is a righteous anger which is not sinful. The Lord Jesus exhibited that (Mark 3:5). When truth is perverted, or that blessed and worthy name is dishonored, a righteous feeling of displeasure arises in the heart, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Such a feeling is not sin. But we are warned "let not the sun go down upon your wrath." The wrath of man, if nourished, worketh not the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:20). How easy it is to harbor feelings which are sinful, and in doing so give place to the devil. Corrupt communications are not to proceed out of the mouth of a member of the body of Christ, "but that which is good for needful building up, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Speech is always to be with grace, seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6). In view of such exhortations, the practice of certain evangelists to use "slang," vulgar and common expressions in public speech stands condemned.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye have been sealed unto the day of redemption." We are His temple and all must be avoided which displeases the holy guest. That He dwells in us and we are sealed by Him is the evidence of our eternal security. We are sealed by Him unto the day of redemption. We may grieve Him, but He will never leave those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb. He abides with us forever. In verse 32 we find another exhortation how the members of the body of Christ should act towards each other.

We are to be imitators of God, as dear children and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. Then there are additional exhortations about fornication, all uncleanness, or covetousness, as well as other things. It shows the possibility of a child of God falling into these things.

The true believer knows that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that only the power of the Holy Spirit can deliver him from the power of the flesh; therefore he walks in the Spirit. There can be no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God for such whose life is in these things. A child of God may fall and commit some of these things, but no true believer will continue to live in them.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (5:10. when our Lord was on earth He reproved the unfruitful works of darkness. His condemnation was aimed at the religious Pharisees and rationalistic Sadducees. He pronounced His solemn "woes" upon them. Walking as the children of light, therefore, means separation from evil, moral and religious, and a definite witness against it.

The exhortation in verse 14, to awake and arise, is not addressed to an unsaved person, but to a Christian. Many believers are in the state of spiritual sleep among the spiritually dead in the world; but the promise is given, that Christ will give light when the awakening comes. Another important exhortation is found in verse 18: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." "Be filled with the Spirit" does not mean another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, another Pentecost. The Holy Spirit dwells in every child of God; He is the abiding guest. He is in us to fill us, and He will do so if we walk in the Spirit. May we open our whole heart to Him and walk in obedience, abiding in Christ, occupied with Christ, exalting Christ, and we shall know what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Some of the effects of it are mentioned in the verses which follow (verses 19-21). There is worship and thanksgiving. He is also the Spirit of love and grace--"submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

4. Manifestation in the Family-relationship

CHAPTERS 5:22-6:4

1. Wives representative of the Church (5:22-24)
2. Husbands representative of Christ (5:25-29)
3. The mystery: concerning Christ and the Church (5:30-33)
4. Exhortations to children and parents (6:1-4)

The exhortations which follow concern the Christian family. The mystery concerning Christ and the Church (verse 32) is to be manifested in the family relationship. While before we have seen the Church as the body of Christ, here in these verses we see the Church in her love-relation to Christ. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The union of husband and wife is used as a type of the union of Christ and the Church. Wives are mentioned first: "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." And why? For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church; and "He is savior of the body." The wife is therefore to be in submission to her own husband in everything, as the Church is subject unto Christ. Thus the wife in her submission is to bear witness to the blessed relationship of Christ and the Church. She has the blessed portion of being in subjection. The question arises, What, if the husband is not a believer? Is she to submit in such a case? The Word of God gives definite instructions covering such a case, and adds a promise (See 1 Peter 3:1-2).

The husband is not to demand of the wife this submission, which is her place. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. He stands in the Christian family as the representative of Christ and is called to love his wife. And how did Christ love the Church? He came from heaven's glory to be a servant. He served and is serving the Church. The husband's love towards the wife is to be expressed in loving service in her behalf and giving unto her, as unto the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). Not the wife is to serve the husband, but the husband is to serve her in love, thus manifesting in a little measure the love of Christ for the Church. Beautiful is the description of the love of Christ for the Church. It is a love in the past: "He loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Thus there is a present love: "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." Then there is His future love: "That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." It is the love which passeth knowledge, the love which never changeth; the love which is eternal. Equally blessed is the truth contained in

verses 30-33. We are members of His body, and of His flesh and His bones.

That we have here a reference to Adam and Eve as the types of Christ and the Church is obvious. While Adam slept God built the woman out of his side and then presented her to him. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," were Adam's words. She was taken out of his body, shared the same life and was also Adam's wife. Adam is the figure of Him that was to come (Rom. 5:14). Eve is the type of the Church. We possess His life and are of Himself, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. And the Church's destiny is to have dominion with Him over the new creation.

Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. And the fathers are not to provoke the children to wrath, "but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And how much wisdom this takes! Parents must show constantly to the children the love and patience of Christ and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Then the promise will be made good. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

5. Exhortations to Servants and Masters

CHAPTER 6:5-9

The servants exhorted were slaves. Slavery existed throughout the Roman Empire at that time. Nowhere is slavery attacked in the New Testament, nor is there a statement telling believers that it was a sin to own slaves and incompatible with the gospel. Paul wrote a courteous letter to Philemon and sent it by Onesimus, the runaway slave, who probably had stolen money from Philemon, his master. The gospel is not here to reform the world, to meddle with social conditions and politics.

The slaves here exhorted were Christians. They all belonged to the one body where there is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free. They were in Christ, saved by grace and seated in Christ in the heavenly places. What did it matter if they were but slaves! Did not God's well beloved Son walk on this earth as a servant, yea, the servant of all! In all their bonds they were the servants of Christ. Their service was to be rendered as unto the Lord and not unto men. The Lord would give them their reward. How happy these believing slaves must have been! And the Christian masters were to remember the one Master in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons.

6. The Warfare and the Panoply of God

CHAPTER 6:10-20

1. The warfare (6:10-12)

2. The panoply of God (6:13-20)

Christian warfare or conflict is with the devil and his wiles, with the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and with the spiritual armies of wickedness in the heavenly places (literal translation).

This revelation given here concerning the powers of darkness, the principalities, the rulers of the darkness of this world and the wicked spirits in the heavenly places, is important and demands a closer attention. The Scriptures clearly teach that there is a vast dominion of darkness over which Satan is the head and that, as the god of this present age, he has rulers over this world and a large army of wicked spirits in the heavenlies. He is the prince of the power in the air. The sphere above the earth, the aerial heavens and beyond are tenanted by these wicked spirits, which under the headship of Satan form with principalities and powers, his kingdom. How mighty this being is, what powers are at his disposal, how vast his dominion, how numerous the fallen angels, the wicked spirits which possess the heavenly places, no Saint has ever fully realized, nor can it be all known, till the day comes in which the God of peace shall bruise Satan completely under our feet. Satan has even access into heaven itself. The first two chapters of the book of Job acquaint us with this fact. See also 1 Kings 22:19-23.

But a day is coming when the old serpent, called the devil and Satan, will be cast out into the earth and his angels with

him. This will happen according to the Apocalypse (Rev. 12), when the saints of God are taken into glory and Michael begins his great war against Satan. Then the heavenlies will be cleared of their wicked and unlawful occupants. They will be forced to the earth, where Satan for a brief period will exhibit his great wrath and institute the great tribulation. The devil and his angels will finally be cast into the lake of fire prepared for them (Matt. 25:41). All this we know from God's revelation, and it is a solemn revelation.

In our days the masses of professing Christendom are wholly indifferent to these truths. Others openly oppose them, sneer at them and reject them as superstitions. Well has it been said, "No one but an unbeliever can overlook and despise them." Behind all these denials and sneers, coming from the camps of higher criticism and the new theology stands the dark shadow of Satan. The rulers of darkness of this world, the wicked spirits, do all in their power to keep a lost world, with its supposed progress and scientific discoveries, in ignorance and darkness about themselves. And occultism, known by the names of spiritualism and Psychological research, tries to establish communion with departed spirits. In reality it is communion with the wicked spirits in the heavenlies, who use this unlawful intrusion to delude their victims and make them doubly secure for the impending doom.

And these wicked spirits are against the masterpiece of God. Those who are in Christ and lay hold in the power of His Spirit of the great and ever blessed truths revealed in this epistle, who know the hope of His calling, who rejoice in God and the glory to come, who walk worthy of the calling, come face to face with these powers of darkness. They hate us as they hate Christ.

The wiles of the devil, not his power, we are exhorted to stand against. His wiles are all aimed at getting us away from the enjoyment of the fellowship into which God has called us, the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. If he succeeds in that he has dislodged us from our stronghold and then is able to attack us. The world over which he rules is at his disposal and he uses it to accomplish his sinister purpose. Many pages could be written on his tactics and not the half would be told. It is not so much by the gross things of the flesh and the world he works, though he also uses them; errors of all descriptions becoming more subtle and more cunning, are the chiefest wiles of this great being and the wicked spirits under his control. And how well he succeeds in our present time!

And we must put on the whole armor of God, the panoply of God. It is the only way that we can get the victory and stand and withstand. First, the loins are to be girt about with truth. Even so our Lord exhorted, "Let your loins be girded about" (Luke 12:35).

It is the girdle around the loins, which holds all things together. The girdle is the truth. What truth? The truth of heavenly things, heavenly blessings, acceptance in Christ, oneness with Him, the truth so fully revealed in this Epistle. This we need as a girdle to hold up our garments, our habits, so that in the warfare and conflict we may not be entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4). The truth is to govern our conduct, our affections.

The breastplate of righteousness. This covers the heart. It means having a good conscience. Not merely knowing that we are the righteousness of God in Christ, that we are righteous because we believe on Him, but it means a consistent walk with our position in Christ and the relationship into which the grace of God has brought us. It is again the walk, worthy of our vocation, obedience to the exhortations of the preceding chapters. Covered by this the devil cannot touch us. Such practical righteousness "love out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned" keeps us in the realization and enjoyment of our relationship to God, in the fellowship with the Father and the Son. How often we fail in having on the breastplate of righteousness. Then we must seek restoration by confessing our sins (1 John 1:9).

The feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. This does not mean the preaching of the gospel to others, Christian service or soul winning. We have through the gospel perfect peace with God. We know that God is for us, who then can be against us? This perfect peace we have, in which we stand is our preparation. And we have the peace of God as well, yea, the legacy our Lord left unto us, "My peace I give unto you." Therefore we are not terrified by our adversaries (Phil. 1:28). Israel wandered over the desert rocks and desert sands for forty years with shoes, which did not wear out. We too wander through the wilderness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, a peace which will last as long as God Himself. Knowing this Peace, knowing we are in God's hands, knowing that we are Christ's and Christ is God's, knowing that all things are ours, we can stand and withstand the wiles of the devil. He cannot touch one who rests in the peace of God and who trusts in the God of peace.

The shield of faith. This is to be "over all" (not above all" as in the Authorized Version). Faith in God, faith in His promises, faith in His Word, simple child-like faith is to cover the head and the body like a great shield. It is the exercise of an unwavering confidence in God. The fiery darts will thus be quenched. These "fiery darts" are indeed terrible weapons. The fire speaks of the wrath of God, of judgment, at least, from Him, and it is with this that the enemy would assail us. He is, we must remember, the accuser. His aim, as already said, is to bring distance in some sense between our souls and God. How great a necessity, therefore, to maintain this happy confidence in Him, which, while it does not excuse failure in the least, yet, in utter weakness, finds all its confidence in Him who has undertaken for us. "All the fiery darts of the wicked one" can thus be "quenched" by the "shield of faith" (F. W. Grant).

The helmet of salvation. The helmet rests upon the head. it covers the head, the seat of intelligence. Assurance of salvation past, present and future is this helmet. As we wear it and as it governs our mind and heart as well, the wiles of the devil cannot fall upon us. We are in possession of a salvation which is secure. No power in earth or heaven, the devil with all his demon powers, cannot spoil us of it. This gives not alone confidence, but boldness in the conflict. Sad it is to see the thousands of believers without the helmet of salvation, destitute of the assurance of salvation and therefore the easy prey of the devil's wiles, driven about by every wind of doctrine. Well has it been said: "Girded by the truth applies to the judgment of the inner man. Practical righteousness guards the conscience from the assaults of the enemy; the power of peace gives a character to our walk; confidence in the love of God quenches the poisoned arrows of doubt; the assurance of salvation gives us boldness to go onward."

The sword of the Spirit. It is the word of God, the only offensive weapon mentioned in the armor of God. It is to meet the devil and to make him flee from us. How our blessed Lord wielded this sword in the wilderness, how He met the devil by a "It is written" is well known to every Christian. Was there ever a time when God's people had greater need of laying hold with a firm grasp of the sword of the Spirit? Satan has succeeded by his wiles to dull the edge of that sword. The enemy also perverts and counterfeits the Word. What need then that as never before we go "to the law and to the testimonies." We must search the Word and have the Word search us. We must have the Word in our hearts and our hearts in the Word, and thus alone can we meet the enemy.

Praying always. We do not detach this from the armor of God. It belongs to it. Prayer always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, is next to the sword of the Spirit the most powerful weapon against the devil and his wicked hosts. We must read the Word and pray. Prayer and the Word cannot be separated. The searching of the Word must be done with prayer and prayer will be effectual through knowing the Word. Prayer is dependence on God; we lean on Him. And as we pray in the Spirit (not for the Spirit) we are to watch also and remember all the saints of God, the blessed members of the body of Christ, the masterpiece of God.

7. The Conclusion

CHAPTER 6:21-24

In the preceding verses the great apostle asked the prayers of the saints for himself Thereby he testified in a practical way to the great truth of the body of Christ, the church. The conclusions are brief. Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in Christ, would make known to them all things, and he was sent also by the loving apostle to comfort their hearts. What a marvelous document this epistle is! What a solid rock to stand upon! What revelations concerning God, and ourselves as redeemed by the blood of His Son! God grant that all His people may increasingly enjoy the riches of this richest portion of His Holy Word.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

Introduction

The city of Philippi was built as a military position by Philip the Great of Macedon to keep the wild Thracians in check, which were the neighbors of the Macedonians. Later it became a Roman colony by Augustus, as a memorial of his victory over Brutus and Cassius. It was not a very important city. The Jews had not settled there at all, so that the city did not contain a synagogue. In Acts 16:12 Philippi is called "the chief city of that part of Macedonia." This does not mean that Philippi was the chief city of all Macedonia, which Thessalonica was; but Philippi was the chief city of that district and the first city to which Paul and his companions came. The historical record of the apostle's visit to Philippi and how the gospel was preached there, for the first time on European ground, is found in the book of Acts (chapter 16). The conversion of Lydia, her hospitality to the servants of Christ, the demon possessed girl and her deliverance, the suffering of Paul and Silas on account of it, their prayer and praise in the prison, the earthquake, the conversion of the jailer and of his house, are the interesting and blessed incidents connected with the beginning of the church in Philippi. The apostle probably visited this city twice after this (Acts 20:1 and 6), though the details of these visits are not reported in the book of Acts.

The church in Philippi was greatly attached to the Apostle Paul. He had no need to defend his apostleship and authority, for the Philippians had not been affected by the false Judaizing teachers, who had wrought such havoc in Galatia and Corinth. This must have been due to the fact that there were few Jews in that city. But the apostle evidently feared the invasion of the Philippian assembly by these false teachers. This we learn from the warning given in chapter 3:2. The church itself was poor and had much trial and affliction; yet did they minister out of their deep poverty to other needy saints (2 Cor. 8:1-2; Phil. 1:28-30). They had also ministered liberally to the apostle twice shortly after he had left them (Phil. 4:15-16); he received their fellowship in Thessalonica. The third time they had remembered him. Epaphroditus was their messenger who brought the love-gift to the prisoner of the Lord. In return the apostle sent to the beloved Philippians another gift, this beautiful Epistle, dictated by the Spirit of God.

Written From Rome

That this Epistle to the Philippians was written by Paul seems almost impossible to doubt. "Indeed, considering its peculiarly Pauline psychological character, the total absence from it of all assignable motive for falsification, the spontaneity and fervor of its effusions of feeling--he must be a bold man who would call its authorship in question" (Alford). Yet the critics are bold and leave nothing unquestioned and some have questioned the genuineness of this document. Needless to say the Epistle has not suffered by this foolish criticism. The ancient testimony of Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and others mentions this epistle as being Pauline and written by him in Rome, during his imprisonment, of which we read in Acts 28:30-31. The question arises at what time of his prison life he wrote this letter. It was not in the very beginning, but must have been towards the end. The Philippians had heard of his imprisonment and had made up a sum of money which Epaphroditus carried in person to Rome. And Epaphroditus had fallen sick and the Philippians had heard of his severe illness "nigh unto death" (Phil. 2:30). This sickness of their beloved Epaphroditus had been in turn reported to them (Phil. 2:26) and the apostle heard how they had been grieved on account of it. All this necessitated a number of journeys from Rome to Philippi and back. This took a good many months. And furthermore, in the beginning of his stay in Rome he dwelt for two years in his own hired house and seemed to have perfect liberty (Acts 28:30). In his epistle to the Philippians he writes that he is in the praetorium and no longer in his own house. "But I would have you know, brethren, that the circumstances in which I am here turned out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds have become manifest as being in Christ in all the praetorium and to all others" (Phil. 1:12-13, revised translation). The praetorium was the place where the praetorium guards were kept, next to the palace of the Emperor Nero. He had now been put in stricter confinement and felt his bonds more severely (Phil. 1:18). The Epistle must therefore have

been written by him after the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, that is, about the middle of the year 63 A. D.

The Epistle of Christian Experience

Philippians is put in our Bibles between Ephesians and Colossians. A better arrangement is to put this Epistle after Colossians. The Epistle to the Ephesians shows the believer's position in Christ and what he possesses in Him; Colossians reveals the glory of Christ as the Head of the body in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. Philippians also speaks of Christ, but not in a doctrinal way. It is an Epistle which describes the walk and the life of one who has apprehended his position in Christ and walks therefore in the power of the Spirit of God. It shows what manner of lives those should live on earth who are saved by grace and who are waiting for glory. The epistle assumes the knowledge of what the salvation of God is. We therefore find nothing said about justification, peace with God or assurance of salvation. The word "salvation" as used in Philippians has nowhere the meaning of salvation by grace in the sense of deliverance from guilt and condemnation. Philippians shows us what true Christian experience is in the power of the Spirit of God. The words "sins" and "sin" are not found in this Epistle. The true believer knows that his sins are put away and that the old man was crucified with Christ. The question of deliverance from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin, as so blessedly revealed in Romans, does not enter into true Christian experience. True Christian experience is to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and to manifest Christ in that walk. This the Epistle to the Philippians reveals from beginning to end. The name of our Lord is used over fifty times in the four chapters. He is the believer's life; Christ must be always before the heart and He must be made known by the believer in his life, following Him as the pattern and looking to Him as the goal.

The words "joy" and "rejoicing" are used eighteen times in Philippians. It is the Epistle of rejoicing. "He went on his way rejoicing" is the description of the experience of the eunuch after he had believed on the Lord. The true believer's way should be one of constant rejoicing. The whole atmosphere of this Epistle is that of joy, and so the believer in whatever earthly circumstances he may be placed should manifest the joy of the Lord. Paul, the great apostle, and now the prisoner of the Lord, as years before in the Philippian prison, sends forth from the Roman prison the triumphant song of faith and holy joy. There is not a word of murmur or complaint. It is "counting it all joy" and "glorying in tribulation." He had Christ; He knew Christ; Christ was his all; he knew himself in His hands and the glorious goal was ever before him and the Holy Spirit filled him therefore with joy. And such should be the experience of every believer. The word Philippians means "those who love horses." The racehorse in fullest energy stretches its neck to reach the goal. This epistle describes also the Christian race. This is especially seen in the third chapter where the energy and holy ambition of the new life to win Christ, to attain and to reach the goal is given. The Epistle likewise reveals the real affection and fellowship which exists between the servant of the Lord and those who have received blessing through his ministry. The annotations of this precious little Epistle contain many hints on the true Christian experience and walk.

The Division of Philippians

The division into four chapters is the correct one. As stated in the introduction it is true Christian experience which this little Epistle unfolds, showing the motives which should govern the believer in his life, the energy he should manifest, the resources which are at his disposal and the victory over all circumstances through Christ. The Christian in a normal, spiritual condition as seen in this Epistle has been aptly described as on a journey with an object before him, which is Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the theme of each chapter. Hence we have four aspects of the true Christian life and experience.

In the first chapter Christ is made known as the all-controlling principle of the life of the believer. Christ is our life; He indwells the believer, and true Christian life and experience is to live for Him and be fully controlled by the Lord. "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). In the second chapter Christ is seen in His humiliation and obedience as the believer's pattern. The One who passed through this life, who left the glory to humble Himself, who was obedient unto death, the death of the cross; He who endured the cross and despised the shame, who is now exalted at the right hand of God and has a name which is above every name, is to be constantly before the believer's heart. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5). In the third chapter Christ is the bright object and the final goal before the believer. In the energy of the new life the believer reaches out after that goal, never satisfied with anything else. It is the desire to win actually Christ, to lay hold of that for which he has been laid hold of by Christ. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might

attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (3:10-11). In the fourth chapter we learn that Christ is enough for all circumstances. The believer, who, like the great apostle, can say, "for me to live is Christ"; who ever follows His path of self-humiliation and obedience, constantly reaching out for the goal, will find that Christ is sufficient for all earthly circumstances. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (4:13). This then is the division of this brief but most important and practical Epistle:

I. CHRIST, THE CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF THE BELIEVER'S LIFE (ch. 1)

II. CHRIST, THE BELIEVER'S PATTERN (ch. 2)

III. CHRIST, THE OBJECT AND THE GOAL (ch. 3)

IV. CHRIST, THE BELIEVER'S STRENGTH, SUFFICIENT FOR ALL CIRCUMSTANCES (ch. 4)

Analysis and Annotations

I. CHRIST, THE CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1-2)

2. The fellowship in the gospel (1:3-8)

3. The apostle's prayer (1:9-11)

4. Paul's victory (1:12-20)

5. Paul's life and confidence (1:21-26)

6. Exhortation to walk worthy of the gospel (1:27-30)

Verses 1-2

The introductory words to this Epistle differ from those of the preceding epistles in that he does not mention his apostleship. The reason for this omission is because his letter to the Philippians does not unfold the great doctrines of the gospel, nor does it correct evil teachings. In writing to them about his own experience as illustrating Christian experience, he does so as a member of the body of Christ. Associating Timotheus, his son in the gospel, with himself as servant of Christ Jesus, he addresses all the saints in Philippi with the bishops and deacons.

Notice the way the name of our Lord is used in this opening verse of the Epistle: "Servants of Christ Jesus" (not Jesus Christ as in the authorized version) and "saints in Christ Jesus." Christ is His name as the Risen One, as Peter declared on the day of Pentecost, "God has made Him both Lord and Christ." The attention is directed at once to Him as the Risen, Glorified One by putting His title "Christ" first.

Believers are saints, that is, separated ones, and servants in the risen, exalted Lord; He must ever be before the heart in life and walk down here and all service must come from Himself. All the saints are mentioned first and then the bishops and deacons. The bishops are the overseers, who are also called elders; the deacons were ministers. The custom of ritualistic Christendom in electing a man a bishop, who has charge over a diocese, the oversight of so many churches, with certain functions of authority, is not according to Scripture. They had a number of bishops, overseers, in the small assembly in Philippi as well as in Ephesus. Acts 20:28 gives their work and responsibility. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers (bishops), to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." And these chosen ones who labor for the flock are to be recognized and esteemed. "And

we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12-13). The deacons probably ministered more in temporal affairs. Of bishops and deacons and their qualifications the apostle writes more fully in 1 Tim. 3.

Verses 3-8

And as he remembered them all and thought of their love and devotion he thanked God for them. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." He remembers with praise to God their fellowship in the gospel, how they took part in the trials, labors, conflicts occasioned by the preaching of that gospel. They had taken a zealous part in the gospel Paul preached and manifested a loving interest by ministering to the needs of the Lord's servant. The remembrance of all which had happened when he was in Philippi and their combined fellowship and steadfastness filled the prisoner of the Lord with gratitude and joy. Therefore he prayed for them continually; he carried them upon his heart and in the prayer of intercession mentioned their names before the throne of grace. How Christ-like this was. He ever carries His dear people upon His heart and intercedes for them.

If we love the saints of God we also will pray for them. This gives joy, courage and confidence. "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet for me to think of you all because ye have me in your hearts, and that, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace." (The Authorized Version has it "because I have you in my heart"; the correct translation is "Ye have me in your hearts.") The grace of God had wrought this loving spirit in the Philippians; the Lord had produced all this interest in the gospel and their whole-hearted devotion. And so the apostle is confident that He who had done all this in them, who had begun the good work, would surely complete it until the day of Jesus Christ, when all His saints meet Him face to face. They had him in their hearts, not merely as a fellow-saint, but they had loving sympathy for him in his sufferings and as the one who suffered for the defence and confirmation of the gospel. And Paul, knowing their love and heart-fellowship, in return longed after them. The response to their affection was his affectionate desire. What a blessed illustration of the command of our Lord, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). How little of this real affection there is among the children of God! How much faultfinding, sectarian exclusion from fellowship, especially among those who claim deliverance from sectarianism, and how little real manifestation of love towards all the saints! It is one of the leading characteristics of the Laodicean condition.

Verses 9-11

The apostle now utters his inspired prayer for them. It is still the prayer of the Holy Spirit for God's people. They had love, but he prays that their love may abound yet more and more. But this abounding love is to be "in knowledge and all intelligence." Love must not and will not tolerate evil. If the heart is fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Christian will manifest this love in knowledge and all intelligence, having discernment of good and evil. As Christ is before the heart the believer will abound yet more and more in love and also "judge of and approve the things that are excellent." Walking after this rule means to be "pure and without offence till the day of Christ." That day is not the Old Testament day of the Lord, when He is revealed on earth in power and glory to judge and to establish His kingdom, but it is the day for the saints when they meet Him in the air and then appear before His judgment seat. And such a walk produces the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Thus it is seen that love is the source of everything in the life of the believer.

Verses 12-20

After the words of love and prayer Paul speaks of himself and his circumstances. But how does he speak of that which had happened unto him? There is not a word of murmur or complaint. Not a word of uncertainty or doubt. Not even a thought of self-pity or discontent. He might have accused himself about having gone to Jerusalem; to create sympathy he might have complained and described his bonds and the sufferings. But he rises above all. Christ is in his life the controlling principle. His own self is out of sight and he bears joyful testimony how all turned out for good, for the furtherance of the gospel. He had written to the Romans years before that all things work together for good to them that love God. In Rome, a prisoner, he shows practically the truth of that statement. The overruling hand of the Lord was manifested in the

furtherance of the gospel, even in the praetorium, adjoining Nero's palace. it was enough for him who was so devoted to Christ and the gospel of grace. And his bonds encouraged many in becoming more bold to speak the word without fear. Who were they who preached Christ out of envy and strife, who tried to add still more affliction to his bonds? They were such who were selfish, envying the great apostle for his gifts and power. They were jealous of him. And now when he was in prison, his widespread activities completely arrested, they began to speak against his person and perhaps used his imprisonment as an evidence against him, that claiming too much authority, the Lord had set him aside. By their envy and strife, they would add affliction to the apostle. And yet they preached Christ. The prisoner of the Lord rises above it all. He is not self controlled, but Christ controls him. And so he writes, "What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." God was with His servant; and instead of the self-seeking which instigated these sorry preachers of the truth, there was found in Paul the pure desire for the proclamation of the gospel of Christ, the whole value of which he deeply felt, and which he desired above all, be it in what way it might. His own self was completely out of sight. Christ was his all; in Him he rejoiced and though he was in prison he was filled with joy and the worthy Name was being proclaimed.

He speaks next of his confidence that this will turn out to his salvation through their prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What salvation is it he means? It is not salvation in the sense of deliverance from guilt and condemnation. Of this the Apostle Paul was not in doubt; for this he did not need the prayers of others. Deliverance from the guilt of sins and from condemnation is the gift of God in Christ Jesus. We are saved once for all by the finished work of the cross. To this salvation nothing can be added. Believers are saved and forever safe in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Salvation in the New Testament has two more meanings. There is a salvation for the believer when the Lord Jesus comes again. "We are saved in hope" (Rom. 8:24). And there is a present salvation which the believer needs day by day as he journeys towards the blessed goal. In the midst of trials, temptations, hardships and other perils, victory over all these things is to be gained and Christ's name to be exalted and glorified. The salvation we have in Christ through Christ is to be practically manifested. For this the apostle desired the prayers of the Philippians; for this he needed, and we also, the supply of the Spirit. The latter certainly not in the sense, as some teach, of a new baptism of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer and if the heart is set upon Christ and controlled by Him, the supply of the Spirit will not be lacking. Therefore the apostle's earnest expectation and hope was that he would be ashamed in nothing, that he would be victor in all these circumstances. Christ would be magnified in his body whether by life or by death.

Verses 21-26

The great principle of his life, the all governing principle, was Christ. He was all in Paul's life. "For me to live is Christ" means that Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20); he lived by Him and for Him. If death should come it would be gain, for it would bring him to Christ. But he finds himself in a strait betwixt two things. He has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which would be far better and yet, if he was to live still down here, it was worth his while. Far better for him personally to depart and be delivered from all the conflicts, trials and sufferings; but, on the other hand, the needs down here, the saints who needed him and his labors, induce him to decide to choose "to abide in the flesh," for it was more needful for them. So he decides to remain, no matter what sufferings were still in store for him, so that he might minister unto their spiritual needs. How unselfish! How very much like Christ! Self again is all out of sight. And there is no mention made of Nero and his power. Through faith Paul knew himself not in the hands of Rome but in the hands of Christ.

We must not overlook the argument against the false doctrine of soul-sleep, which is contained in the words of the apostle, "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." This false doctrine claims that when the believer dies he passeth into a state of unconsciousness. if this were true it would certainly not be "far better" to depart, or as the original states, "much more better." Enjoying the fellowship with the Lord is a good and blessed thing. To pass out of the body and to be with Him is "much more better," for in the disembodied state, the saints of God enjoy and know the Lord in a degree that is impossible down here. And the best of all is when the Lord comes and all the redeemed receive their glorified bodies.

Verses 27-30

And now he desires that their life should be worthy of the gospel he loved so well. He wants them to stand fast in one spirit and with one mind striving together for the gospel; this was to be their attitude whether he was present with them or

absent. only the Holy Spirit could accomplish this; He only can give to believers oneness in all things and power to strive together for the gospel. Walking thus believers need not to be terrified by the adversaries, those who oppose and reject the gospel. These adversaries always try to inspire fear, like the enemies of Israel in the land. But looking to the Lord, letting Him govern all things, walking in the Spirit, was an evident testimony of their own promised salvation (which here means the final deliverance) and to their enemies an evident token of perdition. And suffering through which they passed in Philippi, as well as that of the apostle in the prison of Rome, is viewed as a gift of God, just as much as believing on Christ. It is then a gracious, God-given privilege to suffer for His sake. Murmuring and complaining will be completely silenced when suffering for Christ's sake is looked upon as a gift of grace. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets, which were before you."

II. CHRIST, THE BELIEVER'S PATTERN

CHAPTER 2

1. Oneness of mind through self effacement (2:1-4)
2. The humiliation and exaltation of Christ (2:5-11)
3. Work out your own salvation (2:12-13)
4. As lights in the world (2:14-16)
5. The example of Paul (2:17-18)
6. The example of Timotheus (2:19-24)
7. The example of Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

Verses 1-4

This chapter puts before us Christ as our pattern. The path He went is to be the believer's path. He trod the way, and the many sons He brings ere long with Himself to glory are called upon to follow Him in the same way. And what honor, what glory, to be called to follow in the same path! The chapter begins with a loving appeal of the prisoner of the Lord. He reminds them of the comfort in Christ which was their blessed portion, of the comfort of love and the fellowship of the Spirit and the bowels of mercies, the result of these precious possessions of the gospel. And now while they had manifested all this in a practical way among themselves and towards the apostle, he tells them that they would fulfill his joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, united in soul and thinking one thing. That they had difficulties among themselves may be learned from the fourth chapter. And so he desired that all might be one. it is a precious echo of our Lord's prayer in John 17. Nothing is to be done among His people in the self-seeking spirit of strife or vainglory. This is the spirit of the natural man and of the world.

The true way which becomes the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who live by Him and for Him, is to esteem the other better than himself in lowliness of mind, regarding not each his own things (or qualities) but each the things of others also. To walk in such a manner is only possible with those who have received, by being born again, a new nature and walk in the power of the Spirit of God. To be utterly forgetful of self, complete self effacement and self-denial and thus the absence of strife and vainglory and the manifestation of true humility, is the manifestation of the mind of Christ. But is it possible at all times to esteem each other better than himself?

We let another answer: "There will be no difficulty in this if we are really walking before God; we shall be occupied with each other's good, and the one will esteem the other better than himself, because when the soul is really before the Lord, it will see its own short-comings and imperfections, and will be in self-judgment; and according to the love and spirit of Christ see all the good that is from Him in a brother and one dear to Him, and will therefore look upon his fellow-Christian

as better than himself, and so all would be in beautiful harmony; and we should be looking after each other's interests too"-- (J.N. Darby, Philippians). How true it is, love likes to be a servant; selfishness likes to be served.

Verses 5-11

With the fifth verse begins that portion of the chapter which reveals Christ as our pattern. Christ in His humiliation and His exaltation; Christ who did not please Himself, who was obedient unto death, the death of the cross; Christ, who is now exalted and has a name which is above every other name, is blessedly before us in these verses. There are seven steps which lead down deeper and deeper, even to the death of the cross. And there are seven steps which lead up higher and higher.

His Humiliation

1. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God
2. He humbled Himself
3. He became a servant
4. He was made in the likeness of man
5. He was found in fashion as a man
6. He became obedient
7. Obedient to the death of the cross.

His Exaltation

1. God highly exalted Him
2. Gave Him the Name above every name
3. Every knee is to bow at His name
4. Things in heaven must acknowledge Him
5. Things on earth
6. Things under the earth
7. Every tongue must confess Him as Lord

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The Spirit of Christ is in the believer for this very purpose, not that we should be imitators of Christ, but that His own life may be reproduced in us. We have this mind of Christ in the divine nature. What wonderful grace that we are called with such a calling, to be in His fellowship and follow His own path! Having delivered us from guilt and condemnation we are called to walk even as He walked down here, the author and finisher of the faith.

We trace briefly His path. We behold Him first in His absolute deity, "subsisting in the form of God." He ever was and is God; as we know from the opening of the gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Who can describe what glory was His? And the equality with God which is His He did not

esteem an object to be grasped at, but He emptied Himself (This is the correct translation and better than the King James version, "He made of Himself no reputation.") He gave up something which was His; He laid aside His outward glory. Some teach that He laid aside His deity. This is positively an unscriptural and evil doctrine. It is widely known in theological circles as the kenosis-theory, which is so dishonoring to our adorable Lord. He could never be anything else but the true God and the eternal life. He came down from the heights of eternal and unfathomable glory and took on a body prepared for Him, yet in that body He was very God. John 17:5 shows of what He emptied Himself.

The next step tells us that He who gave up, came down. "He took upon Him the form of a servant, taking His place in the likeness of men." Had He taken upon Himself the form of an angel, it would have been a humiliation, for He created the angels. But He was made a little lower than the angels. He took on the servant's form in the likeness of men. But in Him was no sin, so that it was impossible for Him to sin, for He knew no sin and was in all points tempted as we are, apart from sin.

But the path did not end with this. He who gave up the glory, He who came down and became a servant also became obedient. It was an obedience unto death, the death of the cross. Wonderful condescension and love. It was all for our sake. And redeemed by His precious blood, called into His own fellowship, His way must become ours; we are to follow Him. If we then consider Him and let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, self will have nothing more to say; all strife and vainglory will be at an end. And this path of giving up, coming down, true humility, self-denial and true obedience is the only one in which there is perfect peace and rest for the child of God. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls.

The description of His exaltation follows. God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. What glory it is! In the first chapter of Hebrews we read that the risen man Christ Jesus is the heir of all things, "made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb 1:4). In Him we have also obtained an inheritance. Before He ever received that glory He prayed to the Father "the glory Thou hast given me I have given to them" (John 17:22). In His glorious exaltation He is likewise our pattern. We shall see Him as He is and shall be like Him, His fellow-heirs. And while we follow in His steps down here we can look upon Him seated in the highest heaven and rejoice that we shall someday be with Him and share His glory. Every knee must ultimately bow at the name of Jesus, even beings under the earth, infernal beings. They must own His title in glory. Yet this does not make them saved beings. Nor does this passage teach that ultimately all the lost will be saved, as claimed by restitutionists and others. The fact that every tongue will have to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord does not mean the salvation of the lost. In Col. 1:20 things, or beings in heaven and on earth are also mentioned in connection with reconciliation, but then the things under the earth are omitted. See our annotations on that passage.

Verses 12-13

Words of exhortation come after this blessed paragraph in which the Lord Jesus is put before us as our pattern. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure." These words are misunderstood by many Christians. It is being taught that Christians should work for their own salvation. This is the grossest perversion of this exhortation. Every true believer has salvation which is given to Him by grace. It is his own salvation; he does not need to work for it. Others say that one who is really saved by grace must work in order to stay saved, and work with fear and trembling. They tell us, if a believer does not keep on working, if he fails and sins, he will fall from grace and is in danger to be unsaved and lost again. This also is Unscriptural; the Word of God teaches the eternal security of all who have received eternal life, the gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The exhortation does not mean that we must work to keep ourselves saved, but it means that our own salvation which we have in Christ is to be worked out into result. Salvation is to be practically manifested in the life and walk by glorifying Christ. We are to work it out after the blessed pattern of Christ with fear and trembling, not the fear of being lost, but the fear of failure in not walking in lowliness of mind, in true humility and in obedience. This will ever be the chiefest concern of the believer who walks in the Spirit. "It is this, therefore, which is to induce the fear and trembling; not in selfish dread, but the sense of our responsibility to Him to whom we owe our all and whose our life is. Plenty there is to make us serious in such work as this, but nothing to dishearten us. if God has taken in hand to work in us after this fashion, that is ample security for our success. The fact that the apostle was now absent from them, he whose presence had been so great a comfort and blessing to their souls, was only to make them more completely realize this divine power which was carrying them on to the full blessing beyond" (Numerical Bible).

Verses 14-16

If we thus work out our own salvation, with Christ ever before us as our pattern, following after Him in the same path, we shall do all things without murmurings and reasonings. These are the fruits of the old self. But following Him as our pattern there will be no more strife and vainglory; we shall esteem the other better than ourselves and consequently there will be no murmurings. Furthermore, like our Lord was "harmless and sincere," we shall be harmless and sincere, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, without any self-assertion whatever. And as He was the light down here, so are believers now to shine as lights. As He on earth was the Word of life, holding it forth is what the apostle writes believers should also do, "holding forth the Word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." (See 1 Thess. 2:20.)

Verses 17-18

Three witnesses follow whose experiences tell us that the grace of God can produce such a character after the pattern of Christ in the believer. First, the apostle speaks of himself "Yea and if I am poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and ministration of your faith I rejoice in common with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me." With death threatening, the prisoner of the Lord expresses His joy. Paul speaks of what the Philippians did, their ministrations of faith as the greater thing; he looks upon it all as a sacrifice and himself and his service only as a libation; that is, he views his own life poured out upon it. Thus he manifested lowliness of mind. In regarding the devotion of the Philippians as the sacrifice, and the devotion of his own life he regards only as poured out as a drink offering (the symbol of joy) upon their sacrifice.

Verses 19-24

Timotheus is the next witness. Of him Paul writes, "For I have no one like-minded who will care naturally for your state (or, who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on). For all seek their own things and not the things of Christ." Many already there lived selfishly, seeking in service their own things and not serving and walking, glorifying Christ. So it is today in the Laodicean condition into which Christendom is fast sinking. But Timotheus, Paul's spiritual son (1 Tim. 1:2) was a blessed exception. He was in fullest fellowship with the apostle, like-minded, who forgot himself completely and cared genuinely for the Philippians. They knew the proof of him, for as a son with the father, he served with the apostle in the gospel. The two, Paul and Timothy, illustrate what it means "to be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (verse 2). And thus it ought to be among all the members of the body of Christ. What a comfort Timotheus must have been to Paul in the Roman prison! What cheer and joy to have such a one with him! What refreshment to his soul! But he is willing to give him up. "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state." Not seeking his own, in self-denying devotion, he is willing to part with him, so that the Philippians might enjoy his fellowship.

Verses 25-30

Another gracious witness is Epaphroditus. He also manifests the mind of Christ. Epaphroditus was the messenger of the Philippians. He brought to Rome the collection, expressing the fellowship of the church in Philippi. But he had been taken violently ill in the exercise of his service, "for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death." He did not regard his own life and in this he exemplified the Lord Jesus Christ. "Greater love can no one show than that he lays down his life for his friends." His was a service in entire forgetfulness of self. And when he was sick nigh unto death "God had mercy on him." The Philippians also heard of the dangerous illness of their beloved messenger. They must have been deeply grieved. Then unselfish Epaphroditus was greatly distressed because the Philippians had heard of his illness. In his suffering, nigh unto death, his thoughts were with the saints in Philippi, and he was grieved that they had anxiety for him. It all shows the mind of Christ.

III. CHRIST, THE OBJECT AND THE GOAL

CHAPTER 3

1. The true circumcision (3:1-3)
2. Paul's past experience (3:4-7)
3. The one passion (3:8-11)
4. Pressing towards the mark (3:12-16)
5. The goal of glory (3:17-21)

Verses 1-3

Finally (or, for the rest), my brethren, rejoice in the "Lord." Rejoicing in the Lord, not merely in the salvation which is ours, nor in His mercies, in His gifts or in our service, but in Him, is what gives strength and victory down here. He rejoiced in Him because He knew the Lord was controlling all and that he was in His hands; he followed the same path in humiliation, which he knew would lead him to the glory where He is. And the prisoner of the Lord enjoying the blessedness of fellowship with Christ, following Christ, looking to Him and not to earthly circumstances, exhorts the beloved Philippians to find their joy in nothing less than the Person Christ. It was not a grievous thing for him to write them the same things, but it was safe for them. They needed the exhortation in the midst of spiritual dangers, for nothing else keeps from evil as heart occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ. He warns "beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." By these terms the same false teachers are meant which disturbed the Galatian churches, which did such evil work also among the Corinthians. He speaks of these perverters of the gospel in severe terms, but not too severe. They boasted of religiousness, of righteousness by the observance of ordinances and the keeping of the law; they trusted in the flesh and set aside Christ. They, with their religion of the flesh, are branded by the apostle as dogs, unclean and outside, therefore unworthy of fellowship. They called the Gentiles dogs, but now the Spirit of God shows that they are not better than the Gentiles. (See Gal. 4:8-10.) They were evil workmen who led souls away, as the havoc they had wrought shows. They gloried in ceremonies, the circumcision of the flesh; in reality they were the concision, the mutilators of the flesh, who knew nothing of the true separation through the cross of Christ and union with a risen Christ in whom the believer is complete.

Dogs, evil workers and the concision, are terms which fit the many cults today, including "Christian Science," the "new thought," the "new religion and modern theology," all of which deny the gospel of Jesus Christ. True believers are the circumcision, not a circumcision made by hands, but a spiritual circumcision, the putting off of the body of the flesh by the death of Christ (Col. 2:11). The cross of Christ separates the believer from the flesh, the religious forms, and self-improvement, and separates him unto God. And knowing that Christ is all, glorying in Him with no more confidence in the flesh, the believer worships by the Spirit of God, and no longer in ordinances. The indwelling Spirit fills the heart with Christ, glorifies Him, and true worship by the Spirit is the result. To have no more confidence in the flesh, to expect nothing whatever from ourselves, to glory only in Christ Jesus is true Christian attainment and experience.

Verses 4-7

And this blessed servant of the Lord Jesus speaks of his experience as a Hebrew. He might have had abundant reason to place confidence in the flesh. We had something as a natural, religious man to glory in. What fleshly advantages were his! He was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless. He had indeed, as he testified before, "profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my father" (Gal. 1:14). He was a very religious man, for he belonged to the most religious sect of his day, with a blind zeal which led him to persecute the church, yet touching the righteousness in the law, he knew himself blameless.

And all this religiousness and zeal for God, his law keeping and blamelessness he looked upon as being of value and gain for him, though they did not give him peace or fellowship with God. A change came. The things which were religious gain to him he now counted loss for Christ. On the road to Damascus he had seen the glorified Christ and that vision had laid him in the dust so that he saw himself as the chief of sinners.

Verses 8-11

From that moment when it pleased God to reveal His Son to him the self-righteous Pharisee could say, "I count all things* loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them refuse that I may win Christ and be found in Him." What had been gain to him he cast aside. He had seen Christ and that was enough, he would have nothing else after that. Christ had become his all. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, whom the erstwhile persecutor now blessedly calls "my Lord," made it a joy to suffer the loss of all things, yea, to count them refuse. How he suffered the loss of all things, things needful in life, suffering, hunger, stripes; giving up all earthly distinction and advantage, we know from his own testimony (2 Cor. 11:22-31). He suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse. "This is the marvelous estimate of one who had all the advantages in the world; and then had known all sufferings from it in behalf of Christ, looking upon the former as worse than nothing, as a detriment, and the latter to be nothing, because the knowledge he had already gained of Christ outweighed them all." All earthly things, all human attainments, everything which exalts man were counted as loathsome things in comparison with Him whom He had beheld in the glory light.

*"He does not say: When I was converted I counted all things loss. When a person is truly converted, Christ becomes and is everything; the world then appears as nothing. It has passed from the mind and the unseen things fill the heart. Afterwards as the convert goes on with his duties and with his friends, though Christ is still precious, he does generally not continue to count all things loss. But Paul could say, 'I count all things loss' not 'I did.' It is a great thing to be able to say that."

But what does he mean when he expresses the desire "that I may win (or gain) Christ and be found in Him"? Did he not possess Christ already? Was he not in Him and Christ in him? He possessed Christ. He was in Him. Nor does the apostle mean that he reaches out, as some teach, after a "deeper life" experience or some such thing. He had perfect assurance of his standing before God in Christ; no doubt whatever as to that could be in the apostle's heart. Nor did he need some kind of an experience, as some claim, a holiness-perfection experience, to give him greater assurance. His wish to win Christ, to gain Christ, is his longing desire for the actual possession of Christ in glory. Christ in glory is the great object and goal for the believer down here. This object and goal must ever be before the heart in the Christian's race. Like the racer who has no eyes for his surroundings, but whose eye is steadily fixed upon the goal, so the believer is to look to the glorified Christ and press forward toward the mark. This is the truth unfolded in this chapter.

Paul knew that Christ belonged to him, that his destiny was to be forever with Him, and then his passion was to be worthy of all this. And when Christ is gained in glory and the goal is reached then he would be "found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law (the righteousness which is nothing but filthy rags), but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." How he emphasizes this righteousness in which he delighted! And this great servant of the Lord, who knew Him so well, wants to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering "being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might arrive at the resurrection from among the dead." The power of His resurrection he desires to know is more than a spiritual power, for he knew that power in practical experience. Of this he had written to the Ephesians (1:15-2:10). It is again the goal of the Christian's life towards which he reaches out. He wants to arrive at the resurrection from among the dead by any means and to get there though it means fellowship with His suffering being made conformable to His death. And this was before him in the Roman prison. He wanted to be with Christ, and to arrive there he desired to be like Christ in participating in His suffering even to be made conformable to His death.

It is important to note here the difference between "resurrection of the dead" and "the resurrection from among the dead." The latter is the correct translation of verse 11. There is a resurrection of the dead, of all the dead. But there is a resurrection from among the dead, which elsewhere in the Word is called the first resurrection. The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. When the Lord spoke to His disciples of His resurrection from among the dead they were astonished and spoke among themselves "what the rising of the dead should mean." They did not know what it meant. When the Lord was raised He became the first fruits of them that slept, that is, the righteous dead. And God raised Him from the dead, because His delight was in Him, for He had glorified Him and finished the Work the Father gave Him to do.

The first resurrection, the resurrection from the dead, is the expression of God's delight and satisfaction in those raised; it

is His seal on Christ's work. Because He finished that great work which glorified God, all who are in Christ will be raised from among the dead, while those who live when the Lord comes, will not die, but be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51-52). But it is not on account of the believer's attainment, but because of Christ that the power of God will take His own out. The rest of the dead will be left until the second resurrection.

The Apostle knew that through grace he belonged to this out-resurrection from among the dead. He had an absolute certainty of it. But in divine energy he presses on towards it. All in him wants to get there where the grace of God in Christ had put him. He reaches out for this blessed goal and when he speaks of attaining "by any means" he gives us to understand that nothing shall hinder him in the race. May the cost be what it will, I want it; I want it because I have it in Christ and through Christ and I want to be worthy of it. And therefore he despised the loss of all things and was ready to suffer and die the martyr's death.

Verses 12-16

The words which follow show that this is the true meaning of the desire he expressed. "Not as though I had already attained (obtained), or am already made perfect, but I press on if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press towards the goal for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus." The goal had not yet been reached, he was still on the way and had not yet obtained nor was he made perfect. He constantly presses on towards the goal, Christ in glory. He knew that he had been apprehended, taken possession of, by Christ Jesus and for Christ and therefore he also wants to take possession, to apprehend it. He forgets what is behind and even stretches forward to the things which are before, the blessed goal. This was his constant attitude, ever occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ to be like Him and with Him in glory.

"The whole of Paul's life was founded on that and completely formed by that. The Son of God was forming his soul day by day, and he was always running towards Him and never doing anything else. It was not merely as an apostle that he entered into the fellowship of His sufferings, and conformity to His death, but every Christian should do the same. A person may say he has forgiveness of sins. But I say, What is governing your heart now? Is your eye resting on Christ in glory? Is the excellency of knowledge of Christ Jesus so before your soul as to govern everything else, and make you count everything loss? Is that where you are? Has this excellent knowledge put out all other things? Not only an outwardly blameless walk, but has the thought of Christ in glory put out all other things? If it were so, we would not be governed by everyday nothings" (J.N. Darby). Some teach that these words of Paul, speaking of attaining and not yet perfect, mean that he was still in doubt as to having a share in the first resurrection. We quote the words of a leading advocate of this interpretation:

But what was the goal towards which Paul was thus directing his efforts? 'if by any means,' he continues, 'I may attain to the select (?) resurrection out from among the dead.' In other words, his aim was to be numbered with those blessed and holy ones who shall have part in the first resurrection. But we must notice that he had, at the time, *no certain assurance* (italics ours) that he would compass the desire of his heart.... Just before his death, however, it was graciously revealed unto him that he was one of the approved.--Pember, *The Church, the Churches and the Mysteries*.

Think of it! The prisoner of the Lord who suffered joyfully the loss of all things, who counted all but dung, who walked in such separation and devotion, still uncertain about his share in the first resurrection! This interpretation is not only wrong, but it denies the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, by making the first resurrection a question of attainment when it is purely the matter of divine grace. This teaching aims at the very vitals of the gospel of grace and glory.

An exhortation follows. He exhorts all who are perfect to be thus minded. What does the word perfect mean and who are the perfect? Above, when he said he was not yet made perfect, it applies to Christ-likeness in glory by being conformed to His image. True Christian perfection will be reached when the Lord comes and we shall see Him as He is and be like Him. Now those are the perfect down here who have no confidence in the flesh, who glory in Christ and who know He is all in all, that by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified, that they are accepted in the Beloved and complete in Him in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. And they are all to be "thus minded" like he was, ever occupied with Christ in glory, doing this one thing--pressing on towards the goal for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.

Verses 17-21

"Brethren, be followers (imitators) together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." What a blessed thing that Paul could write this! Grace had enabled him to follow Christ fully. But even then there were those over whom Paul wept because their walk showed that they were the enemies of the cross. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Were these real believers? The statement "whose end is destruction" answers this question. They could not be true children of God, but were such who had professed Christianity, having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5). They turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. "Their god was really their belly; that is to say, the fleshly craving in them had never been set aside by any satisfaction that they had found for themselves in Christ. The craving of the old nature led and governed them." Instead of minding heavenly things, seeking the things which are above where Christ sitteth, they minded earthly things, showing thereby that they had never really known Christ. If there were "many" then among God's people who were enemies of the cross, who had with all their profession no desire for the heavenly calling, how much larger is their number now at the end of the age. They are religious, yet they cling to the world, love the world and thus deny the cross of Christ, which makes them the enemies of the cross.

"There is nothing like the cross. It is both the righteousness of God against sin, and the righteousness of God in pardoning sin. It is the end of the world of judgment, and the beginning of the world of life. It is the work that put away sin, and yet it is the greatest sin that ever was committed. The more we think of it, the more we see it is the turning point of everything. So, if a person follows the world, he is an enemy of the cross of Christ. If I take the glory of the world that crucified Christ, I am glorying in my shame" (J.N. Darby).

"They walked according to the flesh, minding earthly things instead of the heavenly, the heavens being the proper and only sphere of spiritual life, demonstrated that they knew nothing of the matter as to the heart, and for the truth of resurrection and life in a risen Christ, were walking according to their own religious feelings, making this their god. And surely there is enough of this everywhere, a bringing down revelation of the truth to the standard of human feelings and experiences, making these the umpire instead of God. It is a religious appetite ruling and hungry, and satisfied with its own sensations when filled. Israel was charged to take heed lest when they had eaten and were full, they should forget Jehovah (Deut. 8:14) and the prayer of Agur in Prov. 30:9 is, 'lest I be full and deny Thee.' The grand object, Christ Himself, is ignored, and religious excitement, like any other intoxication, displaces Him and occupies the soul to its damage and peril. It is the belly, not Christ. It is religious emotion, it is not Christ. It is perfection in and of the flesh; it is having no confidence in the flesh. The flesh may find its satisfaction and growth as much in religion as in the lower passions and the more secular world. The cross came in to put all this to death. Hence these are enemies to the cross of Christ, even though much mention may be made of the cross, and even continual prostrations before it practiced" (M. Taylor).

In the last two verses the blessed goal itself is fully revealed. "For our conversation is in heaven (or commonwealth-citizenship)* from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" This is the blessed hope and the blessed goal. All we have as Christians, our relationships, rights and possessions are in heaven. Some blessed day He, for whom we wait, will come and take us to the place where He is transforming our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory. Then we shall have attained that for which down here we hope and pray (1 Thess. 4).

* ('conversation', or 'commonwealth-citizenship' -- The Greek word is "politeuma," from which we have our English "politics." Hence one might say "Our politics are in heaven.")

IV. CHRIST, THE BELIEVER'S STRENGTH, SUFFICIENT FOR ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

CHAPTER 4

1. Stand fast and rejoice (4:1-4)

2. Dependence on God and true heart occupation (4:5-9)

3. I can do all things through Christ (4:10-13)

4. The fellowship of the Philippians (4:14-20)

5. The greeting (4:21-23)

Verses 1-4

And now the final testimony of the prisoner of the Lord, telling us from his own experience that Christ is sufficient for all circumstances down here. The first verse is filled with the precious fragrance of the great apostle's affection. What refreshment there is for all His dear saints in these opening words of this chapter! "Therefore my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, dearly beloved." How he loved the saints and longed for them. He looked upon them as his joy and crown; his joy down here and his crown in the day of Christ. So the aged John testified, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). They were to stand fast in the Lord, for this gives strength and the Lord constantly before the heart and mind gives victory. Euodias and Syntyche, two sisters in the Lord, are exhorted to be of the same mind in the Lord. They had difficulties and had become separated. How graciously and tenderly they are exhorted to overcome their differences. The true yokefellow is probably Epaphroditus, who was now fully restored and carried this letter to the Philippians. Paul requests him to assist those women who had contended with him in the gospel, of course in the sphere which belongs to woman. And there were Clement and other fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life. These names are known to Him and in His day their labors will come to light and they will receive their reward. It is enough for the laborers to know that his name, though unknown to the world, is in the book of life, and his service, though unapplauded by the world, has His approval. Once more he exhorts to rejoice in the Lord always, under all circumstances, at all times. And again I say, Rejoice. He did not write such words when he was taken up into the third heaven, but these blessed words come from the prison in Rome. When the Lord is before the heart, if He is the controlling principle of our life, the pattern and the goal, never lost sight of, then He giveth songs in the night.

"Were a light at the end of a long straight alley, I would not have the light itself till I get to it; but I have ever increasing light in proportion as I go forward; I know it better. I am more in the light myself. Thus it is with a glorified Christ, and such is the Christian life."

Verses 5-9

And this walk in Christ and with Christ must be characterized by dependence on God. "Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." Walking thus means to walk in meekness, not reaching out after the things which are but for a moment, content with such things as we have, never asserting one's right. Moderation means to put a check upon our own will. How easy all this becomes if we just have it as a present reality that the Lord is nigh and that when He comes all will be made right. A little while longer and all will be changed. And while we walk here in His fellowship, His command to us is, "Be anxious for nothing." All rests in His loving hands. His people have tribulation down here. He told us so. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And prayer is our refuge. Most blessed words! How the child of God loves, appreciates and makes use of them! "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." We can cast all our cares upon Him, for we know He careth for us. He is our burden bearer. We may look upon all our burdens as being permitted by Him so that we may give them back to Him and find out His love and power.

"We are in relationship with God; in all things He is our refuge; and events do not disturb Him. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows everything, He knows it beforehand; events shake neither His throne, nor His heart; they always accomplish His purposes. But to us He is love; we are through grace the objects of His tender care. He listens to us and bows down His ear to hear us. In all things therefore, instead of disquieting ourselves and weighing everything in our hearts, we ought to present our requests to God with prayer, with supplication, with a heart that makes itself known (for we are human beings) but with the knowledge of the heart of God (for He loves us perfectly); so that, even while making our

petition to Him, we can already give thanks, because we are sure of the answer of His grace, be it what it may; and it is our requests that we are to present to Him. Nor is it a cold commandment to find out His will and then come: we are to go with our requests. Hence it does not say, you will have what you ask; but God's peace will keep your hearts. This is trust; and His peace, the peace of God Himself, shall keep our hearts. It does not say that our hearts shall keep the peace of God; but, having cast our burden on Him whose peace nothing can disturb, His peace keeps our hearts. Our trouble is before Him, and the constant peace of the God of love, who takes charge of everything and knows all beforehand, quiets our disburdened hearts, and imparts to us the peace which is in Himself and which is above all understanding (or at least keeps our hearts by it), even as He Himself is above all the circumstances that can disquiet us, and above the poor human heart that is troubled by them. oh, what grace! that even our anxieties are a means of our being filled with this marvellous peace, if we know how to bring them to God, and true He is. May we learn indeed How to maintain this intercourse with God and its reality, in order that we may converse with Him and understand His ways with believers!" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Our prayers may not always be answered as we want to have them answered, for He alone knows what is best. We speak to Him about our cares and put them thus into His heart and He puts His own peace into our hearts.

What are thy wants today? Whate'er they be Lift up thy heart and pray: God heareth thee, Then trustfully rely that all thy need He surely will supply in every deed. But every prayer of thine, and every want Of either thine or mine, He may not grant, Yet all our prayers God hears, and He will show Some day, in coming years, He best did know--C. Murray

And in the life down here, surrounded by every form of evil, we are to be occupied with only that which is good, things true, things noble, just, pure, lovely, things of good report; if there be any virtue or any praise, think on these things. This is the way how peace of mind and blessing, happiness and joy may be maintained, not being occupied with the evil which surrounds us, or the evil in others, but with the very opposite. The Word of God is given to us for this purpose. As we read it prayerfully and meditate on it we are kept in that which is good, true, noble, just and lovely. Walking according to these exhortations they would find that the God of peace is with them. And so shall we.

Verses 10-13

Paul also rejoiced in the Lord greatly because their care for him had flourished again, and added "wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." They had ministered to him as the Lord's servant, in temporal things. The words, "now at last your care of me hath flourished again," indicates that they had delayed their ministration, but he puts another meaning upon it. He does not insinuate that it was a failure and neglect on their side, "but ye lacked opportunity." He did not mention this in respect of want. "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He had learned it all practically and knew about being abased and abounding--"everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer want. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." The secret of this victory over all circumstances, whether good or evil, was Christ. It was "not I but Christ." In himself he had no strength, but all His strength to be abased and to abound, to be full or hungry, in abounding and in suffering want, was the Lord Jesus Christ. And this strength continually flows from and is supplied by our relationship with Christ as it is maintained by faith in a close walk with Him. He had learnt to trust Him fully; he trusted Him and walked in fellowship with Him in adversity, and, also, which is more difficult, in prosperity. His faith always reckoned on Christ. He kept him from being careless and indifferent, when he was full and abounded in all things and He kept him from being discouraged and dissatisfied when he suffered privations. He had found Christ sufficient in every circumstance. This is the happy life, which, too, we may live if Christ is our object and our all.

(Prosperity in earthly things is for many children of God a snare. The person who requested prayer for a brother who was getting rich made a good request. We need more prayer and need more watching when all goes well and when we abound. Then the danger to become unspiritual and indifferent is great.)

Verses 14-20

He reminds them of their faithfulness to himself; he had not forgotten their love and what they had done in the past. He delighted in the remembrance of it, nor does God forget the ministries to His servants. "But to do good and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16). "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb.

6:10). Yet he does not want them to misunderstand him, as if he was anxious to receive further fellowship from them for his personal need. Therefore he adds, "Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." In reminding them and himself of their love he did not desire more gifts for the sake of having them, but he desired the fruit which would result from their faithfulness and liberality, which would abound to their account in the day of Christ. All ministry to God's servants and to the saints should be done from this viewpoint.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." The God whom He had learnt to know so well in all circumstances--my God, as he called Him--would supply all their need. It is not a wish that He may do so, nor a prayer that he prays, but it is an assured fact. He knows his God so well that he counts on Him for the supply of all the need of the beloved saints according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Verses 21-23

The greetings close this blessed little Epistle of love and joy, so full of the realities of true Christian experience, made possible for every child of God through the indwelling Spirit. He sends his greetings to every saint and conveys the greetings of the saints with him, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. Blessed hint that even there the gospel had manifested its power in the salvation of some.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

Introduction

Colossae was a city of Phrygia, a district in Asia Minor. It was pleasantly located in the valley of the Lycus, a branch of the Meander. Two other cities are also mentioned in this Epistle to the Colossians, the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13). Laodicea was only nine miles and Hierapolis, thirteen miles from Colossae. Laodicea was a very rich and influential city. Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs. Colossae was the smallest of these three cities. Christian believers lived in all three cities and later the Lord selected the church of the Laodiceans and addressed to it the final message of the seven churches (Rev. 3). The region of Phrygia was well settled by Jews, some of whom were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). We shall find through the study of this Epistle that a Jewish sect which held evil doctrines flourished in the whole region; this sect was known as the Essenes, and the Spirit of God warns against their false teachings in the Epistle. Phrygia also was known as the seat of other heresies, especially an oriental-philosophical mysticism.

The Church in Colossae

It seems that the church in Colossae was preeminently a Gentile church (2:13). How did it come into existence? Paul evidently did not visit the city, though he passed through Phrygia (Acts 16:6; 18:23), for he writes in this Epistle, "For I would that ye know what great conflict I have for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh" (2:1).

It seems also clear that the church in Colossae came into existence after Paul had passed through that region the second time as stated in Acts 18:23, for if a church had existed then in that city, he would probably have visited Colossae. If we turn to the nineteenth chapter of the book of Acts, which records the long sojourn of the Apostle Paul in Ephesus, we have a hint on how the gospel was made known to the Colossians. First we read that Paul continued for two years, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). And then Demetrius the silversmith witnessed to the extension of the work of Paul while being in Ephesus. "Moreover ye see and hear, that not only in Ephesus, but almost throughout Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people..." (Acts 19:26).

Asia does not mean the continent, but a province of Asia Minor, of which Phrygia was a part. The whole region heard the gospel during his stay in the prominent city of Ephesus ; among the visitors who listened to the messages of Paul were people from Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis. These carried the gospel back to their homes and thus churches were formed. Philemon and Epaphras of Colossae must in this way have heard the gospel from the apostle and became the instruments through whom the church in their home-city was founded.

That Epaphras was the more prominent one becomes certain from chapter 1:7 and 4:12-13.

The Occasion and Object of the Epistle

Paul in Rome had received, probably through Epaphras, the information that the Colossian Christians were facing great dangers as to their faith. What the danger was the text of the Epistle will show us more fully. A number of false doctrines emanating from philosophical speculations, oriental mysticism, asceticism and Judaism, were being advocated amongst them and threatened the complete corruption of the church. Later a system known by the name of Gnosticism (from the Greek word "gnosis"--knowledge) wrought great havoc in the Church; the beginning of it was troubling the Colossians, who seemed to have been an intellectual class to whom the philosophical, mystical and ascetic teachings appealed in a

special way. Gnosticism attempted to explain creation, the origin of evil, God, etc., apart from the revelation God has given in His Word.

Besides speaking of a certain class of beings, half-gods of different rank, they denied that God had created the world, but that an inferior being had called it into existence. This system taught that matter is evil and that the only way to escape from evil would be to repudiate matter completely. The worst feature of these Gnostic teachings was a denial of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of redemption. It was a philosophical, theosophical speculation, anti-Christian throughout. Well did Polycarp say to the Gnostic Marcion, "I know thee, thou firstborn of Satan." While this evil system had not yet fully developed in the Colossian church, the foundation for it had been laid and the Holy Spirit anticipated its coming, and in sending this document to the Colossians answers the false teachings of Gnosticism. This is of equal interest and importance to the Church in the twentieth century. "Christian Science," so-called, that philosophical-theosophical-mystical cult, is a satanic revival of ancient Gnosticism. The Epistle to the Colossians must, therefore, be an effectual weapon against this cult, which denies the two pillars of Christianity, the Son of God and the finished work of the cross.

The Colossians were also being misled, as the second chapter shows us, by other false teachers. Judaizers were at work among them. We are not left to infer respecting the class of religionists to which these teachers belonged, for the mention of "new moon and Sabbath" in chapter 2:16, at once characterizes them as Judaizers, and leads us to the then prevalent forms of Jewish philosophy to trace them. Not that these teachers were merely Jews; they were Christians (by profession), but they attempted to mix with the gospel of Christ the theosophy and angelology of the Jews of their times. They became infected with theosophic and ascetic principles and were gradually being drawn away from the simple doctrine of Christ. This false system of philosophy and ascetic mysticism, attempting to intrude into unseen things, with which was linked angel-worship, limited the superiority and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ and more so the sufficiency of His work of redemption.

The occasion of the Epistle was the existence of these evil things among them. The object in writing was more than counteracting the false doctrines. The Holy Spirit unfolds the truth of the gospel, showing in this Epistle the majesty and glory of Christ, that He has the preeminence in all things, head of creation and head of the Church; it unfolds the completeness of His redemption and the believer's completeness in Christ as risen with Christ and in living union with Him, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. Like all the great Pauline Epistles, containing the revelation of God to man, the Colossian Epistle with its vital and glorious truths, is meat in due season for God's people, especially in these days when we are confronted by the same errors in modern movements and energized by the power of Satan to destroy the very foundations of the faith.

Colossians in Contrast with Ephesians

Colossians was written by Paul about the year 62 A.D., from the Roman prison, and, as stated in the introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians was carried by the same messenger who also received the Ephesian Epistle from the hands of the Apostle. Tychicus was this messenger (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7-9). There is a striking resemblance between these two Epistles, which have been called "twins." Dean Alford speaks of it as follows: "in writing both, the apostle's mind was in the same frame--full of the glories of Christ and the consequent glorious privileges of His Church, which is built on Him, and vitally knit to Him. This mighty subject, as he looked with indignation on the beggarly system of meats and drinks and hallowed days and angelic mediations to which his Colossians were being drawn down, rose before him in all its length and breadth and height, but as writing to them, he was confined to one portion of it, and to setting forth that one portion pointedly and controversially. He could not, consistently with the effect which he would produce on them, dive into the depths of the divine counsels in Christ with regard to them."

Ephesians and Colossians embody the highest revelations God has given to man. Colossians is the counterpart of the Ephesian Epistle; each may be viewed as a supplement to the other. In Ephesians the revelation concerns mostly the body of Christ (the Church), the fullness of that body, its rich privileges and heavenly destiny; in Colossians the head of that body in His fullness and glory is blessedly revealed. In Ephesians we find repeatedly the blessed position of the believer stated "in Christ Jesus"; in Colossians we read of Christ in the believer, "Christ in you." Ephesians reveals the calling of God and exhorts believers "to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called"; Colossians making known the Lord and His glory, exhorts "to walk worthy of the Lord."

Controversy concerning evil doctrines and errors is absent in Ephesians; it is prominent in Colossians. In Ephesians the Holy Spirit and His work in the believer is fully brought out. Then we read of the quickening, the sealing, the filling of the Spirit and are warned against quenching and grieving the Spirit; in Colossians nothing is said about the Holy Spirit, the doctrine concerning the Spirit is absent. The annotations will point out the reason for this.

At the same time the redemption truths of Ephesians as well as Romans and Galatians are all touched upon in Colossians. The great truths contained in these wonderful Epistles must ever be kept in freshness and in power by the Spirit of God before the heart and mind of God's people, so that they can live and walk as those who are redeemed and be kept in the enjoyment of salvation. The more these deep and precious documents are studied the greater the blessedness for God's people. May God the Holy Spirit, the author of this Epistle, fill, through His message, our eyes and hearts with Him who is our Lord and the Head of His body.

The Division of Colossians

Chapter 2:9-10 is the center of the Epistle. "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power." It is the very heart of the Epistle, the key which unlocks its heavenly treasures. We get in this verse the scope of the Epistle. The apostle does not begin by warning the Colossians of the danger and by exposing the fatal errors which were creeping in among them. He writes first of Him and His glory. The Spirit of God wants the Colossians to get the right estimate of the Person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, of His dignity and preeminence in all things, of the great work of reconciliation, the peace which was made in the blood of the cross and the present and future results of this work.

Then He shows that the believer is in Christ, that He who is bodily in glory, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells is the fullness of the believer. Each is complete in Him. And therefore ordinances, philosophy, traditions of men, intruding in mysterious things, angel-worship, cannot add anything to the believer's knowledge or perfection. His perfection is Christ. Then follow exhortations, how a believer who is risen with Christ and one with Him should walk down here. We divide, therefore, this Epistle into three parts.

I. THE PERSON OF CHRIST, HIS GLORY AND HIS WORK (1)

II. COMPLETE IN HIM, IN WHOM ALL THE FULLNESS DWELLS (2)

III. THE PRACTICAL RESULTS, LIVING AS RISEN WITH CHRIST (3:4-4:18)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE PERSON OF CHRIST, His GLORY AND His WORK

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1-8)
2. The prayer (1:9-14)
3. The person and glory of Christ, Head of creation and Head of the Church (1:15-18)
4. The work of reconciliation and the double ministry (1:19-29)

Verses 1-8

This Epistle unfolds the doctrine of Christ and therefore Paul speaks of himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God; Timotheus is spoken of as a brother. In addressing the Philippians, the apostle spoke of himself and of Timotheus as servants and did not mention his apostleship at all. In addressing the Colossians, when error is to be refuted and truth to be

revealed, he uses his title as apostle. He addresses them as saints and faithful brethren in Christ and the precious greeting to such whom God has separated from evil and unto Himself follows: "Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace and peace belonged to them, as it belongs to all who are in Christ. Their state could not affect what God has bestowed upon them in His Son.

Then he gives thanks "to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." He had heard of their faith in Christ Jesus; of the love which they had towards all the saints and then mentions the hope which is laid up for them in heaven. Faith, love and hope are the blessed marks of all true believers, produced in them by the Spirit of God. Their faith in Christ Jesus was manifested in love for all the saints. "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

And they also know the blessed hope which they had heard and learned in the word of the truth of the gospel. The gospel then had produced these blessings among the Colossians, who were once heathen; and the same gospel was also going out in all the world bringing forth fruit wherever it was received in faith. Could this be said of the various philosophical systems which were being introduced among the Colossians? Or could mysticism and law-keeping show such results? Only those who hear and believe the gospel know the grace of God in truth. Then Paul mentions Epaphras, the beloved fellow servant, who was for them a faithful minister. Through his ministry they had learned these things, while Epaphras had declared unto Paul their love in the Spirit. This is the only time the Spirit of God is mentioned in this Epistle.

It is different in the Epistle to the Ephesians. There the fullest teachings concerning the Holy Spirit are given. Every chapter in Ephesians speaks of the Holy Spirit. We read there that He is the seal and the earnest; He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation; access is through Him unto the Father; the church is described as the habitation of God through the Spirit, who has also made known the mystery hid in former ages. Furthermore He strengthens the inner man that Christ may dwell in the heart by faith. Then the unity of the Spirit is spoken of in Ephesians; believers are not to grieve the Spirit by whom they are sealed unto the day of redemption; the filling with the Spirit, spiritual songs as the result, the sword of the Spirit and prayer in the Spirit are likewise mentioned in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Why is all this omitted in Colossians? Why is this Epistle silent about the work of the Spirit in the believer? The reason is of much interest. Our Lord said concerning the coming of the Spirit of truth, "He shall not speak of Himself," and again He said, "He shall glorify Me" (John 16:13-14).

While the Ephesians knew Christ, owned Him and His glory, the Colossian Christians, through false teachers, were being turned away from Christ; they began to lose sight of the glory of Christ by listening to philosophy (2:8); their eyes were no longer only on Christ. He therefore aims in this Epistle to glorify Christ, to lead the Colossians back to a full realization of the Person and Glory of Christ and their completeness in Him. He directs their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ and thus fulfills his mission, speaking not of himself and glorifying Christ. (Certain sects which claim a restoration of Pentecostal power and gifts are constantly occupied with the Holy Spirit, His work in the believer; they speak much of the Spirit, the feelings He produces, the energy He gives, etc. Nowhere in the Word are believers told to be occupied with the Spirit. The one object given to the believer to have ever before the heart is the Lord Jesus Christ and His glory. One finds among these people who claim a restoration of apostolic gifts (notably the smallest, speaking in tongues) those who are quite ignorant of the work of Christ, and the glory of Christ.)

Verses 9-14

Next follows a prayer, Paul being only the instrument of the utterance of the Spirit of God. And it is a prayer fully adapted to the conditions of the Colossian Christians. It is still the prayer of the Holy Spirit for all the people of God. The leading petition in this prayer is for the knowledge of the will of God--"that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." All the other requests may be looked upon as the results of a spiritual understanding of the will of God. What is the meaning of the will of God? It is that will of God of which we read so much in the first chapter of Ephesians and concerns those who are in Christ. What we possess in Christ, what God has made us in Him and given to us with Him, according to the good pleasure of His will, is that which believers need to know. What God has willed for those who are redeemed by the blood of His Son, how they are constituted in Him holy, put into the place of sons, accepted in the Beloved, heirs of God, sealed and indwelt by His Spirit, is the knowledge with which Christians should be filled. This the Colossians lacked.

The full knowledge of that will would have kept them from listening to the enticing words of false teachers, who promised them wisdom, knowledge and other benefits, which are only found in Christ and which the believer possesses in Him. And this knowledge of His will is a growing knowledge and must govern the walk of the believer. It is needed "to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Such a walk is only possible by enjoying constantly the relationship into which the gracious will of God has brought the believer; the more we enter into all grace has done for us and lay hold of it, the more we shall walk worthy of the Lord. And this walk is "unto all pleasing." With a true Christian, God may be displeased, though He condemn not; and there is a lack of felt fellowship. Only as walking worthily of Christ can we abound in obedience to God, and be as children intimate with their father. Every Christian's habitual question should be, not, "What must I do to escape censure, or win wages?"

But "What will please God?" It produces also fruit bearing in every good work and growth by the true knowledge of God. And this gives strength in the way down here. "Strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, unto all patience and long suffering with joy." In the midst of tribulation and suffering strength is supplied through the might of His glory. It is the glory of Christ and Christ in glory which strengthens the believer, gives power to endure and to pass through every trial and hardship with joy. To know this will of God in Christ and Christ and His glory constantly before the soul, this is what leads to Christlikeness and what gives victory as we walk through a world to which the believer no longer belongs. "For, with our feet outside of the land, our way must be a toilsome and afflicting one, dreary enough and a perpetual outrage to the soul strung to heavenly purity and peace and worship. But He who was from heaven and is now its attractiveness went through it all with a glow of gladness that broke out in a rapture at times of greatest neglect and misapprehension and hatred from without (Matt. 11:25-27). He was as a weaned child, desiring nothing here.

There has been no promise of making things smooth here, but the opposite, and if we nestle we must have made the nest by gathering worldly materials, by accepting a friendship where He would get hate. God brings nothing before us to hold the heart in comfort, peace, and joy, but the glory to be revealed. And is it not enough for that and enough to wait for?" (M. Taylor, Colossians) Being filled with the knowledge of His will produces likewise worship. "Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love; in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." It is a part of the prayer that Christians might give thanks to the Father in spiritual worship.

And these things mentioned are known to the believer if he is filled with the knowledge of His will, for they tell us what God hath done for the sinner who believes on His Son. Here are the most assuring statements, the things forever settled for those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an inheritance of the saints in light and the Father hath made us meet to be partakers of it through the work of His Son. From the Father we receive this inheritance. The title to that inheritance, which every true child of God fully owns, is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fitness to be there is the new nature bestowed upon the believer. It is therefore not, as so often stated, that we try to fit ourselves for heaven; this is impossible. The moment a sinner accepts the Lord Jesus Christ, he is made meet to be a partaker of that inheritance. All the glory of that inheritance is at once put on the side of him who trusts on Christ. All was done for us once for all when Christ died; in Him we are sons and if sons, heirs of God, the fellow heirs of Christ. "There can be no greater acceptance of us in heaven than God gives us now in Christ, for even there we shall stand accepted in Him alone.

Our Father will not more fully rejoice over us there than He does here; for then, as now, He will see us only as in Christ. Our meetness, then, for the one part of the inheritance is just our meetness for the other part. And so, when some eminent saint comes to his death-bed, what is it that gives him his comfort, his serene triumph, in that critical hour? Is it his progressive practical sanctification? Indeed, no. He is too conscious of many failures, that he should rely on that as his passport through the gates into the city. Thankful he is to God, that He has enabled him to serve Him with whatever degree of faithfulness, and he may speak of it to the praise of the glory of His grace; but he rests not his destination on so imperfect a prop as that. What is it then? Just this: the infinite value of the blood which sprinkled him. On that he rests, as on the Rock of Ages. Yes, Christ Himself is our only meetness for the inheritance, and our believing on Christ is our having the meetness" (Bishop W. Nicholson).

And more than that, "He hath delivered us (not a gradual deliverance, but a deliverance accomplished) from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." And the deliverance takes place as well as the translation into His kingdom, when we believe on Christ. There is a power of darkness. Satan is the ruler of darkness and

to this power of darkness the unsaved sinner belongs. We are by nature the complete subjects of this power and also the children of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). As such we are in a helpless condition and if deliverance is to take place it must come from the side of God. And it has come for all believers. All who are in Christ are no longer under the authority of Satan, the prince of the power of the air, they are taken from his domain and rule and are translated into another kingdom, the kingdom of the Son of his love.

My chains are snapped, the bonds of sin are broken,

And I am free.

Oh! let the triumphs of His grace be spoken

Who died for me.

The expression "kingdom of the Son of His love" has been identified with the Church, while others make it to mean the coming kingdom, which will be set up when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again. But it does not mean the body of Christ and much less the kingdom on earth, which is termed the kingdom of the Son of man. We quote from the Synopsis by Darby, who gives the correct meaning of this term.

"Here alone, I believe, is the kingdom called the kingdom of the Son; and, I think, it is only as introducing His Person as the center of everything and giving us the measure of the greatness of the blessing. It is the kingdom of One who has this place, the Son of His love, into which we are introduced. It is indeed His kingdom; and in order that we may apprehend the character of this kingdom as it is now for us, and our nearness to God as having part in it, it is called the kingdom of the Son of His love. It is this which is the present foundation and characteristic of the relationship with God of those who are truly in and of it. As the kingdom of the Son of man, it is His manifestation hereafter in glory and in government. Here it is characterized by the relationship of the Son Himself to the Father, in His person, with the addition of that which gives us a full title to share it--redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Blessed possessions! Blessed assurance! In Christ, fit for glory; in Christ, delivered from the power of darkness and near to God now as He, the Son of His love, is near, belonging to same realm of glory; in Christ redemption, the forgiveness of sins. There are no "ifs" and no questionings. All is positive. For all this we should give thanks to the Father and praise Him for what He has done for us. Such worshippers the Father seeketh (John 4) for they delight in His Son, in whom all His delight is. Yet how little such true worship is rendered! And why? Because Christians are so little filled with the knowledge of His will, with that which grace has accomplished in Christ. (The spiritual condition of a Christian may be learned by his prayer. One who knows what God has done, who has looked deep into the gospel of God, whose heart knows and enjoys Christ will praise much and thank the Father for all these blessed realities. But how many ask God constantly to give to them that, which they already possess; and there is no real worship possible unless we know and enjoy His grace. Bye and bye all our prayers will cease and it will be all praise and worship--when we are with Him in glory and know what grace has done for us forever.)

Verses 15-18

With these verses we reach the heart of this chapter. Christ, the Son of His love, having been named in the prayer, the Holy Spirit reveals Him now in His Person and glory as well as the work of redemption accomplished by Him. It is a remarkable portion of this Epistle in which all the errors about the Person of Christ are refuted and silenced. Arianism, Socinianism, Unitarianism, Russellism, Christian Science and other "isms" which rob the Lord Jesus Christ of His full glory and deny His deity, are completely answered in the brief words which unfold His glory. It was Arius of Alexandria who taught in the beginning of the fourth century that the Lord Jesus was a creature, the first of all created beings, though superangelic, yet not eternal in His being nor a partaker of the divine essence. The council of Nicea (325 A.D.) condemned the wicked theory of Arius. Socinus in the Reformation period revived this error, as did Priestly and Martineau in England and Channing and others in America. It remained for one Charles T. Russell, whose system is known by different names, to popularize these false and corrupt views and spread them throughout Christendom. Russell with Arius asserts that in His preexistent state Jesus was a pure spirit, higher than the angels, yet only a creature. When born of the Virgin Mary, He dropped His spirit nature while on earth. He teaches that the atonement offered by our Lord was only human, having nothing divine about it. Russellism also denies that the human body of our Lord was raised from the dead. The whole

system is a conglomerate of Arianism, Ebioniteism and Rationalism. Christian Science equally denies the deity of Christ and contains in itself all the fatal errors of Gnosticism, which the Colossians were facing in their day.

1. The first statement concerns His absolute deity--"Who is the image of the invisible God." He is the image of God in all His fullness and perfection. As the image of God, the invisible God, He therefore is God. "He is the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance" (Heb. 1:3). He has made known God to man; in Him we see what God is. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him" (John 1:18). Were He not the essential image of God in His own person, one with God in eternity and glory, He could not be the representative image of God by incarnation.

2. "Firstborn of all Creation"--not as the Authorized Version has it "the firstborn of every creature." It is here where the false teaching originates, which claims that our Lord was after all only a creature, called into existence by God, and not very God. This passage teaches no such thing. The title "Firstborn" denotes His priority to creation, for He is creation's head; the headship of all creation belongs to Him. When He who is the image of the invisible God takes His place in creation, as He did in incarnation, it can only be as the Firstborn, as the beginning of the creation of God, the head of all. He, who became man, under whose feet as the second Man all things will be put in subjection (Ps. 8; Heb. 2), is the Lord from Heaven, the Creator of all things.

3. That He is not a creature, though He took on the creature's form, is at once demonstrated by the words which follow. The Holy Spirit anticipated the errors which would deny His glory and therefore we read of Him as the Creator. "For by Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him." It is therefore absolutely certain that the "Firstborn" does not mean that our Lord is a creature, but the Creator. These words which were written by the apostle are revelation. Nor is Paul the only instrument through whom the Spirit of God makes known His glory. John wrote in the beginning of his Gospel the same truth. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). The Son of God is therefore the Creator, yet not to the exclusion of the power of the Father, nor the operation of the Spirit.

The three are one, in character and in their work, in creation and in redemption the three persons of the Godhead are active. What a dignity and glory is His! All things visible were created by Him and for Him; all life, vegetable and animal, all matter and all physical forces, the small things and the big things, everything was called into existence by Him. The heavens are the work of His fingers (Ps. 8:3); the firmament showeth His handiwork (Ps. 19:1). The millions of stars with their suns, the planets and comets, the whole universe, unfathomable and incomprehensible for the creature, were all called forth by His omnipotent word. Not by science, nor by searching do we know of this, but "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). And then things invisible--how little we know of these! The innumerable company of angels, this vast and wonderful world of the unseen, are also created by Him. It is all "by Him" and "for Him"; He is the primal cause of it, as well as the final cause. In the presence of such deep and blessed revelations, which man's mind could never discover, in the presence of the infinite, the reasonings of Unitarianism and Darwinianism and all other reasonings crumble into dust. The evolutionary hypothesis of the creation of a cell or of "primordial germs" from which, through millions of years, all things were developed is an invention of man and completely silenced by this passage and other portions of the Word. "And what a wonderful light do these words throw upon creation itself and upon its destiny! Christ is not only the One under whom it is; He is not only the One who will bring it all into blessing, but He, the One who has become the man Christ Jesus, is the One for whom it all exists!" And such a One, the Lord of creation, by whom and for whom are all things is our Lord, with whom all who have accepted Him are one. How blessed, how safe we are in Him and with Him, sheltered and kept by His mighty arms! And when all things are put under His feet, when in the dispensation of the fullness of times, all things in heaven and on earth are headed up in Christ, when the glories of the new creation are manifested, what glory will be ours in Him and with Him!

4. "And He is before all things and by Him all things consist." Everything depends upon Him; all things are held together by Him. Without Him all would cease to be. Four times in these two verses we read of "all things." All things created by Him; all things for Him; He is before all things; all things consist by Him.

Verse 18 reveals another headship and glory. "And He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the

firstborn from among the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence." From creation the Holy Spirit now leads us to another sphere, that of Redemption. Creation became marred and ruined by sin and He who is the head of all things in creation had to come to earth in the form of man to redeem. He died, and, raised from among the dead, He is the Firstborn, the head of the body, the Church, and as such the Beginning, that is, a new Beginning. The Church was not in existence before His death and resurrection from the dead. He could not be the Head of the Church till He had become the Firstborn by resurrection. And now He has a body, composed of all who have believed on Him as Saviour and Lord, born again and one Spirit with Him. This body is one with Him in life, in position and in glory. This body is the new creation, completely identified with Him, who is the Head, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all (Eph. 1:23)."

He is the Firstborn of creation, He is the Firstborn according to the power of resurrection, in this new order of things in which man is predestined to an entirely new position, gained by redemption, and in which he participates in the glory of God (as far as that which is created can do so), and that by participating in divine life in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and everlasting life; and, as regards the Church, as members of His body. He is the Firstborn of creation, the Firstborn from among the dead; the Creator, and the conqueror of death and the enemy's power. These are the two spheres of the display of the glory of God. The special position of the Church, the body of Christ, forms a part of the latter. He must have this resurrection-glory, this universal preeminence and superiority also, as being man, for all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him" (Synopsis of the Bible). Thus in all things He has the preeminence. And we also must give Him in all things the first place. As we lay hold on the glory of Christ, the head of creation, the Risen One now, the head of the body in glory, and look forward to the day of consummation and glory to come, when we shall see Him as He is, and participate in the glory, which His grace has bestowed upon us, we shall indeed walk worthily of the Lord and be strengthened according to the power of His glory.

Verses 19-29

His great work of redemption and the ministry connected with it is the theme of the remaining verses of this chapter. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." It is to be noticed that the words "the Father" are supplied. If a word is to be used it must be the word "Godhead" (2:9). But there is no need to do that. The correct rendering of the verse is "In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell," and that is the fullness of the Godhead. It is a blessed and deep truth that the whole Godhead manifested itself in Him for the great purpose of redemption. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwelled in all fullness in the blessed One who walked among men. He could say of Himself that the Father dwelleth in Him (John 14:10); he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father (John 14:9) and again, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me." And He who spoke thus was and is the Son of God. And the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, was not given to Him by measure (John 3:34) but He was in Him in all His fullness. The fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in the incarnate One. The Gnostic teachers, which began then to sow their evil seed in the early Church, used the word "fullness" (pleroma) very much, and meant by it the absolute perfection of deity.

But they taught that portions of this fullness were given to various divine incarnations and angels, who were generated by a supreme being. Christ, according to their philosophy, was an inferior being, who did not possess the pleroma of the Godhead. In answer to this perversion the Holy Spirit witnesses to the truth that in Him all the fullness, the pleroma, was pleased to dwell. The fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him and was manifested through Him, yet man, His creation, would not have Him. Man gave Him a cross which showed that man was irreconcilable as far as he was concerned. "He in whom all fullness dwelt, who was the one altogether lovely, who manifested the very character of God and brought among men unimagined goodness and power, who dealt with every need, going about doing good, who never refused a single soul, He was despised and rejected by man, hated without a cause. They crucified the Lord of glory, the Creator of all things. "And what was to be done? Ah! this was the serious question, and this it was which God was waiting to solve. He meant to reconcile man in spite of himself; He would prove His own love to be the conqueror of his hatred. Let man be unmendable, let his enemy be beyond all thought, God, in the calmness of His own wisdom, and in the strength of His unwearied grace, accomplishes His purpose of redeeming love at the very moment when man consummates his wickedness. It was at the cross of Christ. And so it was that, when all seemed to fail, all was won. The fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus; but man would have none of it, and proved it above all in the cross. Yet the cross was the precise and only place where the foundation that cannot be moved was laid. As he says, 'having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him, I say, whether it be things on earth or things in heaven'" (W. Kelly).

He made peace in the blood of His cross. Then the great work of redemption was accomplished. And through the blood of the cross, all things are to be reconciled by Him to the Godhead, whether things on earth or things in heaven. What reconciliation is this? It is a reconciliation which is not yet accomplished. It includes all creation and the universe. The heavens and the earth will be completely delivered from the power of evil. This reconciliation of all things in virtue of the blood of His cross will take place when He comes again, when all things are put in subjection under His feet. All is in disorder in creation; it is a groaning creation. Satan with his wicked spirit is in the heavenlies and defilement is there. Yet the purchase price has been paid in the blood of His cross. The reconciliation of all things yet to come is the same which Peter preached as "the restitution of all things of which God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began" (Acts 3:19-21).

Therefore the prophets in the Old Testament give us the meaning of this coming reconciliation. We find it predicted in portions of the prophetic Word, concerning the coming age, when righteousness reigns, peace is established, the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covers the earth and the earth is full of His glory, when Israel has received the promised blessing and glory, and groaning creation no longer groans under the curse (Isaiah 11:6-9; Rom. 8:19-22). It will all be accomplished when He returns, whose right it is to reign and who paid for all in the blood of His cross. Then all present disorder will cease, the curse will be removed, Satan will be bound. This dispensation of the fullness of times will have come and Christ will reign and His saints with Him. Does this reconciliation include the unsaved, the unregenerated, who reject Christ and remain in their sins? Does it include Satan and the fallen angels? Some, who call themselves "Reconciliationists" or "Restitutionists" teach this; and so does Russellism and other cults. But it is not so. The Scriptures do not teach such a universal reconciliation which reaches the wicked dead and wicked spirits. The best proof is when we compare the statement here with a similar one in Phil. 2:10. In this passage Paul speaks of the things under the earth, which are the lost. It is there the question of acknowledging the supreme authority of the Lord. But here in Colossians where it is the question of reconciliation, things on earth and things in heaven are mentioned, but the things under the earth are omitted, because there is not reconciliation for such.

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment"; no future reconciliation is anywhere promised in the Word of God for the lost. There is no new birth, no repentance, no faith in hell. Not a drop of the living water will ever reach there to quench the spiritual thirst of the damned. But while the reconciliation of all things awaits the return of our Lord to put all things in order, there is another reconciliation which is already effected. "And you being in time past alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before Him; if indeed ye abide in the faith, grounded and firm, and not moved away from the gospel which ye heard, which hath been preached in the whole creation which is under heaven, whereof I Paul was made a minister" (verses 21-23).

This is spoken of those who have believed on the Son of God. All were once estranged from God and enemies in mind by wicked works, but having believed His work, His sacrificial death on the cross hath reconciled them. In virtue of this reconciliation believers are no longer enemies but made nigh, accepted in the Beloved and presented holy, unblamable, and irreproachable before God. What a change! And it is not of man, by his work, or having become a believer by living a fully separated life, but it is all through His death. In Him we are constituted holy, unblamable and irreproachable; this is the believer's standing before God. The words "if ye continue in the faith," etc., are words of caution. They do not touch the election and perseverance of the saints who are members of the body of which He is the head. A believer thus reconciled will continue in the faith and will not be moved away from the hope of the gospel; this is one of the tests of salvation. There was danger for the Colossians to abandon the great fundamentals of Christianity; if they did so they rejected the grace which presented them to God and in doing this they showed that they had never received the reconciliation, for one who is reconciled continues in the faith and remains upon the sure foundation. "All the blessedness that Christ has procured is for those that believe; but this of course supposes that they hold Him fast. The language does not in the smallest degree insinuate that there is any uncertainty for a believer. We must never allow one truth to be either shut out or enfeebled by another; but then we need also to remember that there are, and have always been, those that, having begun seemingly well, have ended by becoming the enemies of Christ and the Church. Even antichrists are not from without in their origin. "They went out from us, because they were not of us." There are no enemies so deadly as those who, having received enough truth to overbalance them and to abuse to their own self exaltation, turn again, and would rend the church of God, wherein they learned all that gives them power to be specially mischievous. The apostle could not but dread the slide on which the Colossians found themselves; and the more so as they themselves had no fears, but on the contrary thought highly of that which had attracted their minds. If there was danger, certainly it was love to

admonish them; and in this spirit he therefore says, 'If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled.'" (if thousands and tens of thousands of members of the professing church turn to "Christian Science" or accept the teachings of the "New Theology" and in doing so abandon the gospel and deny the doctrine of Christ, they show thereby that all their profession was only a sham, that they never received the love of the truth, were never real believers who have been reconciled. They were at least the enemies of the cross who more openly deny Christ.) Then Paul speaks of himself as being the minister of that gospel which hath been preached in the whole creation. How he termed this gospel "my gospel" and received it by revelation, and the meaning of all this we learned from Romans and Galatians. And the sound of this gospel goes forth into all creation. We must notice here that up to this point in this Epistle we have learned of the two headships of Christ. He is Head of Creation and Head of the Church. Then followed a twofold reconciliation. The reconciliation of all things which includes all creation over which He is the head, and the reconciliation of believers, who are in that body over which He is the head. All these wonderful revelations fully answered the teachers who brought among the Colossians the most deadly errors, denying the deity of Christ, as if some demiurge had created the world, etc. And these great statements of verses 15-23 also answer all heresies of today. To the two headships of Christ and the two reconciliations there is now added a twofold ministry. The ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the church. Twice Paul writes he was made a minister, the minister of the gospel (verse 23) and the Church, whereof he was also made a minister (verse 25). It means that to him was given the revelation concerning the gospel of grace and glory and through him was also made known the truth concerning the Church, the body of Christ. There is then a blessed harmony in these statements.

1. The twofold Headship of Christ: Head of Creation and Head of the Church

2. The twofold Reconciliation: Reconciliation of all things (creation) and our reconciliation (the Church)

3. The twofold Ministry: The gospel. (preached in all creation) and The Church (to present every man perfect in Christ) Paul, to whom the Spirit of God revealed these great truths, fulfilled in this way the Word of God, for the truth about the Church, the body of Christ, is the highest revelation. He was shut up in a prison and was suffering "for His body's sake," which sufferings he looks upon as filling up that which remained of the sufferings of Christ in them. He rejoiced in these sufferings for he knew they were "for His body's sake." He knew and declared "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now hath been made manifested to His saints, to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory." The mystery of which he writes is not the coming of Christ to this earth, His incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again. All this was not a mystery, for it was revealed in the Old Testament. The mystery made known through him and of which he writes is a glorified Christ who unites all in His person, the Head in glory, who has a body composed of saved Jews and Gentiles, who are one in Him, and "Christ in (or among) you the hope of glory"--which looks forward to the consummation, when this body which is now forming, through the preaching of the gospel, is to be with the Head in glory. This is the mystery which was hid in former ages. It is unrevealed in the Old Testament and therefore exclusively a New Testament revelation. With such a revelation and ministry he preached, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; where unto I also labor, striving according to His working which worketh in me in power." Every man "perfect" means full-grown. (See Phil. 3:15 and Heb. 5:14.) It is the believing apprehension of what Christ is for us and what we are in Him. Through this knowledge and heart occupation with the Lord of glory the believer becomes full grown and true Christian character is formed. And what toil and energy the great apostle manifested that this might be accomplished!

II. COMPLETE IN HIM, IN WHOM ALL THE FULLNESS DWELLS

CHAPTER 2

1. The mystery of God (2:1-8)

2. Complete in Christ (2:9-15)

3. Exhortations and warnings (2:16-23)

Verses 1-8

In view of the last verses of the preceding chapter we can understand his anxiety and the great conflict he had for the Colossians and for those living in nearby Laodicea, and for as many who had not seen his face in the flesh. He was deeply concerned about them after he heard of their danger of going into error. It was a spiritual conflict. He was greatly exercised in his thoughts and feelings. He knew the powers of evil so well; hence the burden for the Colossians, for the Laodiceans and for all others. In writing to them about his great conflict for them, and therefore his prayerful interest in them, he did so that their hearts might be comforted thereby and then, being knit together in love for this purpose: "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the full knowledge of the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (The translation in the Authorized Version is not correct. The words "of the Father and of Christ" must be omitted. It is "The mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.") And what is this mystery of God in which the treasures, yea all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden? The mystery of God is Christ. But it is not Christ in incarnation, in His life on earth, His death on the cross and His resurrection. Nor is it Christ at the right hand of God, or Christ coming again to rule over the nations on earth and establish His kingdom of glory. All these things are subjects of divine revelation in the Old Testament. They are not a mystery. It is Christ, the Head of the body and believers in union with the glorious Head, joined to Him by His Spirit, possessing His life, one with Him, destined to share His glory. This is the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And what treasures these are! How little His people know of all this mystery of God contains! It will take eternity to know and enjoy these treasures, the unsearchable riches. The Greek word for knowledge is "gnosis"; the false teachers called themselves, after this word, "gnostics," boasting of superior knowledge and as if they possessed mysteries unknown to those who believed on Christ. We understand in this light the brief exhortation which follows: "And this I say, lest any man should delude you with enticing words." Being in Christ they had all in Him and no human philosophy or science, falsely so called, could give a greater wisdom or knowledge, than that which God had made known by revelation. The enemy's work is to keep God's people back from fully enjoying their union with Christ and increasing in the knowledge of it. Satan does this work in the garb of an angel of light, through all kinds of theories and inventions. Before the apostle sounds a more definite warning, he expressed his joy in seeing their order and steadfastness of their faith in Christ. No doubt a part of the Colossian church stood unwavering for the faith, while others had given ear to the delusive teachings. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." This was their danger, as it is still more in these days of declension and delusion, our danger, not to walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him. They were not satisfied with Christ only. They did not realize that the secret of blessing and all a Christian needs, is to go on and know more and more of Christ. This they did not do but turned instead to other sources and listened to that which was not after Christ. "When we have received Christ, all the rest is but a development of that which He is, and of the glory which the counsels of God have connected with His person. Knowledge, or pretended knowledge, outside this, does but turn us away from Him, withdraw our hearts from the influence of His glory, throw us into that which is false, and lead our souls into connection with the creation apart from God, and without possessing the key to His purposes. Thus, since man is incapable of fathoming that which exists, and of explaining it to himself, his efforts to do so cause him to invent a mass of ideas that have no foundation, and to endeavor to fill up the void that is found in his knowledge through his ignorance of God by speculations, in which (because he is at a distance from God) Satan plays the chief part without man's suspecting it" (Synopsis of the Bible). Then follows a stronger and important warning. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." It is a warning against the natural man's philosophy, and the religious man's traditions; both are not after Christ, but aim at the person, the work and the glory of Christ. Rationalism and ritualism are still the pronounced enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they were when He walked on the earth. (The Sadducees were the philosophers, the rationalists. The Pharisees, the most religious sect, the ritualists. Both combined in hatred of Christ.) Both may use His name, but deny His glory and reject the great truth of His headship. Philosophy is the wisdom of this world. Well has it been said: "Philosophy is an idol of man, a blind substitute for the knowledge of God." It is false and ruinous whether it leaves Him out or tries to bring Him in, whether it denies the true God, or sets up a sham god. Atheism and pantheism are the ultimate goal and results of philosophy, and both set God and His revelation aside. This is especially true of the present day destructive Bible criticism, which claims to be "scientific" and "philosophical." It is the most subtle deception the father of lies has produced. This destructive criticism, which denies with a show of learning the Word of God, denies with it God and His blessed Son; it is an antichrist, preparing the way for the final great delusion, the full manifestation of the mystery of iniquity, the man of sin. The evolution theory is another philosophy. Though proven to be untenable, preachers, and especially the teachers of the young, still adhere to it and thereby deny God's revelation. The evolution-philosophy has no explanation for the sin and misery of the world, but makes it all a part of the nature of things which God could not avoid when He started the world evolving. It makes God the author of sin. And evolution offers no remedy for sin and its results. Evolutionists as found in all the prominent sects or denominations of Christendom teach that sin is only animalism left in

man; and then they substitute for true conversion, regeneration, for reconciliation by the death of Christ and salvation by grace--they substitute for it a development for the better by civilization and culture. Evolution-philosophies are the enemies of revelation and the cross of Christ. "But obviously this evolutionary 'salvation' is largely or wholly a salvation of the race through the prospective future perfectibility of mankind as a whole; and it is childishly inadequate in dealing with the poor individual then and now who, under this hideous handicap fails in the sad conflict with his inherited animalism; and it has no gospel for these present moral failures (or those of the past), unless they can be reincarnated at a higher stage of the racial development, or have 'another chance' under some less hard conditions in the future while it goes without saying that, in the view of these theistic evolutionists, this racial culture of development can be accomplished without the intervention of a divine mediator and the help of a divine sacrifice" Professor Price. "Christian Science" also comes under the garb of a philosophy. This wicked system with its outrageous deceptions may be termed the masterpiece of Satan. Against its blasphemous inventions the Spirit of God bears a perfect witness in the first chapter of this Epistle. Christianity is not science. Science is knowledge gained by experience, by searching. Christianity is a revelation from God. It is a faith. The traditions of men and rudiments of the world are terms which apply to the religion of the flesh, by which we mean a religion which the natural man can lay hold of and which suits perfectly the natural, unregenerated man. This is ritualism, the Galatianized gospel which has the curse of God resting upon it. It brings in man's works, law-keeping, ceremonies, holy days, saints' days, the mass and other things. But it is not after Christ. Against these two currents, rationalism and ritualism, the Spirit of God warns. Any one who follows either must deny Christ and becomes spoiled and ruined. Verses 9-10 introduce us to the heart of this great document. "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are filled full, who is the head of all principality and power. How this blessed statement recalls our attention to the great truths of the first chapter we do not need to point out. While in the first chapter He is displayed as the Incarnate One, who walked on earth, in whom all the fullness was pleased to dwell; in this statement of the second chapter we see Him as the Risen One, who is in glory as the Glorified Man and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Glorious truth that there is the Man, in glory, in a real human body, the Man, who made peace in the blood of His cross. The fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him and out of this fullness we receive grace upon grace, and that we might also be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). In Him believers are filled full. In Him we possess perfection and completeness before God and are not wanting anything whatever as to our position before God. Believers are in Him before God, not in what they do or according to their service, or anything else, but in perfection of what He is. Who could add to His fullness and who can add to the fullness and completeness the believer possesseth forever in Him! The child of God has no need of philosophy, ceremonies, asceticism, advanced thought, or any other thing. No need of the traditions of men as embodied in ritualism, a man-made priesthood which He hates (Rev. 2:15); or the mass with its terrible blasphemy, or the worship of angels! We have and are all in Christ. Our only concern must be to lay hold in a practical way of this fullness, to take more and more of Him and walk in the power of it. This is viewed next. The literal rendering of verses 11 and 12 is as follows: "In whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; buried with Him in baptism, in whom ye have been also raised together through faith in the operation of God, who raised Him from among the dead." Circumcision done by hand is for the Jew, the sign of separation from the Gentiles. Believers are circumcised in the circumcision of Christ, that is, "the putting off of the body of flesh" (not "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh") separated from it, by being made partakers of the efficacy of His death. In the death of Christ the old man is put to death as more fully demonstrated in Romans 6; we are dead to sin, because we are in Christ, who is our life. And having now no more confidence in ourselves we are the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:3). Baptism is the symbol of this "buried with Him in baptism." And we are raised up with Him through faith in the operation of God who raised Him from among the dead. It is "through faith" this is accomplished and not in an ordinance; we are risen with Christ in possession of life. "It is thus that we are set free from the thought of deliverance by an ordinance, which so many hold today. We are 'raised up through the faith of the operation of God who raised Him from among the dead.' Here we see distinctly what is meant. Resurrection is the opposite of burial. In burial a dead man is put among the dead. In resurrection a now living man is given his place among the living; and it is seen that Christ, identified with us through grace in His death, has been raised up of God; that we might find, therefore, our own title and ability to take our place amongst those truly alive. But then all depends upon this identification of ourselves with Him. Our eyes are now, therefore, to be upon Christ. He is in this character our true self, and our confidence, therefore, is to be in Him. As we have had it in Galatians, we live, yet no more we, but Christ liveth in us. It is the One who is before God for us who is before us now in faith and whom we accept as now our true self, a self in whom we can have confidence, a self that we can contemplate with joy and satisfaction, and without the least tendency to such pride of heart as results naturally from what we call self-occupation. Here is One who will draw us away from self, who will, as a Heavenly Object draw us completely out of the world, and accomplish our deliverance in both senses at the same time" (Numerical Bible). The truth unfolded in the Ephesian Epistle (chapter 2) is also mentioned here by the apostle. "And you being dead in offenses and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath He

quicken together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Blessed truth again! What follows has a meaning for both Jewish and Gentile believers. "Having blotted out the handwriting in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." The Colossians were Gentiles, they had not been under the law and its ordinances, therefore he writes not which were "against you" but "against us." All the ordinances were against them, for they were as Jews under obligation to keep them, as they had, so to speak, put their handwriting, their signature to it, when they said with one voice, "All the words which the Lord hath said we will do" (Exodus 24:3). And inasmuch as they did not keep these ordinances, they were against them. The work of Christ has taken it out of the way; all was nailed to the cross. Then the signature was erased and the debt paid. The ordinances are removed. This applies to Gentiles as well and also in another sense. The law and the ordinances were the middle wall of partition, which excluded the Gentiles. Christ "has broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandment in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Eph. 2:14-15). At the same time He spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, leading them in triumph by it. This means the principalities and powers of Satan and the wicked spirits. They were against us, but He has vanquished them in His death on the cross and in it has triumphed over them. Trespasses are forgiven; ordinances blotted out, completely gone; principalities and powers triumphed over. Verses 16-23. The chapter closes with warnings and exhortations. The first warning exhortation is against ritualistic legalism. "Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matter of an holy day, or new moon, or of the Sabbath, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body of Christ." All the ceremonies of the law were shadows; the substance has come and the shadows have ceased. Ritualistic Christendom has ape'd the shadows and by doing so practically denies by it the truth of the gospel. It is a turning away from the substance and moving after the shadow. A religion in ordinances, so-called sacraments with mysterious powers, with an imposing ritual for the eye and the ear, which gives the flesh something to do and to boast in, is an invention of Satan. True Christianity has no holy days and feast days, saints' days, lenten days, etc.; nor does it need these "beggarly elements." The Sabbath is also mentioned. Some keep the seventh day, Saturday, and claim that this is the day to be kept. But the church has no Sabbath to keep in the legal sense. The first day of the week, the Lord's day, is the day of worship. The next warning is against the worship of angels and occultism. "Let no one fraudulently deprive you of your prize, doing his own will in humility and worship of angels, entering into things which he has not seen vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh, and not holding fast to the head from whom all the body ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God." Here the Romish idolatry comes into view. It began early in the church. Angels are ministering spirits who minister to the heirs of glory. Their presence with and ministry to God's people may be believed, but never must they be worshipped. Putting them between Christians and Christ as a mediatorial agency is idolatrous, sinful and a denial of the headship of Christ. The worship of angels denies the union of the believer with the Head. The Head, Christ in glory, ministers to the body in spiritual things. All looked like humility when it was in reality self-will and pride. Intruding into unseen things points to such evil systems as spiritism, theosophy, Psychical research and other cults. Whoever follows these things proves thereby that Christ as the Head over all is not recognized but denied. He who knows Christ and is in conscious union with Him will never crave after any of these things. Asceticism is the concluding thing against which the Holy Spirit warns. "If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as if alive in the world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances?" Then he gives an illustration of these "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch." (Strange it is that these words are generally misapplied, wrested from the context, twisted and contorted to furnish a text for the drink-evil and to advocate prohibition. It has nothing to do with that.) This and the concluding words reprove asceticism "the harsh treatment of the body" not keeping the body in a certain honor and all to the satisfaction of the flesh, as he writes: "According to the injunctions and teachings of men (which have indeed an appearance of wisdom in voluntary worship, and humility, and harsh treatment of the body, not in a certain honor), to the satisfaction of the flesh." These errorists taught that matter is evil and the body is the source of sin and therefore they treated the body harshly. They denied honor to the body but it was for their own satisfaction of the flesh. "Asceticism is utterly powerless to effect the object aimed at: it does not, it cannot sanctify the flesh. It has a show of wisdom. It is extravagant in its pretensions and loud in its promises. But it never fulfills them. The apostle here declares that it has no value against the indulgence of the flesh (2:23). It, rather, stimulates the appetites and passions it is meant to extirpate. Asceticism has often proved to be a hotbed of vice. Some of the vilest men have been found among those who advocated the strictest austerities. They denounced the holiest of human associations, and branded as sensual the purest relations. Marriage was degraded, celibacy glorified, the family disparaged, domestic life despised. And some of these foes of truth have been canonized! "Asceticism does not touch the seat of sin. All its strength is exerted against the body. Sin is of the soul, has its seat in the soul. So long as the heart is corrupt, no bodily restraints will make the life holy. There is one remedy alone for human sin, one that reaches to its roots, that ultimately will totally destroy it, viz., the blood of Christ" (1 John 1:7) (Professor W.A. Moorhead). And all these warnings are for our own times, for we live in the day when the tares the devil sowed in the field in the beginning of the age are ripening for the harvest. They are full grown. Legalism,

ritualism, evolution, higher criticism, Christian Science, Russellism, demonism, spiritism, New Thought, New Religion, New Theology, theosophy, Unitarianism, Romanism, Mormonism, Seventh Dayism and other still more dangerous theories, because more subtle, are about us. Only a constant realization of our position in Christ and holding fast the head will keep His people in the days of apostasy. May God's people today, the faithful remnant, never lose sight of the two vital truths of these two chapters: In Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily--and we are complete in Him.

III. THE PRACTICAL RESULTS: LIVING AS RISEN WITH CHRIST (3-4)

CHAPTER 3

1. The life hid with Christ in God (3:1-4)
2. The contrast: The old man and the new man (3:5-11)
3. Manifesting Christ (3:12-17)
4. Relationships (3:18-4:1)

Verses 1-4

Risen with Christ; such is the believer's position. "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." These are the great truths of Christianity: The believer dead with Christ; risen with Christ and in possession of a life which is hid with Christ in God and therefore safe and secure. And these facts constitute the controlling motive of the believer's life on earth. If apprehended in faith they will lead the soul to seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The mind will then be constantly set on the things above and not on things which are on the earth. The more a believer enters into those blessed truths, making them his own by reckoning himself dead with Christ and risen with Him, with his life hid with Christ in God, the more will the things above be for him the great attraction and the things on earth will lose their charm. The things above are Christ and His glory. The things on earth include all the deceiving things mentioned in the previous chapter, such as the rudiments of the world, philosophy and words of vain deceit, legalism, ritualism, ordinances, as well as worldly ambitions, honors, pleasures and achievements. All these will fade away when the believer's heart is occupied with Him who fills the throne in glory. This is the true and only way of sanctification--heart occupation with the risen Christ. When the eyes of the heart see the risen and glorified Christ and faith lays hold of the wonderful meaning for us who believe, then we learn to walk in that separation into which God has called His people. What the Christian therefore needs is an ever increasing realization in faith of his position in Christ, and then to be energized by the indwelling Spirit to seek those things which are above and not the things on earth. Such a life means joy and peace. It is a life of obedience and quietness, victorious over all earthly circumstances. And because it is a life which is hid with Christ in God, it is hidden from the world. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John 3:1). The world, which lieth in the wicked one, cannot understand nor estimate such a life of separation through faith in an unseen person, a life which reaches out after an unseen goal and which spurns worldly honors and the things which are the boast of the natural man. (Phil. 3:18-19 tells us that those who mind earthly things, though Christians in profession, are the enemies of the cross of Christ and that their end will be destruction. Such is the state of the masses of Christendom today--minding earthly things; filled with the love of the world and dead to the spiritual heavenly things.) But it will not be always thus. A day is coming when this life, hidden now, will be fully manifested. "When Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." It will be a manifestation in glory. It comes when He comes again. "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day" (2 Thes. 1:10). It is not the day when He comes for His saints; it is the day of His visible manifestation, when all His own share His glory and come with Him, when He brings His many sons unto glory. To look constantly in holy anticipation to this promised glory-event, is inseparably connected with the statements of the preceding verses. What blessed links these are:--dead with Christ--risen with Christ--a life hid with Christ in God--a life to be manifested when He comes again! May God's people know the reality of all this in power and be kept from a mere profession, lifeless and powerless, of these fundamental facts of the gospel.

Verses 5-11

An exhortation follows to mortify the members which are upon the earth. And what shameful and shameless things are mentioned here! "Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." From this exhortation addressed to those who are believers, dead and risen with Christ, we learn that the old nature is not eradicated in the child of God. The believer knows that the old man is crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6), that being in Christ he is now no longer seen by God as in the flesh; but the believer also knows that the old nature is still in him. He finds this out daily "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit." The spiritually minded believer acknowledges freely that in his flesh there dwelleth no good thing, and that in his fallen nature are all these shameful things and that this old nature is capable of all of which the apostle writes. On account of these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them." The natural man lives in these things; but not so the believer. A child of God may commit these horrible things of the flesh, but he no longer lives in them. And what is to be done to these members? The translation, "mortify your members which are on the earth," does not fully express the original meaning. It does not mean that we are to be doing it as it is so often attempted by resolutions, fasting and other exercises, ever trying to fight the flesh and conquer the evil things of the old nature. We are never told to fight the flesh, but to flee and abstain from fleshly lusts. Fighting the flesh, trying to put it to death ourselves leads to defeat. We cannot do it, but it has been done for us. The old man was put to death in the cross of Christ; we are now dead to sin--sin is not to have dominion over us. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:11-12). "Mortify your members" means keep them in the place of death where they have been put by the death of Christ. "Let it be as done"--exercise the power which redemption gives by holding in the place of death the members which are upon earth. This, however, is not possible unless the believer walks in the Spirit, is occupied with Christ and seeks those things which are above. For this reason the exhortations of verses 5-11 are the result of doing what the opening verses of this chapter put before us. And there are other things besides the gross things of the flesh. "Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications, lying one to another" are likewise the works of the flesh. They are to be put off. The same Greek tense, aorist imperative, is here also employed--"let it be as done"--have it put off, because grace in redemption has made it possible. No need, therefore, to tolerate these things any longer in your lives, "seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." Born again, believers have received a new nature, the nature from above; and this new man is being renewed in knowledge, not after the pattern of the first man, Adam, but after the image of Him, who created him. Christ Himself is the type of the new man; Christ is the object of the faith and the ambitions of the new nature in the believer. And in this new man all differences have ceased, all human distinctions disappear forever. Greek, Jew, circumcision, uncircumcision, barbarian, and the worst type of the barbarian, the Scythian, bond and free, are completely obliterated and gone. Having believed in Christ the new man is formed in each, and Christ is all as well as in all. He Himself is everything and all things are found in Him. The new man is independent of all earthly things and conditions and blessedly dependent upon Him, who created the new man. It is a great truth that Christ is all and also "in all." The believer must look upon all fellow-believers as being indwelt by Christ, that He is in all. This brings deliverance from self; all jealousy, pride and fleshly ambitions will end among the saints of God if they look upon each other after this manner, that Christ is in all. Here is comfort and power.

Verses 12-17

Therefore, as the elect of God, who are the new man indwelt by Christ and one with Him, holy and beloved, are exhorted to put on (have it done) the things which manifest Christ. Bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. It is the fruit of knowing Christ risen and seated in glory. His own character is reproduced and Christ is manifested in the believer's walk. "As the elect of God, those who owe everything to His will, His choice as those set apart to Him, and those upon whom He has set His love, we are to put on the things which properly accompany this: 'bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another.' It is striking how, in all these, there is found some form of self-denial. Power is shown by competence for stooping; God turning also the very things that are against us into the means of educating us in this. Things evil in themselves may, nevertheless, furnish us with a wholesome discipline for the way and enable us, in answer, to bring forth fruit which is according to God. We are to forbear as God has forborne. We are to forgive as Christ has forgiven us; to all which is to be added love as that which is the 'bond of perfectness,' which keeps everything in its place and perfects every detail of life. Think how the world, even, has to put on the appearance of love, the more if it has not the reality; but love itself has no need to put on an appearance. It will manifest itself in harmony in every tone and gesture. The manifestation of the divine

nature has a unity in it which makes everything to be in harmony. If there is love in the heart, the words will not be hard or unseemly; their very tone will be affected" (Numerical Bible). "And let the peace of Christ (not 'Peace of God' as in the Authorized Version) preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful." All God's true children have peace with God and their calling in one body is also to have the peace of Christ presiding in their hearts. This blessed heritage (John 14:27) will be enjoyed by all who walk in the Spirit, who walk in love, obedient to His will and in unbroken fellowship with Him. The crown and glory of such a walk is the peace of Christ, the very peace which He possessed while down here. Blessed, unspeakable privilege! Yet how few know this peace of Christ and enjoy it daily! If Christ is all for the believer and seen as being "in all," in every member of the body of Christ, then that peace will rule in the heart and we shall know the comfort and joy of it. Furthermore the word of Christ is to dwell richly in the believer's heart in all wisdom. And this word ever directs us to Himself. It does not teach us self-occupation but occupation with Himself, His own person and glory. It is through His word that we learn to know Him better and by which we are kept in His fellowship. And this again bears the blessed fruits of joy and praise, as well as spiritual fellowship with the saints. "Teaching, and admonishing one another; with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." And all the believer does in word or in deed is all to be done in His own worthy name, "giving thanks to God the Father by Him." The Lord Jesus is to be in all our thoughts; in every word and in every deed must be given Him the preeminence. "This consciousness of relationship with Christ, in the life which is of Him in us, applies to everything. Nothing is done without Him. If He is the life, all which that life does has Him for its end and object, as far as the heart is concerned. He is present as that which is the governing motive, and gives its character to our actions, and which preoccupies our heart in performing them. Everything relates to Him: we do not eat without Him (how can we when He is our very life?); we do not drink without Him; what we say, what we do, is said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus. There is the sense of His presence; the consciousness that everything relates to Him, that we can do nothing--unless carnally--without Him, because the life which we have of Him acts with Him and in Him, does not separate from Him, and has Him for its aim in all things, even as water rises to the height from which it descended. This is what characterizes the life of the Christian. And what a life! Through Him, dwelling in the consciousness of divine love, we give thanks to our God and Father." Verse 18-4:1. Wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants and masters are exhorted how to walk in the different relationships while still in the body. The more complete exhortations as to husband and wife are found in the Epistle to the Ephesians (5:22-23); and as to children, fathers, servants and masters in chapter 6:1-9. The same loving submission of the wives to their husbands "as is fitting in the Lord" is here stated once more. And husbands are to love their wives and be not bitter against them. God has established and sanctioned the marriage relation; sin has come in and brought its corruption, never so much in evidence as in our own days. Believers in this relationship are exhorted to give in it a lovely display of the union which exists between Christ and the Church. Children in the believer's family are to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), and seeing the truth that "Christ is all" exemplified in the family life they are exhorted to obey their parents in all things. The disintegration of the family life is one of the evil things of the closing days of this age. Among the characteristics of "the perilous times" with which our age closes we find "disobedience to parents" and "without natural affection" (2 Tim. 3:1-5). And fathers must take heed so as not to provoke their children to anger by any unjust treatment, so that the children be not discouraged to obey in all things. How often a spirit of rebellion is fostered in children by the treatment of parents, who do not manifest the love of Christ. But if "Christ is all" in the family life, if the peace of Christ presides in the hearts, if the Word of Christ dwells there richly, then love will govern all. The servants exhorted were slaves, who had believed and become in Christ true freedmen. Not a word is said about the wrong of slavery. Sin is responsible for it. But these Christian slaves are exhorted to obey their masters according to the flesh in all things. In serving them, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in faithfulness, meekness and devotedness they do it as unto the Lord. The place of honor belonged to these slaves in Christ, for they could manifest in their low place the life of Christ, who was here on earth the servant who came not to be ministered to but to minister; the servant of all. In the coming day of Christ many of the slaves who believed on Christ and served in meekness and lowliness will receive a great reward. "Two principles act in the heart of the Christian slave: his conscience in all his conduct is before God; the fear of God governs him, and not his master's eye. And he is conscious of his relationship to Christ, of the presence of Christ, which sustains and lifts him above everything. It is a secret which nothing can take from him, and which has power over everything, because it is within and on high--Christ in him, the hope of glory. Yes, how admirably does the knowledge of Christ exalt everything that it pervades; and with what consoling power does it descend into all that is desolate and cast down, all that groans, all that is humbled in this world of sin! "Three times in these two verses, while holding their conscience in the presence of God, the apostle brings in the Lord, the Lord Christ, to fill the hearts of these poor slaves, and make them feel who it was to whom they rendered service. Such is Christianity" (Synopsis of the Bible). And masters are exhorted to render unto the slaves that which is just and equal. "Knowing that ye also have a Master who is in heaven." Before that Master, all will have to appear and there will be no respect of persons.

CHAPTER 4

1. Prayer and ministry (4:2-4)
2. Walking in wisdom (4:5-6)
3. The fellowship of the saints in their service (4:7-17)
4. The conclusion (4:18)

Verses 2-4

The first verse of this chapter belongs to the preceding one. Prayer is the most needed thing for those who are risen with Christ and know that they are complete in Him. Without continued prayer the full realization of the great truths unfolded in this Epistle is impossible. Communion with God makes it all real. "Continue steadfastly in prayer, and watch therein with thanksgiving." The knowledge of our position in Christ, that we are in Him and have all in Him teaches us our dependence on Him. The more we enter into all these things the greater will be our sense of the need of prayer and real communion with God. The new man yearns for this. All the exhortations to seek the things which are above, to set the mind on those things and not on earthly things, to keep in the place of death the members which are on the earth, to put on the new man and manifest Christ, are impossible without prayer. (Those who boast of being complete in Christ and treat prayer slightly show thereby how little they know of the real spiritual meaning of being dead with Christ and risen with Him.) Without continued prayer the reality and power of our position and blessing in Christ is on the wane and soon lost. It is through prayer that we lay hold of all; it is the means by which we enter deeper into His knowledge. Prayer is, therefore, the greatest need for those who are risen with Christ. And while we express in this way our utter dependence on Him, conscious of Himself and our union with Him, He also delights in our fellowship. We can bring all to Him, "nothing is too small to enlist His love; nothing too great for His strength, and nothing too difficult for His wisdom." And there must be perseverance in it; a broken and interrupted communion soon tells in the life of the believer. No other way to know and enjoy our portion in Christ, to advance in it and be victorious in the conflict which is ours in a world of evil, than continued, steadfast prayer, communion with God. In prayer we are "to watch therein and be thankful"--"Watch and pray" our Lord said to His disciples in the garden, and while He prayed more earnestly they slept (Matt. 26:41). And again it is written, "Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7). Our thoughts wander and our infirmities often become very evident in the exercise of this blessed privilege. We must watch before we pray, watch while we pray and watch after we have prayed, and watch for the answer, not impatiently, but in child-like faith. The spirit of praise and thanksgiving is needed for this watching. The apostle next requests prayer for himself and the ministry of the mystery of Christ. "At the same time praying also for us, that God may open unto us a door of the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak." This blessed man of God was in the prison. From the Epistle to the Philippians we learned how unselfish he was. And here is another evidence. He might have requested united prayer for his deliverance, for divine interference in his behalf as it happened to Peter when he was imprisoned; he might have asked the prayers of the saints that his needs might all be supplied. As risen with Christ he is above these earthly circumstances. His request is for prayer for the gospel, the mystery of Christ, so preciousy told out in the first part of this Epistle. God must open the door for this. How humble and dependent he was! What a contrast with present day professional evangelism! And for the open door to preach the gospel; to speak the mystery of Christ effectively, the saints of God must continue to pray and watch confidently for the answer. In praying for the Word that it may have free course and be glorified (2 Thes. 3:1), we can have all boldness and expectation. Such prayers have God's approval and answer. Verses 5-6. Towards those who are without, the unsaved, believers with the profession of being risen with Christ, for whom Christ is all, must walk in wisdom. What we are in Christ, the grace which has saved us, the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts must be made known in our intercourse with those who know not Christ. How great is our failure! And why? Because we are not constantly occupied with our Lord and our heavenly position in Him. Lack of real communion with God and prayer for the gospel, in behalf of the unsaved about us, strips us of the power to walk in wisdom. "Redeeming the opportunity." It means to bear witness to those without when the proper time for it presents itself And when the opportunity comes the word spoken is to be "always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one."

Verses 7-11

The words which follow these exhortations bring out the fellowship of saints and their different services. Tychicus is mentioned first. We find his name also in Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:12 and Titus 3:12. With Onesimus he was the bearer of this Epistle, as well as the Epistle to the Ephesians, while Onesimus carried also the letter to Philemon. Three things has Paul to say of Tychicus. He calls him the beloved brother, well known because he was a faithful minister, who preached faithfully the gospel and as such he was for the apostle a fellow-servant in the Lord. He sent him to the Colossians to tell them about his own state, and that he might know their state and comfort their hearts. "We see how Christian love delights to communicate and to hear. It was his confidence in their love; and this is shown not merely in his desire to hear about them, but in the conviction that they would like to hear about him. Can anything be sweeter than this genuine simplicity of affection and mutual interest? In a man it would be vain and curious; it is blessed in a Christian. No right-minded man, as such, could take for granted that others would care to know about his affairs any more than he theirs, unless indeed in case of a relation, or a friend, or a public and extraordinary personage. But here writes the lowly-minded apostle, in the full assurance that, though he had never seen them, or they him, it would be real and mutual gratification to know about one another from him who went between them. What a spring of power is the love of Christ! Truly charity is 'the bond of perfectness.' 'And my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord; whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your state, and comfort your hearts; with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here'" (W. Kelly). Onesimus, the once good for nothing slave, the runaway also is called a faithful and beloved brother. The Epistle to Philemon will tell us more of this. Then there was Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4) who was a fellow-prisoner of Paul and also a fellow-worker (Philemon 24). And how delightful to find Mark here, the sister's own son to Barnabas. Twelve years before, he left the work (Acts 13:13) and was the occasion of the deplorable separation between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:26-40). But now he is seen restored. (See also 2 Tim. 4:11.) The third fellow-worker for the kingdom of God, who was a comfort to the prisoner of the Lord, was Jesus Justus. These sent their greetings, as also did Epaphras. Him the Colossians knew well for this servant of Christ was one of them. He is an example of a praying saint. He continued steadfastly in prayer for them. He prayed, yea, he agonized (such is the Greek word) in prayer for the Colossians, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. He knew their danger; he had as a faithful minister communicated some of these things to the apostle. Knowing the Colossian condition, he prayed fervently. His ministry was the ministry of prayer. Paul adds his own word of commendation and approval. "For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis." Though the Laodiceans were probably even then drifting into the lukewarm condition which the Lord from heaven so fully uncovered later (Rev. 3), this servant of Christ did not stand aside, but had a prayerful and loving interest in them. Luke and Demas sent their greetings. Luke, the beloved physician, is the inspired author of the Gospel which bears his name. He also was with Paul in Rome as he was for some time his travelling companion. What a comfort the beloved physician must have been to the prisoner of the Lord! Demas is mentioned, but not a word is said about him. Was even then the evil working in his heart, which later broke out? No doubt it was. A short time afterward we read his sad story. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present age" (2 Tim. 4:10). "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church which is in his house. And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (4:15-16). (This must have been the Epistle to the Ephesians. See our introduction to Ephesians.) One more message is given. "And say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it." He probably had become in one of these cities the instrument for ministry. This he had received from the Lord. He alone can call into the ministry and bestow gifts. Whatever our ministry is, faithfulness in the exercise of it is the important thing.

Verse 18

"The salutation by the hand of me, Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you." Like other Epistles, except Galatians (Gal. 6:11) and Philemon (verse 19), this letter was dictated to an amanuensis. But this closing verse was written with his own hand. (See also 1 Cor. 16:21; 2 Thes. 3:17.) And when he added these words the chain was upon his hand. "Remember my bonds." We may look upon it as a delicate excuse for not having written the whole letter to the Colossians, whom he knew not personally. At the same time the mentioning of his bonds were to remind them that he is the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1). Grace be with you. Blessed be God that His Grace will always be with His people.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

The city of Thessalonica was situated on the northern part of the Aegean Sea, on the Thermaic Gulf. It was a prominent city of the Roman province, Macedonia. Its inhabitants were mostly Thracians. Thessalonica was a wealthy and large city and for a time, the most influential centre in the northeastern part of the Roman empire. On account of its great commerce many Jews had settled there and a flourishing synagogue existed in the city.

The visit of the Apostle Paul to Thessalonica is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Acts. It took place after his ministry in Philippi. It seems that the persecution there hastened his departure. Paul had said to the magistrates, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now would they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out." When this came to the ears of the authorities, they became frightened for it was illegal to scourge a Roman citizen. "And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed" (Acts 16:37-40). Of his experience Paul writes in his first letter to the Thessalonians. "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (1 Thess. 2:1-2). Leaving then Philippi with Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy they went along the famous highway, the Via Egnatia and reached the city of Thessalonica. On the way they passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia. On their arrival Paul followed his usual custom and visited the synagogue.

For three Sabbaths, the record in Acts tells us, he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. The Scriptures, of course, were the Old Testament Scriptures, for the New Testament was then not in existence. The way he dealt with his Jewish brethren is the pattern still for reaching the Jews with the gospel. He opened the Scriptures, and without mentioning the name of the Lord Jesus at all, he showed that the Old Testament teaches that the Messiah (Christ) promised to them must suffer and rise from the dead. This great truth that the sufferings of Messiah come first and the glory follows, had been forgotten by the Jews. A crucified Christ was their stumbling block (1 Cor. 1:23). They looked only to the glory-side and the accomplishment, through Him, of the national promises. And after Paul had demonstrated from the Scriptures "that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead," then he boldly declared that "this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." The predictions of the suffering and the resurrection of Christ were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. But he must have preached more than that. He also taught that Christ would come again. This we learn from the fact that the unbelieving Jews, in bringing Jason, who had believed, with other brethren before the rulers, accused them of "turning the world upside down," and "that there is another King, one Jesus" (Acts 17:5-7). His second Epistle also shows that he had given them instructions in dispensational and prophetic truths (2 Thess. 2:5).

The Church in Thessalonica

As a result of his testimony a church was at once gathered out. "And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts 17:4). From this we learn that a number of Jews were persuaded that the Lord Jesus is the Christ and accepted Him as their Saviour and Lord. But the church was mostly composed of devout Greeks. These were not heathen, but Greeks who had given up idolatry and had become Jewish proselytes. They were convinced that paganism was wrong and seeking for light attended the synagogical services. Of this class a great multitude believed. The third class mentioned are women who occupied positions of distinction. Not a few of them believed. The Epistles Paul wrote to the church of the Thessalonians also shows the character of those gathered. That the majority of them were Gentiles is learned from the statement that they had turned to

God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9). The evils against which he warns (1 Thess. 4:1-8) were mostly practised by the Greeks; and they belonged mostly to the poorer, the working class (1 Thess. 4:11).

Paul's First Epistle: When and for What it was Written

The Epistle to the Thessalonians is the first Epistle Paul wrote. Even the most outspoken critics acknowledge that it is a genuine document. Irenaeus (about 140 A.D.) bears witness to this Epistle. There are many other historical evidences, besides the contents of the Epistle, which prove conclusively that Paul is the author of it. All this is not necessary to follow in this brief introduction. The Authorized Version has a postscript "written from Athens ." This claim is made on account of the apostle's statement in chapter 3:1-2. "Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left alone at Athens . And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith." It is surmised that Timotheus carried this letter to the Thessalonians. This is incorrect. The Epistle was written after Timotheus had returned from his visit to Thessalonica. The sixth verse of the third chapter furnishes this evidence. "But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us." Timothy came from Thessalonica with the good news of the happy state of the Thessalonian church and joined the apostle in Corinth (Acts 18:5). From Corinth Paul wrote this first Epistle about the year 52 or possibly a few months later.

The apostle had been compelled to break off suddenly his ministry in Thessalonica on account of the persecutions which had arisen in that city. "The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea " (Acts 17:10). He must have felt that the new converts needed more instructions. Of this he writes in the Epistle. "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again: but Satan hindered us" (2:17, 18). To comfort them in the midst of the persecution and in their sorrow, to encourage them in their conflicts, he was moved by the Holy Spirit to write this first Epistle. Timothy had brought to him the information of the tribulations they were undergoing. And they were especially distressed by the death of a number of believers. They sorrowed almost like those who had no hope, because they feared that these departed ones would have no share in the glory and in the kingdom of the returning Christ. To relieve them of their anxiety, to give them further light on the coming of the Lord in relation to those who are asleep and the reunion with them who have gone before, what will happen when the Lord comes for His saints, so that they could comfort each other, is one of the chief reasons why this letter was written.

The Coming of the Lord

The blessed hope of the coming of the Lord occupies a very prominent place in this Epistle. In our days we often hear the statement that the coming of our Lord is an unessential doctrine. Those who make such an assertion are ignorant of the fact that the blessed hope is a part of the gospel itself. Christian preaching and teaching which ignores the blessed hope, the coming of the Lord, is incomplete; it omits one of the most vital truths which the Spirit of God has linked with the gospel and with the life and service of the believer. The first Epistle the great apostle wrote is an evidence of this. In this Epistle one of the greatest revelations in the Word of God about His coming, is made known (4:13-18). It is the Epistle in which the doctrine of the coming of Christ is unfolded and shown to be practically connected with the Christian's life. Each chapter bears witness to it (1:9-10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11). Christians wait for Him; serve in anticipation of His coming when all service will be rewarded and the servant crowned; His coming is the incentive to a holy life, it is the comfort and consolation and when He comes and takes His own in clouds to meet Him in the air, it will bring the unexpected judgment for the world. The second Epistle gives additional light on the visible manifestation of the Lord, what will precede that day and what is connected with it, when He comes with His holy angels. The fate of those who obey not the gospel and who receive not the love of the truth is made known in the second Epistle.

The Division of First Thessalonians

Simplicity and deep affection are the marks of this Epistle. We find nothing about Judaizers, these perverters of the gospel of Jesus Christ against whom Paul had to warn in his later Epistles. Warnings such as we have in Colossians and other Epistles are absent. The loving apostle is not grieved in any way, but happy on account of the gracious work going on in the midst of the Thessalonians, and rejoicing in them as his beloved children. In the study of this Epistle we maintain the division in five chapters.

I. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS AND ITS BLESSED CONDITION (1)

II. TRUE SERVICE, AS MANIFESTED IN APOSTOLIC MINISTRY (2)

III. AFFLICTIONS AND COMFORT (3)

IV. THE SEPARATED WALK AND THE BLESSED HOPE (4)

V. THE DAY OF THE LORD AND EXHORTATIONS (5)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS AND ITS BLESSED CONDITION

CHAPTER 1

1. Greetings and thanksgiving (1:1-4)

2. The gospel and its blessed fruits (1:5-7)

3. The blessed condition of the Church (1:8-10)

Verses 1-4

Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus were known to the Thessalonians, for they had been with them, and were the instruments of God used in bringing the gospel to them. He does not speak of himself as an apostle. In nine of his Epistles, Paul uses his title as apostle. In Romans and Titus, he calls himself also "a servant of Jesus Christ and of God." In Philippians, he speaks of himself and of Timothy as "servants of Christ Jesus." In the Epistle to Philemon, he also omits his apostleship, because this Epistle was a private letter. He asserts his apostolic title and authority in the strongest way, when he addresses the Galatians and the Corinthians, because these churches were troubled with false teachers who impeached his apostolic calling. As this trouble did not exist in Thessalonica, he does not call to their remembrance that he is an apostle. He did not parade his title, and only mentions it when the truth he preached and which he had received from the Lord was questioned.

He addressed the church in Thessalonica as "the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." The church in Thessalonica is the only one addressed in this manner. The church is looked upon as the family of God, as the children of God, and God their Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. They were the happy children of God and in simplicity of faith knew Him as their Father. What a transformation had taken place in these Thessalonians! They were idolators, worshipping idols; through believing the gospel, they were born again and now enjoyed the blessed relationship to God as Father. There is no other way into the family of God than the way by which these heathen had been brought there. We are sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26). And John, in addressing the family of God wrote "I write unto you, little children (those born again), because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). The apostle, who had declared the gospel unto them, thanked God always for them, and with his fellow laborers made mention of them in prayer. The life which they possessed manifested itself in faith, love and hope. These are the principles which form our character as Christians. Theirs was a work of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and the Father, labor undertaken by love; all their labor in service flowed from love, and they endured because they possessed hope, waiting for Him. The objects of faith, love and hope are the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Verses 5-7

The apostle mentions next the gospel and what it had wrought among them. "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." Paul, Silvanus and Timothy had preached to them the good news of a free and full salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel message came to them in power. He made

the word effective in their souls and quickened them so that the great change took place by which they passed from death unto life; thus believing, the Holy Spirit was received by them, giving them full assurance. Here we have the divine order of salvation; the message of the gospel heard and believed; the Spirit of God manifesting His power in the conversion and the sealing of those who believed, and the consequence: the full assurance of the truth in all its blessed power and reality. But the gospel was not only preached by these messengers among the Thessalonians; the chosen instruments also witnessed to that gospel by their life and walk--"As ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes." They were living and blessed witnesses of the power of the gospel which they proclaimed. Their holy walk, their self-denial, their peace and quietness had its blessed effect on the Thessalonian believers, for they became imitators of the apostles. Inasmuch as the messengers followed closely the Lord Jesus Christ, the Thessalonians, being imitators of them, became thus imitators of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit. And then in turn they became patterns to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia. In these simple statements, we have a blessed manifestation of the real power of the gospel.

Verses 8-10

There was no need for Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to say anything about these Thessalonian Christians. It was not necessary to speak to others of what God had wrought in Thessalonica or to declare the genuineness of these new converts. The Thessalonian believers gave such a strong and full testimony that it was wholly unnecessary for the laborers to say anything about them. The word of the Lord was sounded forth by them with no uncertain sound. They were true lights in the world-darkness and were holding forth the word of life. Their faith toward God became widely known in every place. Throughout that region it became known through their witness of what the gospel is and what the gospel produces in the hearts and lives of those who believe.

And what was their testimony? It is stated in the last two verses of this chapter. "For they, themselves, report concerning us what manner of entrance we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from among the dead, Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come." In these words we have the great essentials of true Christianity. The first is true conversion. They had turned to God from idols, not, as it is sometimes quoted, from idols to God; the power of God, in believing the gospel had turned them away from idolatry. They were now serving no longer dumb idols, but the true and living God. In this service they manifested the genuineness of their conversion. And there was another prominent characteristic: they waited for His Son from heaven, Jesus, whom God had raised from among the dead. They looked earnestly for Him, in whom they had believed, who had died for them and of whom they knew He had been raised from among the dead, being now, at the right hand of God. According to His own promise to come again, they were patiently waiting for His coming from heaven, though they were ignorant of the manner of His coming. How He will come again, and what is connected with this great event, they learned fully from the two Epistles they received from the inspired pen of the apostle. To wait for the coming of the Lord is a vital characteristic of true Christianity; it is a part of the gospel. A sad testimony it is to the superficial knowledge of the gospel when men say and teach that the belief in the second coming of Christ is unessential and of no practical value. It is most essential and of the greatest value to the true believer. It presents the gloryside of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He who died for our sins, who is the glorified Man, the firstborn among many brethren, has promised to have all His own with Him to be like Him and to share His glory. This is the true object of the believer's expectation and hope. He has delivered us from the wrath to come. Therefore the Thessalonians, and all true believers as well, can wait without fear for that blessed event, for they know they are sheltered by Him from the wrath to come. Before this wrath comes He will take His own into His presence. He is our deliverer from the wrath to come.

II. TRUE SERVICE, As MANIFESTED IN APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

CHAPTER 2

1. Apostolic conduct and service (2:1-12)
2. Thanksgiving for the reception of the message and the opposition (2:13-16)
3. Looking forward to His coming (2:17-19)

Verses 1-12

The apostle now enlarges upon the brief statement in the previous chapter "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes." His conduct and character, as well as that of his fellow laborers, corresponded fully with the holy character of the truth they preached. They walked worthy of the gospel and worthy of the Lord. First he makes mention of the sufferings he and Silas endured in Philippi. They had been shamefully treated. They had been stripped and scourged cruelly with the lictor's rods and cast into prison with their feet secured to the stocks. The physical discomfort resulting from such a punishment must have lasted for many days, but it did not hinder their going to Thessalonica with confidence in God to speak the gospel there, where they also had much conflict. And what a witness he bore of their unselfish conduct while they were among them! This exhortation was not a deceit, that is, out of error; nor was it in uncleanness, emanating from any low motives of self-interest; nor in guile. God had approved them; their ministry was God-given and they were fully conscious of this fact. Being intrusted with the gospel (and what a trust it is!) so they spoke. They had no need to employ different schemes to be successful; they had full confidence in God and in the message He had given to them to proclaim. Therefore their whole aim was to please God who trieth the hearts and not men. Nor had they used flattery to win them; nor did they resort to flattering words as a cloak of covetousness using sweet phrases to get money out of them; not alone were they witnesses of all this, but he could say, "God is witness." They had sought nothing of men, neither money nor glory. They might have been burdensome to them as the apostles of Christ. They did not use their authority, which they might have used, asserting their dignity and demanding something from them. Their whole conduct was in true humility and in great self denial. (Many a "leading" evangelist of our day stands condemned by this beautiful example of a true servant of God. What God and gospel dishonoring schemes are used! What flatteries as a cloak of covetousness! How much man-pleasing!)

This is the negative side. On the other hand they were full of tenderness and kindness. A boisterous, unkind, impatient spirit was completely absent in their ministry. "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." What blessed fragrance is, and will ever be, in these precious words! How little of this gracious, loving interest in souls is manifested today among the Lord's servants! Then he reminds them what he had done so as not to be a burden to any one when he preached the gospel of God unto them. He and his companion had worked day and night with their own hands. Paul was a tent-maker and worked with his own hands in Thessalonica and elsewhere (Acts 18:2; 1 Cor. 4:12). And again he appeals to them as witnesses as well as to God, "how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe; as ye know we exhorted and charged every one of you, as a father his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His own kingdom and glory." Having such a portion in the coming kingdom and being an heir of glory, the walk of every believer should indeed be worthy of God.

Verses 13-16

He thanked God without ceasing for the reception of the message which they heard from his lips. It was the Word of God, which Paul had preached, and hearing the message, they had received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God. This Word received in faith saved them and also effectually worked in them that believed. It is still the same. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The believer is constantly dependent upon the Word of God; it worketh in him effectually through the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer's practical sanctification in the daily life is by the Word (John 17:17).

They also knew what suffering meant. They became followers (imitators) of the churches of God in Judea in Christ Jesus. Those churches suffered persecutions from the Jews, but the Thessalonians suffered from their own countrymen. And what a solemn charge is brought here through Paul against his kinsmen, the Jews! They had killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets; they persecuted the apostles. And not satisfied with this, they tried to keep the gospel they hated from reaching the Gentiles that they might be saved. The measure of sins was now filled up "and wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." The great apostle of the Gentiles, called to go far hence to the Gentiles, in this his first Epistle is used to pronounce sentence upon his own nation, which has been set aside until the fulness of the Gentiles is come in (Rom. 11:25-26).

Verses 17-19

He had an affectionate desire for them. Separated and bereaved of them (the more correct rendering) for a little season in person, but not in heart, he had great longing to see their face. Once and again he wanted to visit them, but Satan had hindered him. How the enemy hindered him in carrying out his desire, whether by attacks upon his body (2 Cor. 12:7) or by wicked men, we do not know. He then speaks of that blessed time when all hindrances will cease, when God's people are no longer separated, when those who ministered the Word and the fruits of their labors are gathered in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy." Here again the apostle mentions the coming of the Lord. The gathered saints before the Lord Jesus Christ will be the crown of glorying and the joy for the faithful servant, who then finds in the presence of the Lord, in the day of Christ, the fruit of his labors. To this consummation in glory Paul directed the attention of the Thessalonians and he speaks of them as his glory and joy, "for ye are our glory and our joy."

"it should be observed here, that the special fruits of our labors are not lost; they are found again at the coming of Christ. Our chief personal joy is to see the Lord Himself and to be like Him. This is the portion of all saints; but there are particular fruits in connection with the work of the Spirit in us and by us. At Thessalonica the spiritual energy of the apostle had brought a number of souls to God and to wait for His Son, and into a close union in the truth with Himself. This energy would be crowned at the coming of Christ by the presence of these believers in the glory as the fruit of his labors. God would thus crown the apostle's work by bearing a striking testimony to its faithfulness in the presence of all these saints in glory; and the love which had wrought in Paul's heart would be satisfied by seeing its object in glory and in the presence of the Lord Jesus. They would be his glory and joy. This thought drew yet closer the bonds that united them, and comforted the apostle in the midst of his toils and sufferings" (Synopsis of the Bible).

III. AFFLICTIONS AND COMFORT

CHAPTER 3

1. Timotheus, Paul's messenger (3:1-5)
2. His return with good tidings and the apostle's comfort and joy (3:6-10)
3. This earnest desire (3:11-13)

Verses 1-5

His longing for the beloved Thessalonians and his solicitude for them became so great that he could no longer forbear and he decided to be left alone in Athens and send Timotheus to Thessalonica. He knew they had great afflictions and that there was danger that they might not endure and then his labors among them would have been in vain. He therefore sent Timotheus whom he calls "our brother, minister of God and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ." The purpose of his mission was to establish the believers still more and to bring them comfort concerning their faith. This would result, under the blessing of God, in their steadfastness. "That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto"--it is the lot of all true believers. In fact he had forewarned them of all this when he was in their midst. "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye knew. This was part of the apostolic message, as we learn from Acts 14:22. "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

Tribulations had now come upon the Thessalonians and they were severely tested. He knew they were in the Lord's hands, that His watchful eye was upon them and that His power was sufficient to keep them. Yet he had deep concern and anxiety for them, for he also knew Satan's power. "For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain." The day of Christ, when the servant receives the reward and the saints are "the crown of glorying" is in his thoughts. If the tempter succeeded he would not have that crown of glorying in the presence of the Lord. (See 1 John 2:28. "And now little children, abide in Him: that when He shall appear, we [the laborers] may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.") While Timotheus was away Paul left Athens from where he had sent him to visit Thessalonica. Paul went to Corinth ; it was there he received the

good tidings from Thessalonica, and, as we state in the introduction, after Timotheus' return he wrote this Epistle (Acts 18:5).

Verses 6-10

"But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought good tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you." It was good tidings Timotheus brought to Paul. They were standing fast in faith; they continued in love, nor had they forgotten Paul. Their hearts longed for him as his own soul desired to see them. In the midst of tribulations which had come upon them they were blessedly sustained.

And how all this cheered the apostle. He is comforted. "Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith; for now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord." He had also his sorrows, his afflictions and much distress. But the good tidings from the Thessalonians refreshed his spirit and filled him with new energy. As a servant of God he is so fully identified with those for whom he labored and whom he loved that he could say, "for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." He feels as if he could not render sufficient thanks to God for them and for all the joy wherewith he now rejoiced, on their account before God. He also prayed night and day exceedingly that he might see their face and help them still more, so that which was lacking in their faith might be perfected. Then, knowing himself dependent upon God and the Lord Jesus Christ, He looks to direct his way to them.

"What a bond is the bond of the Spirit! How selfishness is forgotten, and disappears in the joy of such affections! The apostle, animated by this affection, which increased instead of growing weary by its exercise, and by the satisfaction it received in the happiness of others, desires so much the more, from the Thessalonians being thus sustained, to see them again; not now for the purpose of strengthening them, but to build upon that which was already so established, and to complete their spiritual instruction by imparting that which was yet lacking to their faith. But he is a laborer and not a master (God makes us feel this), and he depends entirely on God for his work, and for the edification of others. In fact years passed away before he saw the Thessalonians again. He remained a long time at Corinth, where the Lord had much people; he revisited Jerusalem, then all Asia Minor where he had labored earlier; thence he went to Ephesus, where he abode nearly three years; and after that he saw the Thessalonians again, when he left that city to go to Corinth, taking his journey by the way of Macedonia" (J.N. Darby).

Verses 11-13

We must not overlook the testimony to the deity of our Lord of the eleventh verse. "Now God and our Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you!" The verb "direct" in the Greek is in the singular. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are in the thought of the apostle one, though, personally, clearly distinguished. It is a striking proof of the unity of the Father and Son.

He prayed "the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another and toward all, even as we also towards you." Love is the bond of perfectness and as such the true means of holiness "in order to establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." This is the third time the coming of our Lord is mentioned by Paul in this Epistle. First he spoke of waiting for His Son from heaven as the characteristic of a true believer (1:9- 10); then we read of the gatherings of the saints in the presence of the Lord, the time of glory and joy, when the faithful servant will receive the reward (2:19-20), and now another phase is added. The Lord is coming with all His saints; it is now not the coming for His saints, but with them, in the day of His manifestation as well as the manifestation of all the saints with Him. It is the same of which we read in Col. 3:4, "When Christ is manifested who is our life then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." He also speaks of this in his second Epistle: "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that have believed (for our testimony unto you has been believed) in that day" (2 Thess. 1:10). In view of this coming manifestation in glory the Holy Spirit urges a walk in practical holiness, so as to be unblamable in holiness before our God and Father. It is an incentive to holy living.

"In reading this passage one cannot but observe the immediate and living way in which the Lord's coming is linked with daily practical life, so that the perfect light of that day is thrown upon the hourly path of the present time. By the exercise of love they were to be established in holiness before God at the coming of Christ. From one day to another, that day was looked for as the consummation and the only term they contemplated to the ordinary life of each day here below. How this

brought the soul into the presence of God! Moreover, they lived in a known relationship with God which gave room for this confidence. He was their Father; He is ours. The relationship of the saints to Jesus was equally known. The saints were "His saints." They were all to come with Him. They were associated with His glory. There is nothing equivocal in the expression. Jesus, the Lord, coming with all His saints, allows us to think of no other event than His return in glory. Then also will He be glorified in His saints, who will already have rejoined Him to be for ever with Him. It will be the day of their manifestation as of His."

IV. THE SEPARATED WALK AND THE BLESSED HOPE

CHAPTER 4

1. The separated walk (4:1-12)
2. The coming of the Lord for His saints (4:13-18)

Verses 1-12

"Furthermore, then, brethren, we beg you and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, even as ye received from us, how ye ought to walk and please God, even as ye also do walk, that ye would abound still more. For ye know what charges we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor (not in passionate desire, even as the Gentiles who know not God), not overstepping the rights of and wronging his brother in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all these things, even as we also told you before, and have fully testified. For God has not called us to uncleanness, but in sanctification. He therefore that (in this) disregards (his brother), disregards, not man, but God, who has also given His Holy Spirit to you" (corrected translation).

Having spoken of being unblamable in holiness at the coming of the Lord he exhorts them to live now in sanctification. The motive is to please God. The believer should constantly in his daily life ask himself this question, "Do I please God?" Exhortation to purity in abstaining from fleshly lusts follows. Fornication, licentiousness in various forms were closely connected with the idolatrous worship from which these Thessalonians had been saved. The lust of the flesh was a part of this former religion, as it is still today among different heathen religions. But why these exhortations? Because they were surrounded by these things on all sides, and because the old nature with its tendencies towards these evils was still present with them, as it is with all true believers. No circumstances or position can make the believer secure against these things, without exercise of conscience and self-judgment, and hence these solemn admonitions from the Lord. Each was to possess his own vessel (his own wife) in sanctification and honor, this would be a safe-guard against the numerous immoralities practised among the heathen. If in this matter any one overstepped the rights of another and thus wronged his brother by committing adultery, the Lord would be the avenger; it would be a complete disregard of God who has not called His people to uncleanness, but unto sanctification, to be separated from all these things. Needful were these exhortations for the Thessalonians as they are still to all of us.

And the best remedy against these evil things is brotherly love. He had no need to say much about it, for they themselves were taught of God to love one another. But he exhorts them to be quiet and to mind their own affairs, working with their own hands, as he their leader had exemplified it when he was among them.

Verses 13-18

"But we do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are fallen asleep, to the end that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For this we say to you in the Word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate these who have fallen asleep; for the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with an assembling shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

These words contain one of the great revelations of the Bible and require therefore closer attention. It is a special and unique revelation which he gives to the sorrowing Thessalonians, occasioned by the mistake they had made when some of their fellow believers had died, and they feared that these departed ones had lost their share in the coming glorious meeting between the Lord and His saints. They sorrowed on their account like those who have no hope. (Their pagan neighbors had no hope of meeting loved ones again after death. Classic Greek and Roman writers abound with dreary expressions of the hopelessness of death.) We must remember that the New Testament was not yet in existence; only one of the gospels, was written; and not one of the epistles. And so the Lord gave to the apostle the special revelation which would quiet their fears and put before them the details of the coming of the Lord for all His saints, those who had fallen asleep and those alive when He comes.

Our Lord spoke that blessed word to His eleven disciples, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also" (John 14:3). It is the only time He mentioned His coming for His own, and in speaking of it He did not tell them of signs to precede that coming, such as wars, false Christs and the great tribulation. It was the simple announcement that He would come again and receive those who are His to Himself. He did not say a word about the manner of that coming and how He would receive His own into glory to be with Him. Nor did the Thessalonians hear definite teaching on this from the lips of Paul. They knew He would come again; they waited for Him. But as to the manner of His coming and concerning those who had already fallen asleep and their relation to that event they were in ignorance. Beautiful it is to see how graciously the Lord answered the question of these sorrowing ones and how much more He adds for the comfort of all His people.

The first statement is in verse 14. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus." Let us first notice that blessed statement that "Jesus died." Of the saints it is said that they have fallen asleep; but never is it said that Jesus slept. He tasted death, the death in all its unfathomable meaning as the judgment upon sin. For the saints the physical death is but sleep. (Some have perverted the meaning of "sleep," and, instead of applying it, as Scripture does, to the body, they apply it to the soul. Soul-sleep is nowhere taught in the Bible and is therefore an invention by those who handle the Word deceitfully.) And He who died also rose again; as certainly as He died and rose again, so surely shall all believers rise. God will bring all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus with Him, that is with the Lord when He comes in the day of His glorious manifestation. It does not mean the receiving of them by the Lord, nor does it mean that He brings their disembodied spirits with Him to be united to their bodies from the graves, but it means that those who have fallen asleep will God bring with His Son when He comes with all His saints; they will all be in that glorified company. When the Lord comes back from glory all the departed saints will be with Him. This is what the Thessalonians needed to know first of all. Before we follow this blessed revelation in its unfolding we call attention to the phrase "fallen asleep through (not in) Jesus"; it may also be rendered by "those who were put to sleep by Jesus." His saints in life and death are in His hands. When saints put their bodies aside, it is because their Lord has willed it so. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15). When our loved ones leave us, may we think of their departure as being "put to sleep by Jesus."

But blessed as this answer to their question is, it produced another difficulty. Hearing that the saints who had fallen asleep would come with the Lord on the day of His glorious manifestation, they would ask, "How is it possible that they can come with Him?" Are they coming as disembodied spirits? What about their bodies in the graves? How shall they come with Him? To answer these questions the special revelation "by the Word of the Lord" is given, by which they learned, and we also, how they would all be with Him so as to come with Him at His appearing. "For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain unto the coming of the Lord, are in no wise to anticipate those who have fallen asleep." He tells them that when the Lord comes for His saints, those who have fallen asleep will not have an inferior place and that, we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. When Paul wrote these words and said, "We, the living, who remain," he certainly considered himself as included in that class. The two companies who will meet the Lord when He comes, those who have fallen asleep and those who are living, are mentioned here for the first time. How the living saints will not precede those who have departed and the order in which the coming of the Lord for His saints will be executed is next made known in this wonderful revelation.

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with an assembling shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then, we, the living, who remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This is an altogether new revelation. Nothing like it is found anywhere in the Old Testament Scriptures. In

writing later to the Corinthians Paul mentioned it again. "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

The Lord Himself will descend from heaven. He is now at the right hand of God in glory, crowned with honor and glory. There He exercises His Priesthood and Advocacy in behalf of His people, by which He keeps, sustains and restores them. When the last member has been added to the Church, which is His body, and that body is to be with Him, who is the head, He will leave the place at the right hand and descend from heaven. He will not descend to the earth, for, as we read later, the meeting place for Him and His saints is in the air and not the earth. When He comes with His saints in His visible manifestation, He will descend to the earth. He descends with a shout. It denotes His supreme authority. The Greek word is "keleusma," which means literally "a shout of command," used in classical Greek for the hero's shout to his followers in battle, the commanding voice to gather together. He ascended with a shout (Ps. 47:5), and with the victor's shout He returns.

The shout may be the single word "Come!" "Come and see" He spoke to the disciples who followed Him and inquired for His dwelling place. Before Lazarus' tomb He spoke with a loud voice, "Come forth." John, in the isle of Patmos, after the throne messages to the churches had been given, saw a door opened in heaven and the voice said "Come up hither" (Rev. 4:1). "Come" is the royal word of grace, and grace will do its supreme work when He comes for His own. But there will also be the voice of the archangel (Michael) and the trump of God. The archangel is the leader of the angelic hosts. As He was seen of angels (1 Tim. 3:16) when He ascended into the highest heaven, so will the archangel be connected with His descent out of heaven. All heaven will be in commotion when the heirs of glory, sinners saved by grace, are about to be brought with glorified bodies into the Father's house. Some teach that the voice of the archangel may be employed to summon the heavenly hosts and marshal the innumerable company of the redeemed, for "They shall gather His elect together from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30-30. (Prof. W.G. Moorehead, Outline Studies.) But this is incorrect. The elect in Matthew 24 are not the Church, but Israel. Dispersed Israel will be regathered and angels will be used in this work. Furthermore the angels will do this gathering after the great tribulation and after the visible manifestation of the Lord with His saints. The coming of the Lord for His saints takes place before the great tribulation.

The trump of God is also mentioned. This trumpet has nothing to do with the judgment trumpets of Revelation, nor with the Jewish feasts of trumpets. It is a symbolical term and like the shout stands for the gathering together. In Numbers 10:4 we read, "And if they blow with one trumpet, then the princes, the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee." The shout and the trump of God will gather the fellow-heirs of Christ. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." This is the resurrection from among all the dead of those who believed on Christ, the righteous dead. All saints of all ages, old and New Testament saints, are included. This statement of the resurrection of the dead in Christ first disposes completely of the unscriptural view of a general resurrection. As we know from Rev. 20:5 the rest of the dead (the wicked dead) will be raised up later. He comes in person to open the graves of all who belong to Him and manifests His authority over death which He has conquered.

The dead in Christ will hear the shout first and experience His quickening power; they shall be raised incorruptible. What power will then be manifested! "Then we, the living, who remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." All believers who live on earth when the Lord comes will hear that commanding, gathering shout. It does not include those who only profess to be Christians and are nominal church-members, nor are any excluded who really are the Lord's. (The so-called first-fruit rapture, which teaches that only the most spiritual of all true believers, who have made a deeper experience, etc., will be caught up, and the other believers, though they are true believers of God, will be left behind to pass "through the great tribulation," has no spiritual foundation and is wrong.) The question, "Who will be caught up into glory?" is answered in 1 Cor. 15:23 -- "All who are Christ's." The change will be "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52). Then this mortal will put on immortality. It will be the blessed "clothed upon" of which the apostle wrote to the Corinthians: "For in this tabernacle we groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed (death) but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:4). Then our body of humiliation will be fashioned like unto His own glorious body. it is the blessed, glorious hope, not death and the grave, but the coming of the Lord, when we shall be changed. And it is our imminent hope; believers must wait daily for it and some blessed day the shout will surely come.

When He descends from heaven with the shout and the dead in Christ are raised and we are changed, then "we shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air." It will be the blessed time of reunion with the loved ones who have gone before. What joy and comfort it must have brought to the sorrowing Thessalonians when they read these blessed words for the first time! And they are still the words of comfort and hope to all His people, when they stand at the open graves of loved ones who fell asleep as believers.

Often the question is asked, "Shall we not alone meet our loved ones but also recognize them?" Here is the answer: "Together with them" implies both reunion and recognition. These words would indeed mean nothing did they not mean recognition. We shall surely see the faces of our loved ones again and all the saints of God on that blessed day when this great event takes place. The clouds will be heaven's chariots to take the heirs of God and the joint-heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ into His own presence. As He ascended so His redeemed ones will be taken up. Caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; all laws of gravitation are set aside, for it is the power of God, the same power which raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead and seated Him in glory, which will be displayed in behalf of His saints (Eph. 1:19-23). Surely this is a divine revelation.

"How foolish it must sound to our learned scientists. But, beloved, I would want nothing but that one sentence, 'caught up in clouds . to meet the Lord in the air,' to prove the divinity of Christianity. Its very boldness is assurance of its truth. No speculation, no argument, no reasoning; but a bare authoritative statement startling in its boldness. Not a syllable of Scripture on which to build, and yet when spoken, in perfect harmony with all Scripture. How absolutely impossible for any man to have conceived that the Lord's saints should be caught up to meet Him in the air. Were it not true its very boldness and apparent foolishness would be its refutation. And what would be the character of mind that could invent such a thought? What depths of wickedness! What cruelty! What callousness! The spring from which such a statement, if false, could rise must be corrupt indeed. But how different in fact! What severe righteousness! What depths of holiness! What elevated morality! What warmth of tender affection! What clear reasoning! Every word that he has written testifies that he has not attempted to deceive. Paul was no deceiver, and it is equally impossible for him to have been deceived" ("Our Hope," February 1902).

And the blessedness "to meet the Lord in the air"! We shall see Him then as He is and gaze for the first time upon the face of the Beloved, that face of glory, which was once marred and smitten on account of our sins. And seeing Him as He is we shall be like Him. How long will be the meeting in the air? It has been said that the stay in that meeting place will be but momentary and that the Lord will at once resume His descent to the earth. We know from other Scriptures that this cannot be. Between the coming of the Lord for His saints and with His saints there is an interval of at least seven years before the visible coming of the Lord and His saints with Him. The judgment of the saints, by which their works and labors become manifest must take place. There is also to be the presentation of the church in glory (Ephes. 5:27; Jude 24). Furthermore the marriage of the Lamb takes place not in the meeting place in the air, but in heaven (Rev. 19:1-10). He will take His saints into the Father's house that they may behold His glory (John 17:22). But what will it mean, "So shall we be forever with the Lord!"

"In this part of the passage, where he explains the details of our ascension to the Lord in the air, nothing is said of His coming down to the earth; it is our going up (as He went up) to be with Him. Neither, as far as concerns us, does the apostle go farther than our gathering together to be for ever with Him. Nothing is said either of judgment or of manifestation; but only the fact of our heavenly association with Him in that we leave the earth precisely as He left it. This is very precious. There is this difference: He went up in His own full right, He ascended; as to us, His voice calls the dead, and they come forth from the grave, and, the living being changed, all are caught up together. It is a solemn act of God's power, which seals the Christians' life and work of God, and brings the former into the glory of Christ as His heavenly companions. Glorious privilege! Precious grace! To lose sight of it destroys the proper character of our joy and of our hope" (Synopsis of the Bible).

V. THE DAY OF THE LORD AND EXHORTATIONS

CHAPTER 5

1. The day of the Lord (5:1-11)

2. Exhortations (5:12-22)

3. Conclusions (5:23-28)

Verses 1-11

"But concerning the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." The apostle next mentions the day of the Lord. This is the day when the Lord is revealed from heaven, the day of His visible manifestation. It is the day when judgment will be executed upon the world. While the coming of the Lord for His saints, as made known in the previous chapter, is unrevealed in the Old Testament, the day of the Lord of which the apostle now writes, is fully revealed by the prophets. (See Isaiah 2:12-22; Joel 2-3; Zeph. 1:14-18; Zech. 14:1-9, etc.)

Our Lord spoke often of that day as the day "when the Son of Man cometh," that is His own visible glorious manifestation. What precedes this day is also made known in the Old Testament prophetic Word; and our Lord gives us likewise the same information. "And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:25-27). See Matthew 24:21-31. Judgment is in store for the world when that day comes, as judgments and tribulation are the forerunners which usher in that day. The world does not believe in such a day, but dreams of peace and safety, in a continuance of prosperity, of expansion, universal peace and a constant improvement of earthly conditions.

"There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4). But while the world saith, Peace and safety, their hearts are failing them for fear and they tremble in anticipation of the future. Much of all this we see clearly in our times, so ominous and so solemn. There is a false hope, a false optimism; we hear of what this world war will accomplish, how peace and safety will come to the whole world; yet underneath it all there are hearts failing for fear. And when that day has come, when He has been "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," the Lord Jesus Christ will reign over the earth with His saints for a thousand years (Rev. 20). That will be the day of the Lord, as the present age is "man's day."

Before that day comes with its preceding judgments and the great tribulation, the coming of the Lord, for His saints, the fulfilment of chapter 4:16-18 must take place. Of this we shall find much more in the second Epistle. When the Lord comes for His saints, the world and those who were Christians only in name, will face that coming day. It is the beginning of it. After God's true children, the praying people of God, have been removed, the age will take its final plunge into apostasy and iniquity; judgment upon judgment from above will then be poured out, as we learn from the book of Revelation.

Because these judgments, the forerunners of the day of His visible manifestation, the times and seasons connected with these events, do not concern those who are the Lord's, the apostle states that there was no need to write them about it. The Lord had told His disciples before He ascended into heaven that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons. It shows that we are not to be occupied with the times and seasons, when the times of the Gentiles end, etc., but to wait and watch for Him, who will surely come suddenly for His own as a thief in the night.

"Had it been possible in the apostle's day to predict the centuries of delay that have, in fact, elapsed, disciples might indeed still have waited for their Lord, but watched they could not, and no 'thief in the night' could have troubled their slumbers. But for the heart, expectancy was needed; and they were to watch because they knew not. Thus for these watchers the times could not speak, and in fact when they do it will be for another people than the present Christian Church, and when this is already removed to be with the Lord in the manner which we have just had before us.

"For mere formal and worldly Christendom, the coming of the thief will then in a sense have taken place. Shut out in the

outside darkness, when others have entered the chambers of light, no place of repentance will be left for the despisers of God's present grace. In a world which, having rejected the true King, will be left for that awful time to experience fully what Satan's rule is, they will fall under the power of his deception. Not having received the love of the truth that they might be saved, they will believe a lie; and comforting themselves with the cry of 'peace and safety,' sudden destruction will come upon them as upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape!" (Numerical Bible)

The words "they" and "you" make it still more clear that the day of the Lord is for the world. He does not say "When you shall say, Peace and safety" but when "they shall say." The apostle excludes the believer completely from that day when sudden destruction falls, for he says, "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day overtake you as a thief" And why? Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For that they sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. This is the character of true Christians, no longer in darkness, but children of light and of the day, and therefore belonging to that coming day to be with the Lord when He comes to judge, it cannot overtake them as a thief.

Being the children of the day we must watch and be sober; it is that which distinguishes true Christians from the mass of professing church-members and the world. The world and those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, do not watch, nor are they sober; and being sober, walking in separation from the world, its lusts and pleasures, the believer, having on the breastplate of faith and love, can advance against the enemy. He has also for an helmet, to protect him, this promised glorious salvation. Thus we can look always up, without fear, in the midst of danger when the judgment clouds are gathering over this present evil age. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Blessed knowledge and twice blessed assurance! that we might be delivered from the wrath to come and share with Him eternal glory. He died for us. "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep (as to the body) we should live together with Him."

Verses 12-22

Exhortations follow. He wishes that those who labored among them should be acknowledged by them and very highly esteemed in love for their work's sake. If the apostle and his co-laborers looked upon them as their crown of rejoicing, their glory and joy (2:19-20), they should very highly esteem them as the instruments of the Spirit of God for their edification. Be in peace among yourselves. All self-will is put aside when the heart looks forward to that coming day, when laborers and the fruits of their labors are in His presence. Then peace among His own will not be disturbed. The disorderly are to be admonished; the faint-hearted comforted; the weak sustained, and patience to be manifested towards all. Then we have joy, prayer and thanksgiving as the characteristics of those who wait for His Son from heaven and look for that blessed hope. "Rejoice evermore"--our joy is in Him. The joy of the Lord is our strength. And what joy will indeed be ours when we remember that we shall see Him as He is!

"Pray without ceasing." Prayer is constantly needed, including the forgotten prayer, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus." If this petition is never wanting, His coming for us will never lack reality. "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." As we pray and ever take afresh from His own fulness grace upon grace, and remember all the abundant provision made for us in Him, and that the glorious future which awaits His own may burst at any moment upon us, then shall we give thanks in everything. "Quench not the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is not to be hindered in His action in the midst of His people. What sad consequences when He is quenched and how great the responsibility! Do not despise prophesyings--the forthtelling of the truth of God, speaking out of the fulness of the Spirit. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil," or, as it is better rendered, "Keep aloof from every form of wickedness."

Verses 23-28

The conclusion of the Epistle begins with a prayer. "Now the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful that calls you, who will also do it." God is for all who have believed in Christ the God of peace. Peace was made in the blood of the cross; believers are both reconciled and sanctified through the peace that God has made for us in the work of His Son. We stand therefore in a blessed relationship with the God of peace, have communion with Him, and from this flows practical devotedness of life and walk to God. Believers are sanctified by the three persons of the Godhead; by God the Father, by

the blood of Jesus Christ, the offering of His body, and by the Holy Spirit.

We are in Christ completely set apart for God, bought with a price and no longer our own. We possess a new nature and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This demands of us that we be wholly set apart to God in every faculty, whether of mind or body. This is our practical sanctification, which springs from our increasing knowledge of God. This practical sanctification is wrought in the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit, who attaches the heart to God, revealing God more and more, as well as unfolding the glory of Christ. This devotedness to God in spirit, soul and body, depends upon the believer's apprehension of his relationship to the God of peace and his communion with Him. And this is progressive. Entire sanctification will be the blessed and eternal portion of all who are Christ's, when He comes, and we shall be like Him, "conformed to the image of His Son." The perfection comes with the coming of the Lord; in the power of this blessed hope shall we be preserved blameless even down here in this evil age. He is faithful who calls you, who will also perform it. Blessed assurance! He has called us to this life of blessed separation with Himself. He is faithful and will accomplish it. May we trust Him daily and stay close to Him.

"Observe again here, how the coming of Christ is introduced, and the expectation of this coming, as an integral part of Christian life. "Blameless," it says, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The life which had developed itself in obedience and holiness meets the Lord at His coming. Death is not in question. The life which we have found is to be such when He appears. The man, in every part of his being, moved by this life, is found there blameless when He comes. This life, and the man living this life, are found, with their Head and Source, in the glory. Then will the weakness disappear which is connected with his present condition. That which is mortal shall be swallowed up of life: that is all. We are Christ's: He is our life. We wait for Him, that we may be with Him, and that He may perfect all things in the glory" (Synopsis of the Bible).

The apostle closes this First Epistle by requesting the brethren to pray for him and his co-laborers. With all the deep knowledge of the truth and the great revelations from the Lord, he felt his dependence and knew the blessing which comes from the prayers of fellow saints. He asks for the expression of affection among themselves and adjures them to have this letter read to all the holy brethren. And the final word "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

This second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written at Corinth by the Apostle Paul and in the joint names of Silvanus and Timotheus. How long after the first epistle cannot be correctly ascertained. It was probably a year after they had received the first document.

What Occasioned This Epistle

From the second chapter we learn that they were greatly troubled about something else. The first Epistle was written to comfort them on account of those who had fallen asleep and to make known the great revelation concerning the coming of the Lord for His saints. And now the apostle writes: "Now we beseech ye, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as if it were by us, as that the day of the Lord is present" (2:1-2). Evidently some one had troubled them and tried to convince them that the day of the Lord, with its threatened judgments, was actually present. When they had received the comforting first epistle, we can imagine how their waiting for the Lord was stimulated. With what simple, childlike faith they must have taken hold of the words, "We who are alive and remain shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Daily, no doubt, they expected this blessed promise to be fulfilled.

Certain false teachers then appeared on the scene, telling them that their hope was vain and that the day of the Lord was actually upon them, that the threatened tribulation and judgment had begun and that they had to pass through all the horrors of the times preceding the visible manifestation of the Lord. They were passing through fearful persecutions and tribulations that these teachers probably told them that these sufferings were the indication of the beginning of the day of the Lord. It was this which greatly agitated them and robbed them of the blessed hope. If they were to pass through the tribulation and judgment which is in store for the world and be on the earth when wrath is poured out, then the blessed hope ceases to be that. And it seems these false teachers had gone so far as to produce a document, which they pretended was a letter from Paul, in which he confirmed their false teaching. For this reason, that they might know that the letter they received now was really his, he added, "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write" (3:17).

But who were these teachers who aimed at the joy and hope of these earnest believers and troubled them with their false message that the day of the Lord was present? They belonged unquestionably to the same class of Judaizers who had sneaked among the Galatian churches. They attacked the blessed hope given to the Church and put in its place the judgment and tribulation of the day of the Lord. They swept aside the comforting revelation of the coming of the Lord and the gathering of the saints unto Him and put the Church on earthly, Jewish ground. What is in store for the ungodly nations and for the Jews, they taught would also be shared by true Christians; it would all come before the Lord comes for His own. To correct this error the Spirit of God moved the apostle to write this second epistle.

A Fundamental Prophecy

Chapter 2:1-12 contains the words of instruction to show that the day of the Lord was then not present. It furthermore tells us what must precede that day, which is nowhere related to the Church of God. It is a great unfolding of prophecy, fundamental and most important. It is needed for the correct understanding of what will take place when the Lord has taken away His true Church. Here is the prediction of the apostasy, which will have for its head and climax the man of sin, the final, personal Antichrist, the same person of whom Daniel speaks (Dan. 11:36, etc.), who is described in Rev. 13:11-

18 and in other portions of the prophetic Word. Here we read of the necessary condition before this apostasy can come and that lawless one is revealed, and what will be the fate of all who received not the love of the truth. The strong delusion of him, whose coming is, according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, will be believed and accepted by the apostates of Christendom. We have given to this portion of the epistle in our annotations the attention it deserves, and we trust it will be, under God, a help, and comfort to His people.

The Division of Second Thessalonians

The scope and divisions of this Epistle are very simple. In the first chapter the Apostle shows that while the Thessalonians had tribulation, they suffered not in a punitive sense, but for the kingdom of God, and that God would recompense tribulation to those who troubled them. The punishment for the world comes when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven. While that day brings this for the world, it will bring glory for those who have believed. As already stated in the second chapter, the day of the Lord, what must take place before that day comes is made known. Words of comfort, prayer and exhortations conclude the Epistle. This gives us three divisions.

I. THE REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS FROM HEAVEN (1)

II. WHAT PRECEDES THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD (2:1-12)

III. THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, EXHORTATIONS AND CONCLUSION (2:13-3:18)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS FROM HEAVEN

CHAPTER 1

1. Salutation and thanksgiving (1:1-4)

2. The revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven (1:5-10)

3. The prayer (1:11-12)

Verses 1-4

The opening words of salutation are the same as in the first Epistle. Once more he gives thanks to God for them, because their faith increased exceedingly and love abounded, the result of an increasing faith. On account of this progress and spiritual condition he wrote, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." The patience of hope, which was mentioned in the first Epistle, is omitted by him. Their hope had been dimmed through the false teachers and alarmists, who would have them believe that they were heading for all the tribulations of the day of the Lord. They endured persecutions and tribulations on account of which they were greatly disturbed, because of the insinuation that these were the judgments of the day of the Lord. They looked more to what was happening to them than to the Lord. They were more occupied with these conditions than with the blessed hope.

Verses 5-10

He quiets these fears. Satan was pressing upon them, terrifying their minds, and they were fearing everything, the enemy taking advantage of the persecutions and sufferings he had instigated to distress them. The Apostle tells them that all their persecutions and tribulations, far from having a punitive character, were "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God" with this purpose, "to the end that ye should be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for the sake of which ye also suffer."

They were children of God, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and their path was to suffer with Him, that they also might be glorified together (Rom. 8:17). A similar word he wrote later to the Philippians. "in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God" (Phil 1:28). What was happening to them was a seal upon them of their being worthy of the coming kingdom. The persecutions they endured showed they were identified with the Lord, who was "despised and rejected of men." Their sufferings were the sufferings of Christ.

And then the contrast. When the day of the Lord comes with the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, it will bring the punishment of the wicked. Their persecutions were from the ungodly, who inflicted suffering on them because they believed on the Lord. But when the day of the Lord comes God will change all by recompensing those that troubled them. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." In other words, in His day they would have rest and peace, while their wicked enemies will suffer the well deserved judgment. From this inspired declaration they learned that the day of the Lord had not come.

The day of the Lord brings the revelation of the Lord from heaven with His mighty angels, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all who have believed (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." "In that day" is a phrase which we find many times in the Old Testament prophetic Word. In most cases it means the day of the visible manifestation of Jehovah to deal in judgment with His enemies and to deliver those of His earthly people Israel who wait for Him. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are as high and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Is. 24:21). "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Is. 25:9).

Judgment for the world is always connected with that coming day. Our Lord, in His earthly ministry, also spoke of that day, the day of the coming of the Son of man. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then shall He reward every man according to His works" (Matt. 16:27). His visible coming out of heaven and bringing judgment is still more fully described in Rev. 19:11-21. It will be the day of vengeance after the acceptable year of the Lord is ended (Isaiah 61:1-2). The apostle's testimony tells us the same. Two classes are mentioned by him. Those that know not God, which means the idolatrous Gentiles and sinners in general, "and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (The text of the Authorized Version having omitted the word "those" makes it appear as if it were only one class; but that is incorrect.) These are the Jews and also nominal and apostate Christians. The latter class will suffer the great punishment. The destruction mentioned has been explained as meaning annihilation. But that is not true. It is banishment from the presence of that glory upon which man has turned his back and which he despised--hardening himself into a final, awful incapacity for it and for communion with Him. What else is it but the destruction "of one who was made at the first in the image of God?" They will live on in eternal separation from God.

The apostle mentions something else which is not found in the Old Testament prophetic Word. When the Lord comes in that day He will be glorified in His saints and then wondered at in all who have believed. When He comes thus in judgment upon the world the true Church is no longer on earth, but the saints, having been previously caught up to meet Him in the air, come with Him in glory. It is the time of the manifestation of the sons of God, transformed into His image, each reflecting His glory, who is the leader and the first begotten. And so these poor, persecuted, despised Thessalonians would then be the marvels for the inhabitants of the earth when they appear with Him. Blessed future for all the redeemed to come with the Lord in glory and to be like Him!

These explanations concerning the day of the manifestation of the Lord bringing judgment upon their enemies and glory to them, delivered them from the concision into which the false teachers were leading them, and they were now ready, after being put at rest in their mind, to receive the needed additional instruction about that coming day. A prayer concludes this chapter that, called with such a calling, God may count them worthy of it, that their walk may be of such a nature as to correspond with that calling and that the Lord might be glorified in them by the power of faith, and that afterwards they might be glorified in Him, "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. WHAT PRECEDES THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD

CHAPTER 2

1. The gathering of the saints preceding that day (2:1-2)
2. The apostasy and the man of sin (2:3-4)
3. The revelation of the man of sin and his fate (2:5-8)
4. His deceptions and the fate of Christendom (2:9-12)

As this section of the Epistle is one of the most important of the New Testament, we give it first of all in a corrected translation.

"Now we beg you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as (if it were) by us, as that the day of the Lord is present. Let not any one deceive you in any manner, because it will not be unless the apostasy have come first and the man of sin have been revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself on high against all called God or object of worship; so that he himself sits down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do ye not remember that, being yet with you, I said these things to you? And now ye know that which restrains, that he should be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness already works; only there is He who restrains it until He be gone, and then the lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall annul by the brightness of His coming; whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God sendeth them an energy of error, that they may believe the lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Verses 1-2

He begs them "by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him" not to be disturbed by the rumours these false teachers were circulating, as if the day of the Lord is present. The Authorized Version has the misleading translation, "the day of Christ." (Equally incorrect is the translation, "the day of the Lord is at hand." The meaning is "present," that it had actually come. The same Greek word is also used in Rom. 8:38, "things present.") There is an important difference between the day of Christ and the day of the Lord. The day of Christ concerns the Church, the saints of God. The day of the Lord concerns the earth-- Israel and the nations. The day of Christ begins when He takes His saints in glory and they are with Him. The day of the Lord will bring, as stated before, the visible manifestation of the Lord from heaven. The day of Christ comes first and the day of the Lord follows at least seven years later. The following passages speak of the day of Christ, and it will be seen that that day is for God's people only (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6-10, 2:16). The day of the Lord does not concern the saints at all; it falls on the world. Before the day of the Lord can come, His saints have to be gathered together unto Him. The promise of 1 Thess. 4:16-18 needs first to be fulfilled. He uses this hope of being gathered to Christ, when He comes for His saints, as a motive why they should not listen to those who said the day of the Lord is present. He reminds them of the fact that their gathering unto Him had not yet taken place. How, then, could the day of the Lord be present? And this opens the way for still more important teaching.

Verses 3-4

The false teachers were deceiving them. Before the day of the Lord can come there must be the falling away first and the man of sin, the son of perdition, must be revealed. No such conditions need to be fulfilled before the Lord comes for His saints. But before the age closes with the visible manifestation of the Lord from heaven these two solemn things must be on the earth. A falling away from the God-given faith has been going on throughout this Christian age. But that is not the apostasy of which the apostle speaks. The complete apostasy means that the entire faith will be abandoned by Christendom, even as our Lord indicated when He said, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find the faith on the earth?" That this present age closes in apostasy is more than once mentioned by the Spirit of God. See 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 2; Jude. Evidences to that effect are abundant in our own days. The destructive Bible criticism

rejecting inspiration and revelation, the denial of the person and work of Christ and of every other article, denials which are rapidly increasing, made the way for this final apostasy. The many cults in which Satanic powers are manifested, under the garb of angels of light, such as Christian Science, Spiritism, Theosophy, etc., are also harbingers of the time of which the apostle writes. Satan is surely actively at work to bring about this apostasy, and his ministers are transformed as the ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15), advocating reform, better living, but denying and antagonizing the doctrines of Christ. We shall hear later that this final apostasy is held back from its full manifestation by One who restraineth; only when He is taken out of the way can this predicted apostasy and renunciation of Christianity come with its leader, the man of sin.

Who is the person whom Paul mentions as the man of sin? it would take many pages to give the views and opinions of expositors as to who is meant. The Roman Empire, the Roman Emperors, Mohammed, the Pope and the Romish Hierarchy have been given as being the man of sin. During the French revolution many thought it was Napoleon, as some today say the German Emperor is the man of sin. Inasmuch as the great apostasy is not yet here, the person whom Paul describes has also not yet come. First there must be the apostasy before there can be the leader and head of that apostasy. And before the revelation of Christ comes from heaven the world, which rejected Christ, will get its Antichrist. John mentions the man of sin. "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). It may be learned from this description that he will be the leader of Jewish unbelief and the unbelief of Christendom. Denying that Jesus is the Christ--that is Jewish; denying the Father and the Son, that is rejection of the Christian revelation. He will therefore take the leadership of Jewish and Christian apostasy. The most common interpretation that the Pope and the Papal system is this man of sin is incorrect, for the Pope does not deny that Jesus is the Christ, nor does the Pope claim to be the Christ. That the Pope has certain marks of the Antichrist about him no one can deny; but that he is the Antichrist is not true. (Certain Roman Catholic writers have charged Protestantism with being Babylon and anti-Christian. A so-called Protestant who denies the Virgin birth, the deity of Christ, surely is an antichrist.)

The final Antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, is the heading up of the apostasy. He fills up the measure of the apostasy of humanity. He opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or object of worship. He takes the place of God on earth. He will be the superman who is expected by the world to make his appearance in the near future. In the book of Revelation his number is given as 666. "For it is a man's number; and the number is six hundred and sixty-six" (Rev. 13:18). There is no need to speculate on this number. The meaning is very simple. Seven, in Scripture, is the complete number, used in connection with what is divine and perfect. Six is incomplete, and is man's number. The number 666 signifies man's day and man's defiance of God under Satan's power reaching its climax. This "superman" takes a seat in the temple of God and sets himself forth that he is God. From this we learn that he claims a religious character. He must therefore not be identified with the little horn in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 7).

This little horn is another Satan-possessed person who takes the leadership politically of the coming federation of nations, the revived Roman Empire. He is "the prince that shall come" of Daniel 9:26. The beast out of the sea in Rev. 13:1-10 is the revived Roman Empire; the ten horns on that beastly empire correspond to the ten horns on Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream image and the ten horns on the fourth beast of Daniel's vision. The little horn, the domineering head of the revived Roman Empire, comes first into prominence and is soon followed by the second beast out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon. Rev. 13:11-18 describes this second beast and the work he does, in which he is helped by the first beast. This second beast is the man of sin, the son of perdition. Read now Daniel 11:36-39, This is another description of the same person. He is called a king because, as the false Christ, he will claim kingship among the Jews. He is also called in Revelation "the false prophet." He is the one of whom our Lord spoke in John 5:43, "I am come in My Father's name and ye received Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

But what is the meaning of "he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth that he is God?" The temple of God does not mean the Church. It is a Jewish temple. When the true Church is gone the Jewish people, restored once more to their own land, established there as a nation, though still in unbelief, will erect another temple and institute once more the temple worship. (See Isaiah 66:1-4). God will despise their worship. The man of sin will sit in that temple, demanding worship for the image he will set up for himself. This will be during the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation. The man of sin, the Antichrist, will be undoubtedly a Jew. He will be filled with the energy and power of Satan. The nearness of the reestablishment of the Jewish people in Palestine in unbelief is an indication that all these prophecies are about to be fulfilled.

(For a closer study of the interesting details of the tribulation we refer our readers to "Exposition of Matthew," "Daniel," and "Exposition of Revelation," all by the author of The Annotated Bible.)

Verses 5-8

When the apostle was with them he had spoken to them about those things. "The mystery of lawlessness (not iniquity) already worketh," he informed the Thessalonians. Sin is lawlessness, and that has been at work from the beginning, man having forsaken God and exalted himself in self will. This works on till it works out into open lawlessness in an out-and-out opposition to God and His Son, culminating in the man of sin, the false Christ, "to give the world its long-sought liberty from divine restraint and bring its vaunted progress to perfection, which under Christianity it has found impossible to attain." The mystery of lawlessness will cease to be a mystery when the lawless one, the man of sin, is manifested. But what keeps back the manifestation of this lawless one? Who or what is it that restrains it? Who is to be taken out of the way before the lawless one can be revealed? Many answers have been given to this question which we do not need to investigate. It is self evident that that which restraineth must be a power superior to man and Satan and of a nature totally different to the man of sin. The restraining one is a power and a person. It is the Holy Spirit of God.

"The Holy Ghost was here below; the Church, be its condition what it might, was still on earth, and God maintained the barrier. And as the porter had opened the door to Jesus in spite of all obstacles, so He sustains everything, however great the energy and progress of evil. The evil is bridled: God is the source of authority on earth. There is one who hinders until he be taken out of the way. Now, when the Church (the Church, that is, as composed of the true members of Christ) is gone, and consequently the Holy Ghost as the Comforter is no longer dwelling here below, then the apostasy takes place, the time to remove the hindrance is come, the evil is unbridled, and at length (without saying how much time it will take) the evil assumes a definite shape in him who is its head. The beast comes up from the abyss. Satan-not God-gives him his authority; and in the second beast all the energy of Satan is present. The man of sin is there" (Synopsis of the Bible).

When the Church leaves the earth then this restraining power and person, who dwells in the Church and therefore is here on earth, will be taken out of the way. As the result, in due time, the lawless one will be revealed. The Holy Spirit, who came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost to form the Church, the body of Christ, will be withdrawn when that body is complete and taken to glory to be joined to the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. The light being gone, gross darkness will settle upon the nations, the apostasy will be here, the enemy comes in like a flood and the lawless one appears. Here we have the best evidence that the true Church cannot be on the earth during the final years with which this age closes. No true believer will be in the final apostasy under the lawless one, nor will the Church pass through the great tribulation. How this should fill our hearts with holy joy and our lips with praises!

Before he speaks of the lawless one with his lying wonders, he tells us at once of his fate. The Lord Jesus, in His visible manifestation, will consume him with the breath of his mouth and annul him with the brightness of His coming (Isaiah 11:1-5 and Rev. 19:11-21).

Verses 9-12

This lawless one, the Antichrist, will come in the energy of Satan with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God sendeth them an energy of error, that they may believe the lie, that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had Pleasure in unrighteousness. This shows us what is coming upon the so-called "Christian nations," with their boast of progress and civilization. This is the future of the destructive critics, the Bible-rejecting, gospel-neglecting masses of Christendom, as well as of apostate Judaism.

"Scientific infidelity now avouches with a sneer that we never see a miracle, and Hume's argument against all evidence in favor of such is its contradiction of universal experience. But it is soon to be matter of extensive experience that miracles there are; only in a very opposite interest to that of Christianity. These things are even now showing themselves in a more or less tentative and doubtful way; they are yet to throw off all reserve and challenge the faith of the world. 'Powers and signs and wonders' are the threefold designation of miracles in Scripture: 'wonders,' which excite attention and admiration; 'signs,' or things that have meaning and doctrine; 'powers,' that are evidently beyond human. These have borne witness in

past time to the truth--never proved it, apart from the truth itself with which they were connected; and this is the mistake of so many at all times that a real miracle--something that could be rightly spoken of as all these--is an absolute guarantee of the message that it brings. Thus they are ready at any time to follow what is thus supported. Yet, if there are heavenly beings--'angels that excel in strength'--it is evident that, if permitted, and if evil enough to attempt it, they could at any time lead us thus according to their mind. Now that is the very thing which God has declared He will permit, when the time shall have arrived. When men have shown that they desire the truth no longer and the patient, long-suffering God has at last no justification further, that will have come to pass for the professing Christian world which we recognize as coming to pass in the history of individuals: God will say again, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone.' And then will rise up one 'whose coming is according to the energy of Satan, with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood'--no longer in the interest of truth, but of a lie--and in all deceit of unrighteousness for those that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

"Dangerous would it be, as well as foolish, to assert that this is of the past, and not the future; that it has been fulfilled in Romanism, or in any like way. Has the power of Rome, whatever its pretension to fabulous miracle may be, exhibited itself after this fashion? No doubt, there is a class at all times ready to be duped in this way, as we see in the rapid progress of such transparent absurdities, as, for instance, 'Christian Science'; but in all this there is only the feeble anticipation of a delusion which will yet carry away the multitudes of unbelieving profession. The arch deceiver is not in the Vatican, nor elsewhere at the present time; he is to be revealed in his time. And yet we may indeed discern the foreshadows of this tremendous iniquity and realize that his way is being prepared in many events and movements that are taking place under our eyes" (Numerical Bible).

Then the rejectors of the truth will receive their judgment. No one can even imagine what will be the fate of the millions who received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Horrible as the events are today, that coming time of Antichrist, the time when the lawless one reigns, energized by Satan, will be far worse. As it has been said, "Sin will be allowed to be its own terrible witness against itself, a witness at which eternity will shudder."

III. THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, EXHORTATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTERS 2:13-3:18

1. Thanksgiving and prayer (2:13-17)
2. Prayer for the Word and for deliverance (3:1-5)
3. Exhortations (3:6-15)
4. Conclusions (3:16-18)

Verses 13-17

What blessed reasons are stated here to give thanks to God for what He has done for us and for all who believe! Brethren, beloved of the Lord, this is what believers are. Chosen we are to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. And glory is before all who have believed "the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." And that glory may burst upon us at any time. For this God's people wait. Therefore we are "to stand fast and hold fast." The word "traditions" means the instructions they had received from the apostle; that is, the truth of God. To stand fast and to hold fast the truth are the two necessary things for God's people. He also prays for them that their hearts might be comforted and that they might be established in every good word and work.

Chapter 3:1-5

As in other Epistles, so here the apostle requests prayer for himself, "that the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified." His great ambition was to spread the gospel and the Word of God everywhere. When sinners are saved by grace, are added as members to the body of Christ and walk in the Spirit, then the Word is glorified. Enemies were on all sides then, as they

are now, obstructing and hindering the word, "for faith is not the portion of all." He counted on the faithfulness of God to establish and keep them. It is a comfort for His people to know that their keeping rests in His hands. If God be for us, who can be against us? "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ." Christ, in infinite patience, waits in heaven, and His people on earth wait for Him and with Him until the appointed time comes when His waiting and their waiting ends.

Verses 6-15

Exhortations follow. It seems there was considerable disorder among them. "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." This was no doubt the result of their unsettled condition brought about by the false teachers. He therefore exhorts them to withdraw from any brother who does not hearken to the instructions he has given and who continued in a disorderly walk. Once more he cites his own exemplary life among them (1 Thess. 2:9-10). "For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought (as charity); but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. Not because we have not authority, but that we might give you an example to imitate us." He exhorts such who were disorderly, doing nothing but living in idleness, that with quietness they should work and no longer live from the labors of others, but eat their own bread. If there is refusal from the side of such, no obedience to this rule, he is to be noted and no company kept with him. Yet he is not to be treated as an enemy, but to be admonished as a brother. How well it would be if this course would always be followed.

Verses 16-18

"And the Lord of peace Himself give you peace continually in every way." This is the final prayer in these two Epistles. It must be noticed how prominent prayer is in both of these Epistles. And the Lord, who is with His people, will give peace continually in every way, if they walk in obedience, subject to Himself.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelien

Introduction

The two Epistles to Timothy and the one to Titus are generally called the pastoral Epistles, because they were addressed to these servants of the Lord who had been put in charge of important churches. Timothy ministered in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5). There never was a doubt expressed in the early Church that these epistles were written by the Apostle Paul. Quotations from them are found in the writings of Clement of Rome (96 A.D.); Polycarp of Smyrna (110 A.D.); Ignatius of Antioch (110 A.D.); Irenaeus (175 A.D.); Theophilus of Antioch (168 A.D.); Justin Martyr and others. The Syriac version, known by the name Peshito, made about 135 A.D., contains these Epistles, as well as other ancient versions. The greatest scholars of the early Church attested them as genuine. Some of the heretics, like the Gnostic Marcion, and Tatian, rejected them, and so do the destructive critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is hardly necessary to say that the style and internal evidences establish fully the Pauline authorship.

The Personal History of Timothy

The name of Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16:1. His mother's name was Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5); she was a Jewess, but his father was a Gentile (Acts 16:1, 3). Paul called him his son, my own son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2), from which we conclude that he was converted by the apostle's ministry. His mother and grand mother, Lois (2 Tim. 1:5), were both Christians. They must have been, before their conversion, God-fearing Jewesses. This seems to be implied by 2 Tim. 3:14-15. Young Timothy had an excellent reputation among the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. After having him circumcised "because of the Jews," Paul took him as a fellow-laborer in the gospel (Acts 16:1-3). He must have accompanied the apostle on his journey through Macedonia, for the apostle left him at Berea with Silas (Acts 17:14). He had been in Thessalonica and Paul sent him back to ascertain the state of the Thessalonian church. After that he remained with the apostle in Corinth. He then traveled with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus. From Ephesus he was sent by the apostle with Erastus to Macedonia and Corinth (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17). Later we find that he was with Paul, the prisoner, in Rome (Col. 1:1; Phil. 1:1, Philemon, verse 1).

When Was First Timothy Written?

Much has been written on the date of the First Epistle to Timothy. The question of one or two imprisonments of the apostle becomes important in connection with the date of the First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus. Paul was no doubt imprisoned twice, and between the two imprisonments, when he was a free man, the First Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus were written. If only one imprisonment is maintained, the date of the writing of these Epistles is hopelessly obscure, besides other unexplainable difficulties. Paul reached Rome as a prisoner in the year 61 A.D. and remained there for two years (Acts 28:30). During this time he wrote the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and to Philemon. In each he speaks of the fact that he was a prisoner. He does not mention himself as a prisoner when he writes the first letter to Timothy. He tells Timothy that he hoped to come unto him shortly. In writing Titus he speaks of spending the winter in Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12). This is sufficient evidence that he was no longer a prisoner. His trusting confidence to be released had been realized (Phil. 1:25; 2:24; Philemon, verse 22). The prayers in his behalf had been answered. For several years he was again at liberty, and Eusebius, a reliable source, states that it was known that Paul went forth preaching again.

Another ancient source (the Muratori fragment, 170 A.D.) gives the information that Paul after leaving Rome went to Spain. The interval between the first and second imprisonment explains fully the statement in 2 Tim. 4:20, "Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick." When Paul was at Miletus before he came to Rome (Acts 20:17), he did not leave him there

sick, but Trophimus accompanied him (Acts 21:29). Therefore Paul visited Miletus and Ephesus again; this must have been between his first and final imprisonment. Nor could the statement in 1 Tim. 1:3 be explained if Paul had written this Epistle before his arrest in Jerusalem . He wrote Timothy that he had besought him to abide still at Ephesus .

The book of Acts records two visits of Paul to Ephesus . In Acts 18:19-22 we read of his brief visit, and in Acts 20:31 we have the record of his longer stay which lasted three years. At this time he did not request Timothy to stay in Ephesus , but he sent him into Macedonia (Acts 20:29, 30) he predicted the coming danger for that church, grievous wolves coming from the outside and false teachers from the inside. Some eight years later this prediction came true. He visited Ephesus again, and left Timothy there facing the different heresies which had sprung up, and bearing witness against them. A short time after he wrote this first Epistle to his beloved Timothy, beseeching him to abide still in Ephesus . The second Epistle was written from Rome after he had been thrown into prison the second time, and immediately before he suffered the martyr's death.

The Purpose of the Epistle

It is a confidential communication which Paul sent to Timothy concerning the church as the house of God. In chapter 3:14, 15 we find the words which state clearly the purpose of this Epistle, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." The epistle therefore contains practical and important instructions on the order which is to be maintained in the church, as the house of God. The suitable conduct befitting to the house of God is given by the apostle. Pure doctrine, pure worship and a faithful ministry are the leading thoughts of this pastoral letter, but he also enters into the godly conduct of the individuals which are in the church of the living God. Blessed instructions! There is failure on all sides, showing, that departure from the faith, when men no longer endure sound doctrine, is upon us, according to the warning given in both Epistles. Yet individuals can always walk and live in the truth, for there is grace sufficient to lead and to maintain the members of the body of Christ in the divinely marked out path, even in the last days, the perilous times.

The Division of First Timothy

In the beginning of this Epistle unsound doctrine and all that is connected with it is rebuked, and the apostle puts a strong emphasis on true doctrine, without which no godliness is possible. This true doctrine is the gospel of grace of which Paul testifies, when he writes, "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1:11). Of this grace he was himself a witness. Prayer is the leading topic of the second chapter. In the third chapter the house of God and the holiness which becomes that house is the theme, what manner of persons overseers and deacons must be. Then in the fourth chapter we find a warning of the departure from the faith in the latter times. The last two chapters give different instructions and exhortations concerning the elder and younger women, widows, the support of elders, or overseers, as well as personal instructions to Timothy. This gives us a fivefold division.

I. CONCERNING SOUND DOCTRINE (1)

II. CONCERNING PRAYER (2)

III. CONCERNING THE HOUSE OF GOD (3)

IV. CONCERNING THE LATTER-DAY APOSTASY (4)

V. INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS (5-6)

Analysis and Annotations

I. CONCERNING DOCTRINE

CHAPTER 1

1. The salutation (1:1-2)
2. The charge concerning false doctrine (1:3-4)
3. The law, its use, and in contrast with grace (1:5-11)
4. Exceeding abundant grace (1:12-17)
5. The charge to Timothy, and the danger of shipwreck (1:18-20)

Verses 1-2

Paul writes as an apostle and mentions the fact that it is "by the commandment of God our Saviour." Necessity was laid upon him to act and write as an apostle through the energy of the Spirit of God, and therefore all he writes is of great importance, for it is not merely loving advice to his son Timothy, but by commandment of God. The expression "God our Saviour" is peculiar to the First Epistle to Timothy and to the Epistle addressed to Titus. (See 2:3; 4:10; Tit. 1:3; 2:10; 3:4.) It shows that God's character towards the world is that of a Saviour through the work of His Son. His grace, bringing salvation, has appeared unto all men, a different thing from what was under the law-dispensation. All men are now the objects of God's dealing in grace, and therefore we read in the second chapter that supplications, prayers and intercessions be made for all men (not believers only), "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." We learn from this the meaning of "God our Saviour"; it expresses His love towards the world.

This sovereign mercy of God was the true starting point of all the apostle had to declare. He then salutes his child Timothy, "grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." Here we find another interesting distinction in the use of the word "mercy." When greetings are sent by the Holy Spirit to churches, He never mentions mercy, but only "grace and peace," but when an individual is addressed "mercy" is added. It supposes the need, the constant wants, the difficulties, the trials and the dangers of individual believers. Timothy, in Ephesus, when the grievous wolves came from the outside, and false teachers from the inside, needed mercy, so that he would be kept. As the days grow darker, the departure from the faith becomes more pronounced, individual believers need mercy upon mercy to stand and to withstand. ("Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied" is written in the beginning of the Epistle of Jude. This Epistle pictures the darkest days of departure from the faith with the church still on earth.)

Verses 3-4

The apostle had besought Timothy to abide still in Ephesus when he left that city and went to Macedonia. He was to remain behind to charge some that they teach no other doctrine. When Paul had met the elders of Ephesus at Miletus he had made this prediction, "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Then he went to Jerusalem, where he was taken prisoner and sent to Rome. After his release he must have visited Ephesus once more and found the very things in the assembly of Ephesus against which the Holy Spirit had sounded the warning. Timothy was with him at that visit between his first and second imprisonment. He left him behind to deal with false teachers and false doctrines. (The word "doctrine" (teaching) is used eight times in this Epistle.) The better rendering of verse 4 is, "neither turn their minds to fables and interminable genealogies, which bring questionings rather than God's dispensation which is in faith."

The special warning is against fables and interminable genealogies. From the Greek word "muthos," translated fables, we have our English word "myths." The warning is undoubtedly aimed at the Gnostic emanations, the invention of "aeons" and the list of their successions. Like the church in Colosse, the church of Ephesus was also invaded by the false teachers of Gnosticism. It was not yet fully developed. That came during the post-apostolic days in the second century. These speculations were not according to sound doctrine and the truth of God. Neither are the present-day myths of evolution, the derivation of one thing from another in an interminable chain, the myths of destructive criticism, of spiritism, theosophy, Christian Science, and other vagaries. Jewish teachings on the perpetual obligation of the Mosaic law, genealogies, and

other matters, are likewise included in this warning. They all lead not upon the sure foundation of the dispensation of God, (the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph. 3:21) which is in faith, but to questionings in which there is no profit, but which open the way to a complete rejection of God's truth and God's grace made known in the gospel.

Verses 5-11

When the apostle used the word "commandment" he does not mean the Ten Commandments. It is the charge the apostle is putting upon his son and fellow-laborer Timothy. What he enjoins is, love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. And this is produced not by the law, nor by human imaginations and questionings, but solely by the gospel of grace. Speculative questions or anything else do not act upon the conscience nor bring into the presence of God. An unfeigned faith in Christ clears the conscience from guilt and produces love out of a pure heart. Some had swerved from this, by turning aside from the dispensation of the grace of God unto the vain talk about the law, fables and genealogies. They gave heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men (Tit. 1:14) and were consequently turned from the truth of the gospel. They aimed at being law-teachers, but they did not understand what they said and what they so strenuously affirmed. They were evidently the same Judaizers, ever insisting upon law-keeping and its ordinances, the false teachers who perverted the gospel, who continually dogged the steps of the apostle and tried to injure the work he was doing.

Then follows a parenthetical statement on the use and purpose of the law. The law is good (Rom. 7:12) if a man uses it lawfully. Its lawful application is to the lawless and disobedient, to the ungodly and sinners, who are condemned by the law. It has no application to a righteous person. A believer with unfeigned faith and love out of a pure heart and a good conscience is righteous, and has nothing to do with the law. In possession of the righteousness which is apart from the law, having the righteousness of God in Christ, the law has no power over the believer. He is dead to the law; the law can have no possible meaning or use for him. The law was never designed to be the rule for the life of the Christian. He is saved by grace, and that alone can produce godliness. It is grace which teaches to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, and also gives the power for it.

To use the law is for the believer a denial of grace. He continues: "And if any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." Here we see the contrast between law and gospel. The law is for condemnation, but the gospel proclaims the glory of the blessed God; and this gospel, committed to the apostle, unfolding God's counsels of glory for us in Christ, tolerates no evil. Sound doctrine is therefore not only a correct belief in the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, what is accomplished in that gospel to the glory of God, and the glory it puts on our side; but sound doctrine means also practical godliness. (See 1 Tim. 6:3, "The doctrine which is according to godliness.") A holy life is produced by sound doctrine, and sound doctrine must lead to a holy life. Unsound doctrines, profane and vain babblings, all the unscriptural teachings, the destructive criticism, and the cults "will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:17) and eat like a canker.

Verses 12-17

And now he speaks of himself, thanking Christ Jesus, Who gave him power and counted him faithful, appointing him to the ministry. And who was he? A blasphemer and persecutor, and injurious. "But I obtained mercy, because I did it in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The grace which he preached, which he defended against the attacks of Judaizing teachers, was preeminently witnessed to by his own case. The grace of the Lord was towards him exceeding abundant, or more literally rendered, "the grace of our Lord surpassingly overabounded." He had the most marvellous experience of this grace which saves so freely and fully. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." He knows what he says and of what he speaks.

No fables, imaginations, vain speculations, or questionings here, but the fullest assurance, that Christ Jesus the Son of God came into the world to save sinners. And He had saved him, the chief of sinners, so that no man need to consider himself too great a sinner for this grace. He obtained mercy so that he might be a pattern of the grace that Christ would display towards all "who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." In a special manner this is applicable to the nation to which Paul belonged; the Jews hereafter, at the time of our Lord's second coming, will obtain mercy. Paul in his experience is the pattern of the sovereignty of grace which in due time will save "all Israel ." The chief, the most active, the most inveterate of enemies, was the best and most powerful of all witnesses that the grace of God abounded over sin,

and that the work of Christ was perfect to put it away. It was the best refutation of the "other doctrines" against which Paul warns in these epistles to Timothy. He then gives utterance to the praise which filled his heart. Such praise the law could never teach the human heart. It knows no song of joy and blessing; its melody is the curse.

"Such was the foundation of Paul's ministry in contrast with the law. It was founded on the revelation of grace; but it was a revelation connected with the experience of its application to his own case. Peter, guilty of denying a living Saviour, could speak to the Jews of grace that met their case, which was his own; Paul, formerly the enemy of a glorified Saviour and the resister of the Holy Ghost, could proclaim grace that rose above even that state of sinfulness, above all that could flow from human nature--grace that opened the door to the Gentiles according to God's own counsels, when the Jews had rejected everything, substituting the heavenly assembly for them--grace that sufficed for the future admission of that guilty nation to better privileges than those which they had forfeited" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Verses 18-20

He then commits a very solemn charge to Timothy. The charge is "holding faith, and a good conscience." Some put it away, that is the good conscience, and then concerning faith make shipwreck. The faith is sound doctrine, the gospel of grace, the truth of Christianity. A good conscience must be maintained in order to hold that faith in sincerity and truth. Daily self-judgment, even as to the smallest things, is absolutely necessary to keep the believer from the dangerous rocks on which his faith may be wrecked. It may be a very little sin that is allowed and not confessed and put away; but this unjudged sin becomes the starting point of something worse and may lead to terrible results. If a good conscience is put away the believer begins to drift.

"To be in communion with God, the conscience must be good, must be pure; and if we are not in communion with God, we cannot have the strength that would maintain us in the faith, that would enable us to persevere in the profession of the truth, as God gives it to us. Satan has then a hold upon us, and if the intellect of one in this state is active, he falls into heresy. The loss of a good conscience opens the door to Satan, because it deprives us of communion with God; and the active mind, under Satan's influence, invents ideas instead of confessing the truth of God. The apostle treats the fruit of this state as "blasphemies"; the will of man is at work, and the higher the subject, the more an unbridled will, possessed by the enemy, goes astray, and exalts itself against God, and against the subjection of the whole mind to the obedience of Christ, to the authority of the revelation of God" (J.N. Darby).

We have here an explanation why men who used to hold the faith delivered unto the saints have given up that faith. Error does not begin with the head but with the heart. Some sin was cherished; some secret sin had control. Self judgment was not exercised; no confession made. Having no good conscience, there was no longer real communion with God and the shipwreck of faith followed in due time. Hymenaeus and Alexander, who denied resurrection, were examples of this fatal road. He delivered them over to Satan, not to be lost, but for discipline. They were to find out by sad and sorrowful experience what Satan's power is, so that broken and humbled they might be brought back. "Better surely not to need such discipline; but if we do need it, how precious to know that God turns it into account in His grace, that we might be thoroughly dealt with and exercised in the conscience" (Wm. Kelly).

II. CONCERNING PRAYER

CHAPTER 2

1. Prayer for all men and for those in authority (2:1-7)

2. The place for the man and the woman (2:8-15)

Verses 1-7

Instructions are now given by the apostle. The first concerns prayer. "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (literally, gravity). For this is good and acceptable in the sight

of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." The God who is our Father is also the Saviour-God, who acts in the gospel of His grace with love and compassion towards all men. As such He manifests a gracious willingness to have all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. We must, therefore, knowing Him and the exceeding abundant grace towards us, act in love towards those who are without. God acts in grace and the household of faith must do likewise.

As the gospel of grace goeth forth to all men, and God wants all men to be saved, so are we to pray for all men. Especially are kings and all who are in authority to be mentioned in the prayers of intercession. This is the true grace-spirit; the Jewish law-spirit knew nothing of love towards all men. Gentiles and Gentile kings were looked upon as outside, and not considered to be the objects of divine love. The dispensation of the grace of God having come, salvation by grace is offered to the whole world. And how this exhortation has been neglected! How little true prayer for the salvation of all men is made! (Verse 4 disposes completely of the unscriptural idea that God has predestined a part of the human race to be lost.) We must also remember that cruel Nero was on the throne of the Roman Empire when this exhortation was written.

The house of God is to be a house of prayer for all nations, and to exercise the priestly function of intercession. Well has it been said, "Nothing but the strong sense of the infinite blessing of the place that grace has given us could lead to, or keep up, such prayer." But often we are apt to settle down in the enjoyment of grace, without reflecting on our responsibility towards those who are unreached by that grace, which is also at their disposal. Through preoccupation within, how often we forget those without! How needful today when thrones totter, when democracies arise, when all forms of government break down and the shadow of the coming lawless one lengthens, to be obedient to this divinely given instruction, so that even in these days of confusion God's people may lead "a quiet and peaceable life"!

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be rendered in due time." Judaism was the revelation and testimony of the one God. Christianity reveals also the true God, but brings forth the equally great truth that there is but one mediator, as there is but one God. And this one mediator is the Man Christ Jesus, who came into the world and who gave Himself a ransom for all.

"Precious truth! We are in weakness, we are guilty, we could not bring ourselves near to God. We needed a mediator, who, while maintaining the glory of God, should put us into such a position that He could present us to God in righteousness according to that glory. Christ gave Himself as a ransom. But He must be a man in order to suffer for men, and to represent men. And this He was. But this is not all. We are weak--here, where we are to receive the revelation of God; and weak, with regard to the use of our resources in God and our communion with Him--even when our guilt is blotted out. And, in our weakness to receive the revelation of God, Christ has revealed God, and all that He is in His own person, in all the circumstances written wherein man could have need either in body or in soul. He came down into the lowest depths in order that there should be none, even of the most wretched, who could not feel that God in His goodness was near him and was entirely accessible to him--come down to Him--His love finding its occasion in misery; and that there was no need to which He was not present, which He could not meet.

"He came down, took part in all the sorrows of humanity, and entered into all the circumstances in which the human heart could be, and was wounded, oppressed, and discouraged, bowing down under the evil. No tenderness, no power, no sympathy, no humanity, like His; no human heart that can so understand, so feel with us, whatever the burden may be that oppresses the heart of man. It is the Man, the Christ Jesus, who is our mediator; none so near, none who has come down so low, and entered with divine power into the need, and all the need, of man. The conscience is purified by His work, the heart relieved by that which He was, and which He is for ever.

"There is but One: to think of another would be to snatch from Him His glory, and from us our perfect consolation. His coming from on high, His divine nature, His death, His life as man in heaven, all point Him out as the one and only mediator" (Synopsis of the Bible).

"A ransom for all, the testimony to be rendered in due time." This statement has been perverted by some, who handle the Word of God deceitfully, to mean that the whole human race will ultimately be saved including all the wicked dead. And more than that, some of these teachers have made the astonishing statement that the testimony of their unscriptural invention was to be reserved for a certain time, and that "due time" came when they preached their "larger hope" and universal salvation. He has given Himself a ransom for all, which means that provision is made by His propitiatory

sacrifice for the salvation of the whole race, but faith is necessary for the appropriation of this salvation.

All who do not accept Christ by personal faith are not covered by His substitutionary sacrifice. If they die in their sins the great ransom cannot deliver them (job 36:18). The due time, or, its own time, when that testimony of all this was to be rendered came when the work was finished on the cross. Ever since the one mediator between God and man gave Himself a ransom for all, the message of God's love and grace has been preached. And Paul to whom the gospel of the glory of the blessed God was specially committed could therefore say, "Whereunto I was appointed a preacher (literally "herald"; also used in 2 Tim. 1:11; and of Noah in 2 Peter 2:5) and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

Verses 8-15

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." This refers to praying in public. Audible prayer in the congregation is to be made by men, and not by women. This is apostolic teaching. (There are sects in existence today which claim to have returned to apostolic doctrines and practices, yet they ignore the apostolic commandment as to the place of women in the church. In fact in many of these sects women are the leaders.) The hands which are lifted up in public prayer must be holy hands (James 4:8). True piety and a separated walk are to characterize the man who lifts up his hands in public prayer. And it must be "without wrath," angry feeling against a brother, and without disputing or "reasoning." To harbor an ill feeling against another while praying or to introduce a dispute, a reasoning argument (as done quite often) makes prayer noneffective.

And now in regard to women he gives the charge that they "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." She is to give her testimony in this way and show that she is not following the world, but is above these things. Immodest dress, bordering on indecency, to gratify the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, is a noticeable thing among the women of the world.

The Christian woman must bear a testimony in an outward manner that she is separated from these things. Then he gives the charge about the teaching authority of women. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." This is and belongs to the wholesome, sound doctrine. Woman has her sphere of service, of laboring in the gospel and also teaching the truth, among her own sex and children. But the place of authority does not belong to her; she is not to usurp authority, nor to exercise it. This is the divine order, that the authority to teach is vested in the man. (See 1 Corinthians 11 and 14). "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." This is creation's order, which must be maintained on the ground of redemption.

And the fall teaches another lesson. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." The able expositor Bengel wrote on this: "More easily deceived, she more easily deceives." When she leaves the place given her according to this apostolic charge, she is easily deceived, and then in turn easily deceives others. The second epistle speaks of "silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts." Women rejecting sound doctrine, usurping authority, have become instruments of the enemy, by inventing Satanic doctrines and perverting the truth of God.

(Seventh Day Adventism had Mrs. White as prophetess; Theosophy--Mrs. Blavatsky and Annie Besant; Spiritism--the Fox sisters and the thousands of wicked and often immoral women-mediums; Christian Science--Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy and the thousands of women healers; the Irvingite movement--demon-possessed prophetess, who spoke in strange tongues; New Thoughtism has its women leaders, etc. How this bears out the divine truth stated here.)

Verse 15 refers to Genesis 3:16. She shall be preserved in child-bearing, delivered in the hour of trial and labor, if they continue in faith and love. and holiness with sobriety.

III. CONCERNING THE HOUSE OF GOD

CHAPTER 3

1. The overseer (3:1-7)

2. The deacon (3:8-13)

3. The house of God and the mystery of Godliness (3:14-16)

Verses 1-7

As stated before, the Church is viewed in these pastoral Epistles as the house of God. The holiness which becomes this house is to be maintained and expressed in a practical way. The different directions given as to overseers and deacons demonstrate what God esteems highly, and what He expects of those who are saved by grace, and who constitute His House. Paul wrote these instructions to his son Timothy, so that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God (verses 14-15).

Bishops (overseers) are identical with elders (presbyters). For conclusive proof see Acts 20:17 and 28; Titus 1:5 and 7. In both passages the same persons are called both bishops and elders. It is nowhere taught in the Word of God that a bishop has a place of superior authority in the body of Christ, as head of a diocese, etc. These things as practised in the Romish, Episcopal and other ritualistic churches are according to human ordinances.

The work of the overseer is learned from Paul's statement in Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." The Holy Spirit called them into this work, for He is the great administrator in the church. Each local church had not one overseer or bishop, but a number of them, showing that the authority was not vested in one person only (Phil. 1:1). If anyone desired the office of an overseer, he desired a good work. It is a good work to exercise loving and patient care over souls which are beloved of God, and so dear to Him, who purchased them by His own blood. Such a desire would be the result of the Spirit of God, who laid the work of an overseer upon the heart. Paul then gives Timothy the qualities which a bishop or overseer must have. He must be blameless, that is as to his moral character irreproachable, with nothing whatever against him. "He must be the husband of one wife." This has been explained as excluding all who had been married twice. This is incorrect. It may refer to those who were as pagans married to more than one woman, for polygamy was practiced among the heathen in that day, as it is still. Converted to Christianity these pagans were in an unhappy condition, and on account of it could not exercise oversight in a local church.

On the other hand this inspired qualification of an overseer or bishop is a complete and crushing refutation of the celibacy of the Romish priesthood. He also must be vigilant, sober, of a good behavior (modest), given to hospitality and apt to teach (2 Tim. 2:24). ("Apt to teach" has also been translated "ready to learn.") Among the other qualifications we point out especially the one "not greedy of filthy lucre," that is, he must not be a lover of money. This is mentioned several times in the epistles to Timothy and to Titus. And Peter in exhorting the elders also writes, "Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2). The Holy Spirit anticipated the corruption of church office and ministry through the love of money. He is also to rule well his own house and have his children in subjection, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"

We see all these are moral qualifications. They are to be men of mature age, who had shown in the government of their own household their fitness for the more blessed work of having oversight in a local assembly. A new convert may begin to give a testimony for the gospel as soon as he has believed, but fitness for oversight, to be an elder, required time and a practical walk in the truth. Therefore Paul writes, "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation of the devil." How often this has been true, that in some assembly a young convert with natural gifts was made much of, and then became lifted up and aspired, like Diotrephes (3 John) to have the preeminence.

Verses 8-13

"Deacon" means "a servant," one who ministers. The seven chosen in Acts 6 to serve tables were deacons. They were to be occupied with the external affairs of a local church, to serve the bodily need. Without entering into the different qualifications, which need hardly any further comment, we point out only one. "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers--sober, faithful in all things." As the deacons had their work in external things, in connection with the family

and family life of a local church, there was danger of their wives making mischief and becoming busybodies and tale-bearers; hence the instruction to the wives of the deacons. Nothing was said to the wives of the overseers; theirs was a different sphere.

Verses 14-16

Paul expected to come shortly to be with Timothy, from which we gather that he was not then a prisoner. In the words which follow we have a threefold mention of the church on earth.

1. It is the Home of God. God dwells in it on earth. Its leading characteristic on earth must be holiness. "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever" (Ps. 93:5). All Paul had written, his solemn charge concerning sound doctrine, a good conscience, prayer for all men, about overseers and deacons, was to teach Timothy and to teach us also, how to behave in the house of God, as on earth. God dwells in the church on earth. And He who dwelt among Israel and said, "I am holy, be ye also holy," makes the same demand of the house in which He dwells now.
2. The second name is the Church of the living God. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the living God, dwells in the church. She is the habitation of God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:22). She is therefore set apart for Himself, not of the world, as He, who is the blessed Head of the body, is not of the world.
3. The pillar and support of the truth. While our Lord was on earth He said, "I am the truth." He is so still; and His Word is the truth. The church is here to maintain this truth on earth, to contend earnestly for the faith delivered unto the saints. She is the witness for Christ on earth, Christ who is hidden now with God. Therefore the true Church is the pillar of the truth, in proclaiming it. Woe! to the men who meddle with the truth of God, and by their wicked criticism try to undermine the support of the pillar and the house of God. God shall destroy them for their evil work (1 Cor. 3:17). When the Church leaves the earth, then the truth will be abandoned, and complete apostasy has come. As long as the true Church (though it only may be a feeble remnant) the pillar and support of the truth, is on the earth, the complete apostasy cannot come (2 Thess. 2). From all this we learn that the presence of the living God and the maintenance of the truth are the foremost characteristics of the house of God.

Verse 16 brings before us the mystery of godliness (piety). It is that which the church on earth is to witness to. This mystery is the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 2). The first fact of the mystery is, "God was manifested in the flesh." (The Revised Version on account of textual criticism changed this to "He who hath been manifested in the flesh." Some would therefore rule out this text as one which speaks of the deity of our Lord. But even if it were positive that the correct reading is "He" instead of "God," it does not affect the argument. The "He" could not be any one else but the Son of God.) It is the incarnation. God Himself has been manifested in the form of man. The Creator God came to be the Saviour God. He appeared on earth as man. "Justified in the Spirit." Upon Him, the second Man, the Spirit of God descended. He lived the holy life on earth. The power of the Holy Spirit was manifested throughout His life on earth. And having offered Himself by the eternal Spirit without spot to God, the power of the Holy Spirit marked Him out as Son of God in resurrection. "Declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). His resurrection, by God the Father and through the operation of His Spirit (Rom. 8:11) justified Him as Son of God.

"Seen of angels." Not only did man see Him as John testifies, "that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life"--but angels saw Him. The host of angels witnessed His entrance into the world, surrounded Him and were present with Him in His life on earth. He was seen of angels in His resurrection, and seen of angels when He ascended on high to take His place at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, becoming the head over all things, the head of the Church. And to these heavenly principalities and powers there is now made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10). "Preached unto the Gentiles." The good news is preached in the whole world. Jews and Gentiles hear the message, and especially is He preached to the Gentiles. "Believed on in the world." As a result of the preaching, the hearing of the Word of God, He is believed on, and those who believe on Him constitute the house, the Church of the living God. "Received up in glory." He ascended to the glory from which he had descended. He glorified God on earth, and now, as the Risen One, God has glorified Him in heaven. And some day all who believed on Him in the world will also be received up in glory, to be with Him where He is. And all this is the truth which is to be maintained and preached in the house of God.

IV. CONCERNING THE LATTER-DAY APOSTASY

CHAPTER 4

1. What the Spirit has predicted (4:1-5)
2. The remedies against apostasy (4:6-16)

Verses 1-5

The mystery of godliness having been mentioned, the apostle speaks of Satan's power in opposition to the faith and truth of God (the mystery of godliness here, and the mystery of iniquity in 2 Thessalonians). "But the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons." It is a prophetic warning. Paul had given a similar warning to the Ephesian elders gathered at Miletus a number of years before, and elsewhere in the New Testament the Holy Spirit gives the same warning concerning an apostasy in the future days. Inasmuch as the faith is the foundation upon which everything rests, Satan aims to destroy this first, knowing if faith is given up and the truth of God denied, that he, the master-mind, can easily introduce his seducing spirits and substitute for the faith, demon doctrines.

All this is fully evidenced in our days, the latter times which are the perilous times (2 Tim. 3:1). The mystery of godliness, the doctrine of Christ, is being increasingly denied and rejected by seducing spirits, active in systems like the destructive criticism, Unitarianism, the New Theology and others. And in "Christian Science," Spiritism, Mormonism and other "cults" we find the very doctrines of demons. Anyone who rejects the mystery of godliness, no matter what else he may put in its place, has departed from the faith and becomes the prey of seducing spirits who lead him on to destruction and eternal ruin. And these seducers and seducing spirits, Satan's ministers, appear as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15). They feign sanctity, "speaking lies in hypocrisy." They teach the most deadly error under the cloak of piety, devotion and of deeper religious knowledge. Evil and error put on the form of truth and godliness. All this fits the different systems which claim to be "Christian," but which are "anti-Christian." They have seared, that is branded, consciences; claiming to lead others into righteousness and holiness while their consciences are defiled.

Two things are especially mentioned, "forbidding to marry" and "commanding to abstain from meats." (The Roman Catholic Church forbids her priests to marry, and also commands her members to abstain from certain meats on certain days.) This austere asceticism was a pretension to superior piety. Men began to teach these heresies even in apostolic days. They developed later into systems like Gnosticism; and today we see the same principles advocated in theosophical and other occult movements. They forbid what God has established in creation, for marriage is an institution which God has sanctified, and to use that which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by them which believe and know the truth. They claimed that their superior holy character would not be consistent with marriage and eating meats.

"Forsaking the real and practical holiness of communion with God, and of His commandments by Christ, they created a false sanctity for themselves, which denied that which God had ordained from the beginning, and thus exalted themselves against the authority of Him who had ordained it, as though He was an imperfect or perhaps evil being" (Synopsis of the Bible).

The Spirit of God through Paul assures us that any creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If that which God has made for the creature for its use is refused and rejected, it is sin. But all that the Creator has provided must be received from Him with thanksgiving, and the acknowledgment of a dependence upon Him. Prayer is needed for that, to sanctify to our use what He has so graciously given.

Verses 6-13

The rest of the chapter consists of exhortations in view of the threatening apostasy, how these evils may be combated and remedied. If Timothy put the saints of God in remembrance of these things, he would be a good minister (deacon) of Jesus

Christ, and be continually nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine. To remember the apostolic instructions and to maintain by them faith and good doctrine effectually counteracts error and the doctrines of demons. Then profane and old wives' fables must be avoided and refused, We have an all-sufficient revelation of God; speculative things of the human mind intruding into things unseen (Col. 2:18), following the theories, imaginations and traditions of men, only lead away from godliness, and lead from foolish questionings into that which is profane. (A believer has no business to investigate Spiritism, Theosophy, or occupy his mind with things not made known in the Word of God. We must avoid these things, refuse to have anything to do with them, else we step upon the territory of the enemy, and lay ourselves open to his attacks.)

The true exercise must be unto godliness, pious, consecrated living; and the true exercise is self-judgment, maintaining a good conscience and communion with God. Bodily exercise by erratic living, abstaining from meats and other things, profits but little. It is far different with true godliness. It is profitable for everything, both in this life and that to come. This is another faithful word and worthy of all acceptation (1:15). And for this doctrine the apostle labored and suffered reproach; but he had faith in the living God, who as Saviour-God, by His power and providence, sustains all men. He is the preserver of all men, but especially of those who believe. As Creator He is the preserver and benefactor of all men; but for those who believe He is much more than that. In this God as Creator and Saviour, preserver and keeper, the believer trusts. "These things command and teach." It is another remedy against the seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. None should despise his youth. Timothy was very young when he joined Paul (Acts 16:1-3), and now after some eleven years he was still youthful, especially in comparison with Paul the aged. He urges him to be in his life and walk a model of the believers--in word, in conduct, in faith and in purity.

These are the evidences of true piety and holding sound doctrine. Then as to himself and his service, till Paul came, he was to give himself to reading, which of course must mean the Holy Scriptures, to exhortation and to teaching. He was not to neglect the gift that had been bestowed upon him. In his case this gift was a direct bestowal of prophecy, the voice of the Spirit making it known (as in Acts 13:1). The laying on of hands by the elders had not communicated the gift. It was the outward expression of fellowship with the gift imparted unto Timothy. This gift had to be used and developed like every other gift of the Spirit. A gift may be idle and neglected, but if rightly used it will grow and be used in blessing. To do all this and meditate in these things, be whole-hearted in them, progressing constantly in godliness, is a safeguard against all error. "Take heed to thyself and the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Some have perverted this instruction as if it meant the salvation of the soul, for eternal salvation. It has nothing to do with eternal life and salvation. This the believer has in Christ through grace. "Save" has here the same meaning as in Philippians, a present salvation from the dangers in the way, being saved from error.

V. INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS

CHAPTER 5

1. Concerning widows (5:1-16)
2. Concerning elders (5:17-21)
3. Responsibility and personal instructions (5:22-25)

Verses 1-16

It is not necessary to follow all these instructions in detail and explain their meaning. An elder was not to be rebuked sharply, but to be entreated as a father, and younger men as brethren. Then he speaks of widows. Those who are widows indeed are to be held in honor. Piety was to be shown at home, if they had children. "She that is a widow indeed, and desolate (left alone) trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers day and night." Happy privilege of such, with special claims upon the Saviour-God. Thus exercising trust in God and in His promises, her special ministry is the ministry of prayer and intercession (Luke 2:36-37). God hath chosen that which is weak, widows, those who are on sick-beds, "Shut-ins," to use especially in the ministry of intercession.

The Day of Christ will reveal the great things which were accomplished in secret prayer. But if other widows lived in pleasure, in self-indulgence then she is dead while she liveth, that is, dead to the spiritual things. For such there could be no honor, but dishonor. And if anyone did not provide for his own house, he denied the faith and was worse than an infidel, for an unbeliever generally recognizes this duty. Then we have divinely given regulations as to those who should be given relief by the church, and those who should be refused. Practical godliness is thus to be maintained in the house of God, and manifested in every way so as "to give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Verses 17-21

Elders that ruled well were counted worthy of double honor, and especially those who had the gift of expounding the word of God, and teaching the truth, "who labor in the Word and teaching." And as elsewhere in his former epistles, the apostle here once more states the responsibility that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." The ox that treadeth out the corn is not to be muzzled. The Creator-God careth for the oxen, and made a merciful provision for them in His law. How much more then should those be ministered to in temporal things that labored in the Word, and with much self sacrifice taught the truth. But the laborer must remain in dependence on the Saviour-God, for he is God's laborer. (The almost universal custom of promising a laborer in the Word, an evangelist, pastor and teacher a salary, and the laborer depending on his bargain, is nowhere sanctioned by the Word of God. It is contrary to faith which should mark the path of the servant of Christ.) Instruction is given how an elder is to be treated if charged with wrong. Before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels (from which we learn that angels are silent onlookers in all these things--1 Cor. 11:10), Paul charges Timothy to observe these things, to be firm in them, without showing partiality.

Verses 22-25

He was not to lay on hands hastily on any man, the outward sign of fellowship, to acknowledge them as co-laborers and become identified with them. It might result in becoming partakers of other men's sins. How little conscience there is today in this matter! How often believers are in fellowship with those who are not teaching the truth. "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." A small matter, yet not too small for the Holy Spirit. No doubt Timothy had a very scrupulous conscience, but the apostle in this God-inspired letter, sets aside his scruples and tells him to use a little wine. Much criticism has been made of this divinely given instruction. Extreme faith-healers, who reject all means in a way that is not faith, but presumption, and on the other hand extreme prohibitionists, have made the astounding statement that Paul made a mistake when he wrote these words. But if Paul made a mistake here who can convince us that he did not make a mistake when he wrote the eighth chapter of Romans? Others state that it was not wine, but "grape juice." We give the helpful comment of another:

"Timothy's habitual temperance is here seen: weak in body, the apostle recommends him to use his liberty by taking a little wine--a pleasing instance of grace. We have here a proof of the habits of this faithful servant. The Spirit shows us how carefully he kept himself from exciting or satisfying his passions in the least thing (at the same time that there is perfect liberty to use everything that is good when there is a true reason for it), and also the apostle's tender interest in his fellow-laborer in the gospel. It is a little parenthesis attached to the expression, 'be not a partaker of other men's sins,' but it has great beauty. This affectionate watchfulness became the apostle; he desired holiness in his representative, but he well knew how to respect Timothy, and to maintain the decorum which he had enjoined, and to exhibit his heartfelt tenderness" (Synopsis of the Bible).

"Some men's sins," the apostle continues, "are open beforehand, going before to judgment"--they are manifested in the present life. "And some men they follow after"--unknown now, hidden away, but to be made manifest at the judgment seat of Christ.

CHAPTER 6

1. Concerning servants (6:1-2)
2. Concerning those who oppose (6:3-5)
3. Concerning contentment and temptation (6:6-10)

4. The final exhortations (6:11-21)

Verses 1-2

Servants (slaves) who had pagan masters were to count them worthy of all honor, and thus bear a good testimony for the truth, that the Name of God and the teaching be not blasphemed. Theirs was a blessed opportunity to show forth the excellencies of Him whom they served, and who once served in obedience and submission on earth. If their masters were believers, and master and slave worshipped together, there was danger that a slave might forget his place and become insolent. The apostolic exhortation guards against this.

Verses 3-5

These things Timothy was to teach and exhort. If anyone opposed these instructions, if he did not give his consent to wholesome words, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the teaching which is according to godliness, he showed thereby that he knew not the real power of godliness. He gives evidence of pride of heart, that he is destitute of the truth, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strife of words. And from such a state of soul cometh as a result envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of depraved minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. This is a good description of a good portion of professing Christendom.

Verses 6-10

While the class of people who have the form of godliness and deny its power, make piety a means of gain in earthly things, which is condemned, the apostle speaks of true piety, or as it is called in the Authorized Version, godliness, with contentment as a great gain. True piety, in walking with God, having a good conscience, gives contentment, no matter what earthly circumstances are. A believer who seeks the things above should no longer cling to earthly things, knowing that we brought nothing into the world nor carry anything out. If the eternal things, that promised glory, are ever real before the soul, then each will be content with having the necessary things, food and raiment. And how very true are the words which follow, as not a few have found out. "But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is the root of every evil; which, while some coveted after, they have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." Money itself is not evil, but the love of it is the fearful thing. No further comment is needed on these words. Examples of this evil are all about us in the professing church, and "lovers of money" and "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" are constantly increasing. Surely they heap treasure together for the last days. Weeping and wailing will follow (James 5:3).

Verses 11-21

The man of God is to flee these things. If he does not it will rob him of his good conscience, his true piety and contentment. The thing to be coveted for the child of God, who belongs to the house of God, is not money, but righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. To covet this is to be the daily business of a Christian. While the believer has to turn his back upon the world and its filthy lucre, he is also to fight the good fight of the faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. This life is, as we have seen from the Gospel of John, a personal possession. It does therefore not mean the obtaining of eternal life; that is the gift of God. It must be laid hold on in faith, entered into and enjoyed. Many possess eternal life, but a practical laying hold on all that it implies and that is connected with it, is what they need. Timothy, in this respect, had confessed a good confession before many witnesses. Once more the charge before God, the Creator-God, who preserveth all things, and before Christ Jesus, the great and faithful Witness, to keep all spotless and irreproachable until His appearing.

The Lord Jesus is coming again. Note what is said of that coming, "which (His appearing) in its own time the blessed and only Ruler shall show, the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship; who only has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see; to whom be honor and eternal might. Amen" (J.N. Darby's translation). Those who deny the immortality of the human soul and who teach that man has no longer endless being, but dies like the beast, use the words that God "only has immortality" as their star-text, to affirm their

error. God only hath immortality in Himself; it is His essential possession. He is the Source of it. The statement does not teach that man has not immortality, but that God only hath immortality in His Being; man has received it from Him.

We but quote the final exhortations. "Charge those that are rich in this present age not to be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God (the Creator and Preserver of all) who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." And then another warning against the errors: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed unto thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and opposition of science falsely so-called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (Gnosticism - and its Satanic offspring, "Christian Science" so-called).

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelin

Introduction

This is the last Epistle the Apostle Paul wrote. He was once more imprisoned in Rome, and shortly before his martyrdom he wrote this second letter to Timothy. His movements between his first and second imprisonment may be traced as follows: After having written his first Epistle to Timothy he returned to Ephesus, as he intended, by way of Troas. Then he left the books he mentions (4:13) with Carpus. From Ephesus he went to Crete, and after his return wrote the Epistle to Titus. Next he went by Miletus to Corinth (4:20), and from there to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12) and then on to Rome. If he visited Spain, as tradition claims, it must have been immediately after his release.

Timothy was evidently still in Ephesus, obedient to the charge of the Apostle delivered to him in the first Epistle. That Timothy must have been in Ephesus when he received this second letter may be learned from the persons mentioned in this Epistle. Onesiphorus is mentioned in chapter 1: 16-18 as having sought out the apostle in Rome, and also having ministered to him at Ephesus. In chapter 4:19 Paul sends greetings to the household of Onesiphorus, and they lived in Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila are also saluted, and they lived generally in that city. Hymenaeus is stigmatized as a teacher of false doctrine (2:17). There can be no doubt that he is the same person mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20. And so is Alexander the coppersmith another evil teacher whose residence was also in that city.

The Object of the Epistle

The Apostle knew that the martyr's death was soon to be his lot. He has a great and deep desire to see his beloved Timothy once more. He therefore wrote him to that effect, "greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (1:4). "Do thy diligence and come before winter" (4:9, 11, 21). Being uncertain how it might be with himself, whether he should live or be offered up before his arrival, he wrote this letter with his final warnings, exhortations and instructions.

The Contrast

There is a marked difference between this second Epistle and the first. In the first Epistle the house of God, the Church, is seen in order, and the fullest instructions are given how this order in all godliness is to be maintained. The house as such is no longer mentioned in the second Epistle, though we read of "a great house" in which are vessels to honor and some to dishonor; the believer is urged to purge himself from the vessels of dishonor. The professing church is foreshadowed as becoming now a great house; as the little mustard seed became a big tree, sheltering in its branches the fowls under heaven. And this great house no longer manifests the order as laid down in the first Epistle. It has become dilapidated and is in disorder. What has happened in the history of the Church is foreseen in this Epistle, in fact the beginning of it was even then noticeable when Paul wrote this last Epistle. Paul had to see before his departure the beginning of the ruin of that which as a master workman he had been used to build, and over which he watched so faithfully. He had labored more than all the other apostles, and now he had to be a witness of the decline of that which he had loved so much; departure from the faith he had preached, and with it corruption set in. The power of God had been at work and he was the channel of that power, but man fails in it.

Because the professing church, the house of God, is anticipated in its failure and disorder, not a word is said of elders and deacons. Nor is there a promise made, nor instruction given, about a recovery from these conditions. They continue to the end of the age. It is true revivals, partial recoveries there have been, but only to show that man fails again after each renewed action of the Holy Spirit. It goes from bad to worse in the professing church, till the hour strikes when the Lord

takes His faithful remnant, the true Church, out of the great house (1 Thess. 4:13-18). What happens then to the great Babylon-house is written in Revelation 18:2. The house completely abandoned by the restraining Spirit becomes "the habitation of demons and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Paul before his departure is alone. It is a mournful record--"all they in Asia are turned away from me"; "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present age"; "only Luke is with me." It also foreshadows the position of the individual believer in the midst of disorder and confusion. The sure foundation of the Lord abides forever, and as we shall learn from our brief annotations, the individual believer under these conditions is to be faithful and maintain the true testimony for the Lord.

The Division of Second Timothy

The opening chapter contains the loving greeting of the apostle, and exhortations to faithfulness, especially to hold fast the form of sound words which Timothy had heard from Paul. Then follow other exhortations to be strong, to endure hardness, to strive lawfully, to labor, to consider and to remember. It is the conflict which the true servant has in the world, in which he is to be as a good soldier of Jesus. This is followed by a description of the departure from the faith, and the path the believer is to follow. In the third chapter the last days are prominently brought into view by the Spirit of God, and all that these days mean in the manifestation of evil. The fourth chapter contains the final words of the apostle; faithful to the end, and the Lord's faithfulness to him.

I. PAUL'S PERSONAL WORD TO TIMOTHY (1)

II. FAITH'S CONFLICT AND THE BELIEVER'S PATH (2)

III. THE LAST DAYS AND THEIR PERILS (3)

IV. THE LAST WORDS OF THE APOSTLE (4)

Analysis and Annotations

I. PAUL'S PERSONAL WORD TO TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1

1. Paul's affectionate words and confidence (1:1-5)
2. Difficulties and assurance (1:6-12)
3. Holding the form of sound words (1:13-14)
4. Turning away and faithfulness in contrast (1:15-18)

Verses 1-5

Paul speaks in this last Epistle as an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." It is a blessed word and shows how the prisoner in Rome, facing now the martyr's death, had full assurance that all was well. He knew that he was in the hands of God. The promise of life in Christ Jesus was his portion; he possessed that life in Him who ever liveth. Again he addressed Timothy as his beloved son (1 Tim. 1:2) with the greeting of grace, from which all blessings flow, mercy, so constantly needed by all His own, and peace, which his people know and enjoy, who look to Him alone for grace and mercy. The apostle speaks of the past; he had served God, so had his forefathers, with a pure conscience (Acts 23:1); they had been pious, God-fearing Jews.

This also had been the case with Timothy. There was unfeigned faith in him, which dwelt first in his grandmother, Lois,

and in his mother, Eunice. Both Lois, the grandmother, and his own mother, who had a Greek for a husband (Acts 16:1) had trained the child Timothy in the Holy Scriptures (the Old Testament) and he had known them from the earliest childhood (3:15). Therefore when the gospel of Christ was presented to them this unfeigned faith laid hold upon it at once. It was good ground which had been prepared to receive the gospel-seed. Thus it should be in the Christian household. The promise is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house." (Acts 16:31). Unfeigned faith will be produced in the young by instructing them out of the Word of God, for "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Without ceasing Paul remembered Timothy in his prayers night and day. He remembered his tears, occasioned no doubt by the second imprisonment. How he desired to see his beloved son to be filled with joy!

Verses 6-12

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up (stir up in a "flame" or "rekindle") the gift of God, which is in thee by the laying on of my hands." God had used Paul as the instrument in bestowing a gift upon Timothy. This gift needed rekindling. The danger of decline, which began even then to be manifested, is evident by this exhortation. The rekindling of a gift needs constant use of the Word of God and fellowship with the Lord, as well as a prayerful exercise of the gift itself. And the Spirit given of God to minister is not a spirit of fear, or cowardice, fearing men and conditions, but a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Therefore he was not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, which men began to reject, nor of him, who was now the prisoner of the Lord. It was Timothy's blessed calling and privilege to be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. He was not to shrink from the reproach and difficulties which then set in, but to endure it all, enabled by His gracious power.

The gospel may be rejected and despised, so that the enemy seemingly is victorious, but finally the Lord and His truth will have the complete victory. The believer knows this amidst all present difficulties and discouragements, for God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." (This refers to the first promise in Genesis 3:15, the promise of life, salvation and final victory.) "Before the world began" does not mean eternity, but the time before the dispensations, "the age-times," began. And all is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The full accomplishment and victory comes when He who abolished death by His death on the cross, and triumphant resurrection, comes again. Paul was the herald of this gospel to all men, to Jews and Gentiles. It was for this he suffered, and he was not ashamed. He knew all he passed through, all reproach, all afflictions, would not leave him ashamed. He knew the Lord and His power. "For I know whom I believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

"The apostle does not say 'in what I have believed,' but 'whom,' an important difference, which pleases us (as to our confidence) in connection with the person of Christ Himself. The apostle had spoken of the truth, but truth is allied to the person of Christ. He is the truth; and in Him truth has life, has power, is linked with the love which applies it, which maintains it in the heart and the heart by it. 'I know,' says the apostle, 'whom I have believed,' He had committed his happiness to Christ. In Him was that life in which the apostle participated; in Him, the power that sustained it, and that preserved in heaven the inheritance of glory which was his portion where this life was developed" (J.N. Darby).

Verses 13-14. Next he exhorts Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words. "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." This is one of the most important exhortations of this Epistle, and of special meaning for all believers who, in these days of departure from the truth, contend earnestly for the faith delivered once for all unto the saints. The expression "the form of sound words" is a strong argument for verbal inspiration. The truth of God is conveyed in the very words of God, and therefore the form in which the truth of God is made known is to be maintained. It is all to be held fast in faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. It does not mean a certain creed constructed by man, but the whole truth of God as revealed by Him. And whatever good thing is committed unto the believer, in the form of a gift as a member of the body of Christ, must be kept by the energy and power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the believer. What we have received, the knowledge of the form of sound words and the gift imparted, must be used. "in proportion as we do not care to communicate to others the 'sound words' which we have received, we shall find their power over our own souls diminish and their sweetness for us also."

Apostasy starts with the giving up of the form of sound words. Critics and other deniers of inspiration speak of the

spiritual meaning of the words of the Bible, and, that the Bible contains the Word of God, instead of is the Word of God. And that is the starting point of the ever increasing departure from the truth of God in our days, which will soon culminate in the predicted complete apostasy.

Verses 15-18

All in Asia (the province) had heard the Gospel in years gone by from the lips of the apostle. And now the great man of God had to write mournfully: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." It would be wrong to conclude from this that they had turned their backs completely upon Christianity and abandoned the profession of it. Such was not the case. Their faith had become weak and they had withdrawn from the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he had become a despised prisoner, and with this act they showed likewise that they were departing from the great and blessed doctrines the Apostle had preached unto them. Perhaps some of those in Asia had visited Rome and had repudiated Paul the prisoner. It was an evidence of the spiritual decline which was setting in.

But there was a notable exception. Onesiphorus had also visited Rome and had diligently sought him and found him finally. There were many thousands of prisoners in Roman dungeons, and we may well imagine how day after day Onesiphorus sought for his beloved brother, going from dungeon to dungeon till he had located Paul. What a meeting that must have been! He had ministered to Paul in Ephesus, which was well known to Timothy, and now he was not ashamed to minister unto the prisoner of the Lord. He prays therefore for his house and that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. The reward for his faithfulness to Paul will be mercy, as everything else is mercy in the believer's life.

(Strange it is that the prayer of the Apostle for the house of Onesiphorus is used as an authority to pray for the dead. The assumption that Onesiphorus had died is incorrect.)

II. FAITH'S CONFLICT AND THE BELIEVER'S PATH

CHAPTER 2

1. The apostle's charge (2:1-2)
2. As soldier and husbandman (2:3-7)
3. Identification with Christ (2:8-13)
4. Exhortation and warning (2:14-18)
5. The great House (2:19-22)
6. The believer's path (verses 23-26)

Verses 1-2

First we find a charge of the apostle to his spiritual son Timothy. The blessed servant of the Lord knew that he was soon to depart, and therefore he charges Timothy to commit the great truths concerning the Gospel, which he had heard from the lips of the apostle in the presence of many witnesses, to faithful men, who are able to teach others. To the apostle it had been given to complete the Word of God (Col. 1:25). No new revelation is promised through Timothy, but he is charged to communicate the revealed truth to others, who would be chosen by the Lord, as His gifts to the Church, to propagate His truth. This is the only true apostolic succession, not through the church as an organization, nor through certain men who claim ecclesiastical authority, but through those who hold the form of sound words and who minister it to others in the energy of the Spirit of God. Timothy needed for this the strength of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And so does every servant of Christ.

Verses 3-7

Here the qualities that Timothy ought to possess in order to carry on the work are given by the apostle. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, warring a spiritual warfare, he must suffer hardships and many privations. He must beware not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. The soldier's calling is to please him who has called him, and all else, comforts and self-indulgence must be sacrificed. The soldier does this to obtain a corruptible crown, how much more then should the soldier of Jesus Christ do this to gain an incorruptible crown!

The Christian is also a laborer, a husbandman. He must labor first in order to enjoy fully the fruit of his labor. And that requires patience. He urges Timothy to consider what he tells him, with the assurance that the Lord would give him understanding in all things. These are the practical conditions for all who are engaging in service--enduring hardship, self-denial, unentangled, separated from the world and its ways, fighting lawfully and laboring first to be partaker of the fruits.

Verses 8-13

In connection with this he was to remember "that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from among the dead" according to the gospel, which he calls "my gospel"--"wherein I suffer as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound." Christ suffered, and though He is of the seed of David and has the promises of David's throne, yet it is not yet His; He waits patiently for it upon the Father's throne. In the meantime He, raised from among the dead (the seal upon His blessed work), has given His gospel of grace and glory to be preached. And suffering is connected with this (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24).

"The afflictions found in the path of service in the gospel assume here a high and peculiar character in the mind of the suffering and blessed apostle. It is participation in the sufferings of Christ, and, in the case of Paul, to a very remarkable degree. The expressions he uses are such as might be employed in speaking of Christ Himself as regards His love. As to the propitiation, naturally no other could take part in that: but in devotedness, and in suffering for love and for righteousness, we have the privilege of suffering with Him. And here what part had the apostle with these sufferings? 'I endure,' He says, 'all things for the elect's sake.' This is truly what the Lord did. The apostle trod closely on His footsteps, and with the same purpose of love--'that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory,' Here of course the apostle has to add, 'which is in Christ Jesus'; still, the language is marvellous in the lips of any other person than the Lord Himself For it is what Christ did."

The servant is identified with his Lord and called upon to go in the same path. "It is a faithful saying, for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." While this is true positionally of all believers, all have died in Christ and live in Him, the meaning here is the practical manifestation of it in self-denial and suffering with Him. If we suffer and endure we shall also reign with Him. And if any deny Him He will also deny them before His judgment seat (Matt. 10:33). These are solemn words little heeded in our days of laxity and declension. "If we are unfaithful, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself," that is, His own nature. "The One we serve must of necessity be served according to the reality of what He is. The Righteous One must be served in righteousness; the Holy One, in holiness; the One who is not of the world, by those who seek no place in the world. We cannot make Christ other than He is, and we cannot make the world other than it is" (Numerical Bible).

Verses 14-18

These things he was to remember. And if they are remembered they will bring deliverance from the strife about words, vain and unessential disputations in which there is no profit, which only subvert the hearers. It is through disputes about words, and speculations, that Satan brings in his most subtle deceptions. The true way is to strive diligently to show oneself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, "rightly dividing the Word of truth." What a havoc has been wrought by a wrong dividing of the Word of truth! Law and grace have been jumbled together, Israel robbed of her promises, and the church impoverished on account of it. The Word of God and the truth of God have suffered most from the hands of such unskilled workmen, who, not dividing the Word of truth rightly, have produced confusion worse confounded. The sad division of Christendom, a carnally minded, professing church, is the fruit of it, and much else. The whole truth of God has been obscured, and unbelief fostered by it. To insist upon "rightly dividing the Word of truth" and to practice it both in teaching and living is a most essential requirement of the true workman.

Profane and vain babblings are to be avoided, for they only produce ungodliness. Hymenaeus and Philetus, who held that the resurrection had taken place already and thereby overthrew the faith of some, were examples of it. How true it is that error is like a gangrene, spreading vileness and corruption everywhere.

Verses 19-22

But in the midst of the declension and perversion of the truth of God, as it began in apostolic days, and is now more fully developed in our own times, there is the foundation of God, which stands firm and unmovable. Christ is the foundation of faith, and of His church. There is a double seal. "The Lord knoweth them that are His"--this is the divine side. This statement is given for the comfort of His own, and it is a most precious comfort, "the Lord knoweth them that are His." But this comforting assurance must lead us into communion with Himself. If He knoweth us as His own, we also know Him and delight ourselves in His fellowship. And so we also know in the days of decline and departure from the truth, that the Lord knows and keeps those who belong to Him. But there is also another side, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This is the solemn responsibility of every one who nameth that blessed Name, which is above every name. This is the true evidence that we walk in real fellowship with Him, that He knows us and we know Him.

The great house of which Paul speaks is Christendom. It contains vessels of gold and silver, and vessels of wood and earth, some to honor and some to dishonor. Here we have the two classes found in the professing church, those who are really the Lord's, known of Him, who know Him, who walk in His fellowship and witness to it by departing from iniquity; and the other class, which merely profess His name, who have the outward form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; more fully described in chapter 3:1-5. If the true believer is to be a vessel fit for the Master's use he must purge himself individually from such. This is demanded again by the apostle when in the above passage, describing the moral character of these vessels to dishonor, vessels of wood and earth, he writes, "from such turn away." This is the solemn responsibility of every true believer; he is not to be in fellowship with such, and when obedient to this call the believer becomes a sanctified vessel, a vessel set apart, separated, and then as such a fit vessel for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work.

The whole of that which calls itself "Christian" is looked at here as a great house. The Christian is of it outwardly, in spite of himself, for he calls himself a Christian, and the great house is all that calls itself Christian. But he cleanses himself personally from every vessel which is not to the Lord's honor. This is the rule of Christian faithfulness; and thus personally cleansed from fellowship with evil, he shall be a vessel unto honor fit for the Master's use. Whatsoever is contrary to the honor of Christ, in those who bear His Name, is that from which he is to separate himself.

By purging himself from all those who are unto dishonor, the servant of God shall be unto honor, sanctified and prepared for every good work. For this separation from evil is not merely negative; it is the effect of the realization of the word of God in the heart. I then understand what the holiness of God is, His rights over my heart, the incompatibility of His nature with evil. I feel that I dwell in Him and He in me; that Christ must be honored at all costs; that that which is like Him alone honors Him; that His nature and His rights over me are the only rule of my life. That which thus separates me unto Him, and according to what He is, separates me thereby from evil. One cannot walk with those who dishonor Him, and, at the same time, honor Him in one's own walk (Synopsis Of the Bible).

Verses 22-26

Exhortations follow pointing out the way the servant of Christ is to walk and serve as a vessel unto honor, and fit for the Master's use. He is to flee youthful lusts and follow righteousness, faith, love and peace, in true fellowship with all who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. His service, under the direction of the Lord, must be among those who are destitute of the truth and who are ensnared by the devil, though they profess to be religious. The servant of the Lord has a solemn responsibility towards such. How he is to act in this service is given in verses 24-26. And blessed are those servants who, walking in true separation, reach out for the unsaved masses of professing Christendom and labor in love in the great house.

III. THE LAST DAYS AND THEIR PERILS

CHAPTER 3

1. The characteristics of the last days (3:1-7)
2. What the last days mean for the true believer (3:8-13)
3. The need of the Word of God (3:14-17)

Verses 1-7

Little comment is needed on these words. They are a prophecy. The apostle by the Spirit of God reveals what shall come in the last days. It is a description of the moral qualities in the vast number of professing Christians of the last days, "who have the form of godliness," that is, go "to church," profess a creed of some sect, and are outwardly religious, "but deny the power thereof." Three times they are shown to be lovers. "Lovers of themselves"--they live for themselves and know nothing of self-denial, they live and walk in the flesh. "Lovers of money"--this is what the word covetous means. Greed controls their activities so that they can enjoy themselves and live luxuriantly and in pleasure. And therefore "they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

The same class is mentioned in Phil. 3, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, minding earthly things. Their end is destruction. Compare verses 1-4 with the last verses of the first chapter in Romans. There the characteristics, morally, of heathendom are given, and here the characteristics of the professing masses of nominal Christendom. There is no difference between the two, only the condemnation of the profession, the unsaved, religious element in Christendom is greater. There is no need to point out how this prophecy given by the aged apostle has come true. We live in the midst of these conditions, and are surrounded by them on all sides. Evil teachers began in apostolic days to creep into houses, winding about silently like a serpent, and captured silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. How much more true this is today.

Verses 8-13

What true believers may expect in the closing days of this age, if they walk in separation and are faithful in their testimony, is the theme of these verses. Jannes and Jambres were the Egyptian sorcerers who withstood Moses. Jewish tradition gives the information that the magicians of Ex. 7:11-22 bore these names. The Spirit of God assures us here that this is correct. Another Jewish tradition claims that they were the sons of Balaam. They worked by imitations. They produced by Satanic powers certain miracles which were imitations of God's power. Such is the case in our own days. Christian Science, Spiritism and other systems are the sphere where Satan's power of imitation is manifested. Satan also imitates in a still more subtle way the work of the Holy Spirit. All this will work on till finally (after the Church has been called away) the times are reached as prophetically described in 2 Thess. 2:3-12. And like the folly and wickedness of Jannes and Jambres were manifest, so will these deceivers and perverters of the truth be uncovered. This will be when the Lord comes.

How happy in the Lord Paul must have been that he could point to himself as an example. The grace of God had enabled him to be all he writes to his beloved son Timothy. "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me." Paul endured persecutions because he was a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ and did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If the believer is true to the Lord, if he lives in separation, the world, and especially that which is called "the religious world," with its unscriptural aims and endeavors, will not applaud him, but he will have to bear the reproach of Christ and suffer persecution. Why do so few Christians suffer persecutions? Because they have not purged themselves from the vessels unto dishonor, and are consequently yoked with unbelievers.

"But evil men and seducers (juggling impostors) shall wax worse, deceiving, and being deceived." Things morally and religiously are therefore not getting better in this age. There is no hope apart from the coming of our Lord.

Verses 14-17

The inspired Scriptures of God are the need, the supreme need of the believer in the last days. Timothy had known the sacred Scriptures (the Old Testament) from a child, and of these Scriptures Paul writes, "they are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." He exhorts him therefore, "Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been assured, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Then the assuring statement of the Holy Spirit, the author of the Scriptures, that all Scripture is inspired of God. It is well known that the revised version has dropped the "is," so that it reads "every Scripture given by inspiration of God." We do not accept this, for it opens the way to deny that parts of the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God.

"We are told we have to read as, 'Every Scripture inspired of God,' as if it distinguished such from other Scriptures side by side with them, and therefore we had to distinguish in like manner. At once the human mind is set in supremacy over the Scripture, and we become judges of it instead of its judging us. But the apostle has been already pointing out the sacred Scriptures of which he is speaking when he says 'all Scripture.' Nothing is Scripture in the sense he uses the word except that which is in the sacred Scriptures, and nothing that is in them is without that inspiration of God which makes it 'profitable for doctrine, for conviction, or instruction in righteousness'" (Numerical Bible).

How important it is to hold fast the great truth that the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore "God-breathed." All apostasy starts with the denial of this fact. The Scriptures are the permanent expression of the mind and will of God. It is not merely that the truth is given in them by inspiration, but they are inspired. They are the expression of His own thoughts. They are our only authority. Upon the constant use of them depends everything. Without adhering to the Scriptures and being obedient to them, we also would be swept along by the current of apostasy. They are the one thing profitable. Note the order: Profitable for doctrine, which we get alone from the Word of God, and which is the foundation of everything. Then follows "reproof" or conviction, and that is followed by correction and instruction for righteousness. It starts with the doctrine and leads, after conviction and correction, to righteousness. And then the man of God, obedient to the Scriptures in all things, is perfect, thoroughly finished unto every good work.

IV. THE LAST WORDS OF THE APOSTLE

CHAPTER 4

1. The last charge (4:1-5)
2. His last testimony (4:6-8)
3. The last personal messages (4:9-22)

Verses 1-5

This last chapter is a most impressive one. It is the farewell of this great man of God. joy and sorrow, confidence and love breathe in his final charge and message. "The sorrow that he might have in his soul was only for those he was leaving, and even that is almost swallowed up in the joyful consciousness of the thought with whom he was leaving them." And so he delivers one more charge, and that solemnly before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom. He is as a servant to keep the coming of the Lord, His appearing and His kingdom before his heart.

"The apostle urges this upon Timothy as what would, amid all the difficulties of the way, be his strength and assurance. It is always according to Scripture, 'yet, but a little while, and He that will come shall come, and shall not tarry.' We look back and see how long it has been, and we take this to make the distance behind us put distance into that which is before us. The apostle's way for us would be rather that we should say, 'The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.' We may, after all, go to the Lord before He comes to us, but we shall not have missed the good of having been in the meanwhile 'like unto men that wait for their Lord.' The whole character of our Christianity will be affected by our 'holding fast,' or practically losing sight of His coming, as our constant expectation" (Numerical Bible).

With the thought of the coming of the Lord before his soul, Timothy is charged to preach the Word at all times. The blessed hope gives energy to continue in the ministry of the Word. Preach the Word! The Word, all the Word of God, the gospel and dispensational truth, is needed in the days when sound doctrine is no longer endured. And how all has come to pass! As the Apostle testified even so it is today. Sound doctrine no longer endured, "after their own lusts they heap to themselves teachers, having an itching ear." They care nothing for the message of God, but have man's person in admiration (Jude). They admire the teacher, his great swelling words (Jude). And the teachers and preachers are men-pleasers. And as a result of this their ears are turned away from the truth and are turned to fables, such as evolution, higher criticism, Christian Science and other delusions. In the midst of all this departure from the truth of God, the Lord still maintains His testimony through those who keep His Word and who do not deny His Name (Rev. 3:8).

Verses 6-8

The martyr's death now looms up, and he pens the never-to-be-forgotten words of faithfulness and assurance of the crown of righteousness. "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not only to me, but also to all that love His appearing." Upon the incorrect translation of the Authorized Version "I am now ready to be offered" has been founded that strange theory that the apostle was now ready to die, and had at last the assurance that he was worthy of being a participant in the first resurrection. (See annotations on Philemon 3.) The apostle from the moment he had trusted in Christ had the fullest assurance that he belonged to Christ and was His co-heir; and so every believer knows that he is fitted for glory, not by what he does, or what he has suffered, but through grace alone. To teach that the Apostle Paul received his assurance that he would share the glory of Christ in resurrection, after, and as the result, of, his prolonged suffering, is pernicious, inasmuch as it denies all the great revelations in his Epistles concerning the standing of the believer in Christ. But he did not say he was ready; his words are, "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come." Knowing the time of his departure, in which he would have fellowship with His sufferings and be made conformable unto His death (Phil. 3:10), his heart contemplated in joyful expectation the moment when he would depart to be with Christ. In this sense he was being already offered, having his heart set upon the early departure to be with His Lord. He had fought the good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. He had been faithful in all things and resisted the attacks of the enemy.

And now he looks forward to the reward. He knew that there is laid up for him the crown of righteousness. He does not say that this crown would be bestowed upon him immediately after he left the earthly tabernacle. He will receive it from the righteous judge in that day, and that day has not yet come. At the same time "all that love His appearing" will receive the rewards. The Lord will come for His saints, as it is promised in the Word of God, and take them to Himself, and the kingdom which follows the rewards for faithful service will be enjoyed. To be in that glory with the Lord, in the Father's house is the blessed destiny of all who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are accepted in the Beloved. No service can secure that destiny. The grace of God puts it on our side. Faithful service will be rewarded in the kingdom. How great the reward that awaits the Apostle Paul in that day! May it be an incentive to all His people to labor on, to spend and be spent.

Verses 9-22

And now the last message of the apostle. How he would have loved to have his beloved Timothy at his side and look into his face once more! "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." And once more at the close of the letter he writes, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." It was the cry of deepest affection of one who was deserted by others and yet not a lonely man, for the Lord was with him. Demas, a fellow worker and with Paul in his first imprisonment (Philemon 24; Col. 4:14), perhaps a Thessalonian, had forsaken the prisoner of the Lord. It is a mournful record, "having loved the present age, and is departed unto Thessalonica." It is wrong to conclude from this that Demas ceased to be a Christian and had renounced the name of the Lord. He, with love for the present age in his soul, would avoid the cross and its shame, and therefore abandoned Paul. What became of Demas? What was his after-history? The Lord alone knows this.

And Crescens had also gone away to Galatia. We know nothing else of him. Titus went to Dalmatia. It is supposed that Titus joined Paul at Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12) and accompanied him to Rome, and then went to Dalmatia to preach the gospel there. Only Luke, the beloved physician, remained with him, and no doubt he ministered in every way to the comfort of Paul. Then Mark is mentioned. It is the same John Mark mentioned in Acts 13:5 and 15:36-41. For a time after his failure

in service Mark was unprofitable. His restoration had taken place, accomplished by the grace of God, and therefore the apostle desires to have him again at his side, "for he is profitable to me for the ministry." And this John Mark became the chosen instrument to write the gospel record which bears his name, in which the Spirit of God describes so blessedly the Servant of all, who never failed.

Tychicus he had sent to Ephesus. Winter approaching he feels the need of the cloak which he had left with Carpus in Troas. We see that he paid attention even to so small a matter, and that as to his earthly possessions he was poor. He also wants the books, but especially the parchments. He had opportunity as a prisoner to read and study. We do not know what these books and parchments were.

And then the sad record of Alexander the coppersmith. He warns Timothy against him, for he had done him much evil. It must be the same Alexander mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:20. It may be possible that this man became incited against Paul on account of having mentioned his name in the first Epistle, and that he persecuted him for it. "The Lord will reward him according to his works." This is according to God's righteousness. At the time of the apostle's first defence no one took his part, by standing by him; all forsook him. They left him alone and had not the courage to defend him. Beautiful is his prayer, "that it may not be laid to their charge."

But while all men had forsaken him, one had not forsaken His faithful servant. True to His promise, "I will not leave nor forsake thee," He had stood with Paul and strengthened him. And when he stood before the Roman authorities the Lord had given him another opportunity to proclaim the Gospel he loved so well, "that through me the preaching might be fully known, and all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

And then in simple confidence he counted on the help of the Lord to the end. "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

He sends his last greetings to his dearest friends and old companions, Prisca and Aquila and to the house of Onesiphorus. Erastus had remained in Corinth, where he was treasurer (Rom. 16:23). The Ephesian brother Trophimus (Acts 20:4; 21:29) he had left sick in Miletus. Then the final greetings and the last works of his inspired pen, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you."

"It is evident that this Epistle was written when the apostle thought his departure near at hand, and when the faith of Christians had grievously declined, which was proved by their having forsaken the apostle. His faith was sustained by grace. He did not hide from himself that all was going wrong: his heart felt it--was broken by it; he saw that it would grow worse and worse. But his own testimony stood firm; he was strong for the Lord through grace. The strength of the Lord was with him to confess Christ, and to exhort Timothy to so much the more diligent and devoted an exercise of his ministry, because the days were evil.

"This is very important. If we love the Lord, if we feel what He is to the assembly, we feel that in the latter all is in ruin. Personal courage is not weakened, for the Lord remains ever the same, faithful, and using His power for us: if not in the assembly which rejects it, it is in those who stand fast that He will exercise His power according to the individual need created by this state of things" (Synopsis of the Bible).

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelin

Introduction

Titus, to whom this Epistle is addressed, was a Greek convert of the apostle (Titus 1:4; Gal. 2:3). We have little knowledge of him. From the Epistle to the Galatians we know that he accompanied Paul and Barnabas in their journey to Jerusalem to attend the council in which the question of the relation of believing Gentiles to the law was decided (Acts 15). From the Second Epistle to the Corinthians we learn that Paul sent him to Corinth to gather the collection (2 Cor. 8:1-6) and that he discharged the duty in a zealous way. "But thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you" (2 Cor. 8:16-17). Paul also stated in the Second Corinthian Epistle that he had no rest when he did not find Titus (2 Cor. 2:13), but when he came Paul was greatly comforted. "Nevertheless God, who comforteth those who are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Cor. 7:6). The Epistle shows that he was in the island of Crete. Paul visited this island in company with Titus, leaving him there. Titus probably did not stay long in Crete, for Paul asked that he should meet him at Nicopolis (3:12). This is all that can be said on the person of Titus.

The contents of this Epistle are of the same nature as the Epistles to Timothy, though the departure from the faith so prominent in the Epistles to Timothy is less prominent in this Epistle. That the truth must be after, or according to, godliness is especially emphasized; the truth must be manifested in a godly walk.

The Division of the Epistle to Titus

The Epistle contains practical instructions. We make three divisions.

I. INSTRUCTIONS AND WARNINGS (1)

II. THINGS WHICH BECOME SOUND DOCTRINE (2)

III. IN RELATION TO THE WORLD AND FALSE TEACHERS (3)

Analysis and Annotations

I. INSTRUCTIONS AND WARNINGS

CHAPTER 1

1. The salutation (1:1-4)
2. Instructions concerning elders (1:5-9)
3. Warnings against false teachers (1:10-16)

Verses 1-4

Paul calls himself in writing to Titus "a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ," for he speaks in these introductory

words of God's elect, and their faith in Him; and the promise of eternal life, God, who cannot lie, gave before the dispensations began; and that His Word is now manifested through preaching which was committed unto him by our Saviour-God. God's elect are those who have trusted in Christ. They have personal faith in God and know His love and are in relationship with Him. But such a faith and relationship demands godliness; therefore the statement, "The acknowledgment of the truth which is after godliness." These two, truth and godliness, belong together. If the truth is given up or not held, then godliness also is given up; the truth must be manifested in godliness. As to statement on the promise of life before the ages began, see annotations on 2 Tim. 1:9.

Verses 5-9

Paul had left Titus in Crete . From Acts 2:11 we learn that the inhabitants of Crete were present on the day of Pentecost and heard Peter preach. These Cretan Jews may have brought the gospel to the island. Titus is commissioned by Paul to set the things in order which were wanting, and to appoint elders in every city. (For discussion that bishops are elders see annotations on 1 Timothy 3.) We do not find the same intimacy between him and Titus as that intimacy and confidence which existed between Paul and Timothy. He does not open his heart to him as he did to Timothy. He invests Titus with authority to appoint elders and states the qualifications the elder must possess. These qualifications are also mentioned in the First Epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Here is added that their children must be faithful and not accused of riot or of being unruly. The bishop must also be blameless as God's steward, not self-willed (headstrong), not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, no seeker of filthy lucre. What he is to be is given in verses 8 and 9. "But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word according to the doctrine taught, that he may be able to exhort with sound doctrine and to convict the gainsayers." Thus we have again that godliness and sound doctrine belong together.

Verses 10-16

He states that there were many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers especially they of the circumcision. The Judaizing teachers were at work among the Cretans. Titus must have been especially distasteful to them, for he was an uncircumcised Greek. These Cretan Jews who claimed to have accepted Christianity worked evil in the assembly. The apostle demands that their mouths must be stopped, for they subverted whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of base gain. The national traits of the Cretans are then described. One of their own prophets had said, "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons." This is a quotation from Epimenides, who lived six hundred years before Christ. The Cretans were classed with the Cappadocians and Cilicians (all beginning in the Greek with a "K") as the most evil and corrupt in the Greek world. And Paul testifies to the truth of it, "This witness is true." They must be rebuked sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith, "not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth." These Judaizing teachers were ascetics, forbidding certain things, making rules for the outward conduct. Certain things were forbidden by their ordinances and commandments; yet though they were fasting and continent, they were, because unregenerated, inwardly defiled and unbelieving. Paul brands these Judaizers in this Epistle as "defiled and unbelieving," with a confession that they know God, but in works they denied Him. He speaks of them as abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.

II. THINGS WHICH BECOME SOUND DOCTRINE

CHAPTER 2

1. Adorning the doctrine of our Saviour-God (2:1-10)
2. The grace of God and its work (2:11-15)

Verses 1-10

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." The sound doctrine or healthful teaching must be accompanied and witnessed to by the right condition of soul, a godly character. The doctrine of God our Saviour must be adorned in all things. Aged men are exhorted to be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love and in patience. Sound doctrine must of necessity produce such a character. Aged women are to be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers (1 Tim.

3:11) nor to be enslaved by too much wine. In the First Epistle to Timothy deacons are exhorted "not to be given to much wine." Here the exhortation is in the original in a stronger form, for the Cretans were known, and especially the women, for being slaves of strong drink. They are to be teachers of what is good. This is not contradicting 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12. The teaching of the aged woman is here defined. She is to teach young women to be sober, to love their husbands and their children, to be discreet, chaste, busy at home, good, obedient to their own husbands; that the Word of God may not be blasphemed. These are important instructions. They show that the Christian woman's sphere is first of all at home. The disregard of this has more than once wrecked Christian families. This is the great danger in these last days to put women into a place which does not belong to her.

Young men are also to be discreet. Titus who is charged to deliver these exhortations was himself to be a pattern of good works. His example was to confirm his word. In teaching he was to show uncorruptness. Likewise gravity, setting forth the doctrines with dignity and in all seriousness, and sincerity. (What a contrast with certain evangelists and preachers of our day, who act like clowns and make sport of sacred things; instead of teaching the young reverence, they drag down holy things!) "Sound speech that cannot be condemned"--so that those who oppose may be silenced, unable to speak anything evil of the servant of God. When the preacher or teacher does not practise what he preaches it becomes a great detriment to sound doctrine. How great a stumbling block this is!

Servants (slaves) are next exhorted to be obedient to their masters. They were not to forget their place. Though they had been saved and become children of God and heirs of God, their earthly relationship was that of slaves, and as such they were to strive to please their masters in all things, not answering them in contradiction, not purloining but showing all good fidelity, "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Chrysostom said: "The heathen do not judge of the Christian's doctrine from the doctrine, but from his actions and life." The world does the same today. And so even slaves in their low estate could bear a witness to the Saviour God by adorning His doctrine.

Verses 11-15

"For the grace of God, bringing salvation for all men, hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

This is a blessed and comprehensive statement of the gospel and Christianity. It may be looked upon as embodying all the great apostle taught in his God-revealed gospel, in a practical way. The grace of God hath appeared, and it appeared in the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him His grace is made known. His finished work is the source of it. It flows from the cross. And this grace comes to man with salvation. It brings salvation, not to a certain class of men, but it brings salvation for all men. Because all men are lost, and therefore in need of salvation, unable to save themselves; the grace of God bringing an unconditional, a perfect and eternal salvation hath appeared, offering that salvation to all. And when this salvation is accepted by faith in the Son of God and the believing sinner is saved by grace, the same grace teaches how to live and walk here below in newness of life.

Grace instructs to renounce all ungodliness and all lusts that find their gratification in this age. But grace does more than that; it supplies the power to do this. It bestows upon the believer a new nature and the Holy Spirit, and walking in the power of all this, the lusts of the flesh are not fulfilled. And renouncing ungodliness and worldly lusts, the believer, saved by grace, is to walk with grace as his guide, instructor and power. That walk as concerning ourselves is to be soberly; as to our fellowman it is to be righteously; as to God, godly. It teaches something additional. We are to await the blessed hope, "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." He who gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness,* who has purified us unto Himself a peculiar people, He is coming again. He will appear in glory, and grace has given us the blessed promise that we shall be with Him in glory, beholding His glory and sharing it also. And this blessed hope is the most powerful motive for a sober, a righteous and godly walk in this present age.

*1 With respect to the conduct of Christians towards the world, grace has banished violence, and the spirit of rebellion and resistance which agitates the heart of those who believe not, and which has its source in the self-will that strives to maintain its own rights relatively to others. The Christian has his portion, his inheritance, elsewhere; he is tranquil and submissive here, ready to do good. Even when others are violent and unjust towards him, he bears it in remembrance that

once it was no otherwise with himself. a difficult lesson, for violence and injustice stir up the heart; but the thought that it is sin, and that we also were formerly its slaves, produces patience and piety. Grace alone has made the difference, and according to that grace are we to act towards others (Synopsis of the Bible).

These things Titus was to speak, to exhort; and also to rebuke with all authority. This is still the calling of every true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. IN RELATION TO THE WORLD AND FALSE TEACHERS

CHAPTER 3

1. Instructions (3:1-8)

2. Warnings (3:9-11)

3. Directions (3:12-15)

Verses 1-8

He asks Titus to remind all believers to be subject to rulers, principalities and powers (Greek: Magistracies and authorities, Rom. 13:1), to yield obedience and to be ready for every good work. An ancient historian, Diodorus Siculus, speaks of the riotous insubordination of the Cretans. They were to speak evil of no man, nor were they to be contentious, but show all gentleness and all meekness towards all men. Our own rights must be yielded, but never the rights of God. If authorities demand what is against sound doctrine then God must be obeyed more than man. This is indicated by the exhortation "to be ready for every good work." Meekness towards all men is to characterize those who are no longer of the world, but who are still in it. Such meekness towards all, not only towards fellow-believers, but towards all men, adorns the doctrine of our Saviour-God, and is a commendation of the grace of God which offers salvation to all men.

Then follows an additional reason why Christians should be gentle and meek towards all men. "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." It is a look backward, what they were in their unregenerate condition. These are the true characteristics of man in the flesh. Here is an answer to the question, What is sin? Sin is foolishness, disobedience, deception, slavery to lusts and unsatisfying pleasures, a life of malice, envy and hatred. It is lawlessness. And such is the natural man in all ages. What was true of these Cretans nineteen hundred years ago is true today of every unregenerated person.

And then follows a "but." (See Eph. 2:13.) "But when the kindness and love to man* of our Saviour-God appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He has shed upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that having been justified by His grace, we might be heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

*"Love to man" in the Greek is "Philanthropy." Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great Lover of men, Philanthropist, as no human being could ever be.)

For such as the Cretans were, and we all are, the kindness and love of our Saviour-God appeared; and this Saviour-God is Christ Himself, He by whom and for whom all things were created. All who have believed and trusted in the kindness and love of God as manifested in Christ can testify in fullest assurance, "according to His mercy He saved us," and own it likewise that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done."

And this is accomplished by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The washing (or bath) of regeneration is the new birth. Of this our Lord spoke to Nicodemus (John 3) and also to His disciples when He washed their feet. "He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10). He spoke in these words of the fact that His disciples, except Judas, were born again, and therefore they were clean every whit. The washing has nothing whatever to do with water-baptism; water-baptism cannot save nor help in

the salvation of a sinner, nor produce regeneration. What is the renewing of the Holy Spirit? It is distinct from regeneration. The Holy Spirit is the active agent in the new birth; imparts the new nature and then indwells the believer, and as such He does His blessed work by renewing the inward man day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). He is shed upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and gives power to all who walk in the Spirit. On the fact that the word "regeneration" is found only once more in the New Testament (Matt. 19:28) the late F.W. Grant made the following interesting comment in connection with this passage.

"The Lord promises to the twelve that 'in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His kingdom,' they also shall 'sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' 'The regeneration' is in this passage the millennial state; but thus we may see already the difference between it and the idea of new birth, whatever the connection may be between these. The millennial regeneration is not a new life infused into the world, but it is a new state of things brought about by the new government over it. Thus, the Lord speaks of the throne of the Son of man and of thrones for His disciples. The throne of the world in the hands of the Perfect Ruler is, in fact, what brings about the regeneration. Righteousness now reigns. In the new earth it will dwell; but in the millennium there is yet neither the full reality; nor, therefore, the full permanence of deliverance from evil. Righteousness reigns, and evil is not suffered any more, but the full blessing waits to be manifested in that which is eternal and not millennial. The subjugation of evil, Christ's foes put under His feet, goes on through the millennium, in different stages, towards completeness. It is the preparation for eternity, but not the eternal state itself.

"it is plain, therefore, that there is a parallel between the stages of God's preparation of the earth for blessing and that of the individual man. The present stage of the earth is that out of which the Christian has been delivered, the state of bondage to corruption, the dominion of sin. The present state of the Christian is that which the earth itself waits for, the time when the power of sin will be broken and righteousness will reign. For us righteousness reigns now, but the conflict with sin is not over. This, in the millennium, will be fully seen at the end, when there is once more the outbreak of evil, Satan being let loose. What follows this is the dissolution of the present heavens and earth and the coming of the new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness, just as the dissolution or the change of the body makes way for the perfect eternal state with us. Thus there is a complete parallel, which we cannot be wrong in accepting as that which will help us with the expression here. 'The washing of regeneration' is the deliverance from the power of sin, which is no more tolerated, but which is not, by any means, wholly removed. 'The renewing of the Holy Spirit' is that which is constantly needed to supplement this, although the word used does not speak of a mere reviving or refreshing constantly, but rather of a change into that which is new--thus, of ways, habits--as the light more and more penetrates, and the word of God manifests more and more its perfection and its power for the soul."

Being then saved according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration and receiving the Holy Spirit and having been justified by His grace, we become also heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The practical side, godliness in life and walk, is once more connected with these preceding statements of sound doctrine. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

Verses 9-11

Foolish questions and genealogies, contentions and striving about the law must be avoided, for they are unprofitable and vain. How many of these things are about us! Some are more occupied with the ten lost tribes and their supposed recovery, according to the Anglo-Israel hallucination, than with the grace and glory of God; and others are given to questions of law, like Seventh-day Adventism--that evil system. All these things are indeed unprofitable and vain. The heretic is one who sets up his own opinions and then causes division in the body of Christ. If such a one after a second admonition continues in his ways, he is to be rejected, for he proves that he is self-willed and not subject to the Word of God--"Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

Verses 12-15

In the closing directions and greetings Artemas is mentioned first; his name does not occur elsewhere. Tychicus is mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:12. He was sent by Paul to Ephesus; he probably was sent later to Crete to take the place of Titus.

Zenas the lawyer and Apollos (Acts 18:24) were travelling companions, and the apostle expresses his loving care and interest in them.

"Observe also that we have the two kinds of laborers: those who were in personal connection with the apostle as fellow-laborers, who accompanied him, and whom he sent elsewhere to continue the work he had begun, when he could no longer carry it on himself, and those who labored freely and independently of him. But there was no jealousy of this double activity. He did not neglect the flock that were dear to him. He was glad that any who were sound in the faith should water the plants which he himself had planted. He encourages Titus to show them all affection, and to provide whatever they needed in their journey. This thought suggests to him the counsel that follows: namely, that it would be well for Christians to learn how to do useful work in order to supply the wants of others as well as their own" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Then the final exhortations, once more "to maintain good works" and his final greeting. "All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all."

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

Introduction

This beautiful little letter addressed by Paul to Philemon does not occupy the right place in the New Testament. It should be put after the Epistle to the Colossians, for it was written at the same time as that Epistle. Tychicus carried from Rome the two Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. Onesimus, his travelling companion, received from the prisoner of the Lord this personal letter to Philemon. It was therefore written at the same time as Colossians, during the first imprisonment of the Apostle Paul, about the year 61 or 62. Its genuineness cannot be doubted, though some critics have done so. Dean Alford says: "The internal evidence of the Epistle itself is so decisive for its Pauline origin--the occasion and object of it so simple, and unassignable to any fraudulent intent, that one would imagine the impugner of so many of the Epistles would have at least spared this one, and that in modern times, as in ancient, according to Tertullian and Jerome, 'Sua illam brevisitas defendisset.' ("Its own brevity would be its defence.") The objections raised against this Epistle we do not need to state nor investigate, for they are pure inventions and do not require an answer.

The occasion and object are both plainly indicated in the Epistle itself. Onesimus, a slave, probably a Phrygian, who were considered the lowest of all, had run away from his master, Philemon, who was a Christian. It is more than probable that he had stolen money from Philemon (verse 18). He was attracted to Rome, the great world-city, thinking perhaps he would be undetected there. What happened to him in Rome and how he came in touch with Paul is not made known in the Epistle. He may have been in dire want and destitution. Perhaps he had heard Paul's name mentioned in his master's house and learning of his presence in Rome as a prisoner, he got in touch with him. This we know, that he heard the gospel preached by the apostle, and believing, he was saved. He then told the apostle his story and Paul sent him back to his master with this precious letter. And Onesimus who returns to Philemon is no longer "unprofitable"; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved" (verse 16).

The Epistle itself shows the sweet and tender character of the great man of God who penned it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It has been remarked, "Dignity, generosity, prudence, friendship, affection, politeness, skillful address, purity are apparent. Hence it has been termed with great propriety, 'the polite Epistle.'"

Suggestive are Luther's words on this letter to Philemon: "The Epistle showeth a right noble, lovely example of Christian love. Here we see how St. Paul layeth himself out for the poor Onesimus, and with all his means pleadeth his cause with his master; and so setteth himself, as if he were Onesimus, and had himself done wrong to Philemon. Yet all this doeth he not with power or force, as if he had right thereto; but he strippeth himself of his right, and thus enforceth Philemon to forego his right also. Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, this also doth St. Paul for Onesimus with Philemon; for Christ also stripped Himself of His right, and by love and humility enforced the Father to lay aside His wrath, and to take us to His grace for the sake of Christ, who lovingly pleadeth our cause, and with all His heart layeth Himself out for us. For we are all His Onesimi, to my thinking."

Analysis and Annotation

1. The greeting (1-3)
2. Recognition of Philemon's faith and love (4-7)
3. Concerning the reception of Onesimus (8-21) 4.

The conclusion (22-25)

Verses 1-3

He speaks of himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus; the Lord had made him a prisoner. He addresses Philemon (meaning: friendly, loving), the beloved, and his fellow-laborer. Apphia was probably the wife of Philemon; Archippus is called "fellow soldier"; he ministered in the Colossian assembly (Col. 4:17). Greeting is also extended "to the church" which was gathered in the house of Philemon. While the Epistle is addressed to Philemon personally and Paul appeals to him in behalf of Onesimus, the gathered assembly was equally to be interested in this runaway Slave, who was now returning as a brother beloved and therefore to be received by them in Christian fellowship. The Lord had received Onesimus and he had become through grace, a member of the body of Christ; he belonged to the Colossian assembly. Therefore in addressing the Colossians Paul had written of Onesimus as "a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you" (Col. 4:9).

Verses 4-7

He thanked God for Philemon, making mention of him always in his prayers. He did not know Philemon personally, but had heard of his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints. And he prayed for him "that the fellowship of the faith may become effectual by the acknowledgment of every good thing that is in us toward Christ Jesus." His faith was to manifest itself still more by exhibiting every good thing which Christians possess to the glory of Christ. With these words of commendation, recognition and encouragement, he opens the way to plead for Onesimus.

Verses 8-21

For this reason, because of love which was in Paul's heart for Philemon, he did not use his authority to enjoin upon him what was meet as to the reception of a good-for-nothing slave, who had been saved by grace and accepted in the Beloved. He beseeches instead, and that "for love's sake"--his love for Philemon and Philemon's love for Onesimus, for he was entitled to this love, being a saint in Christ. And he beseeches, "being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of the Lord." Courteously he repeats "I beseech thee," and then he mentions him who was so dear to his own heart--"I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, who in times past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me." Onesimus (meaning helpful) shows the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A miserable, unprofitable slave, a runaway thief, had become a child of God, born again, and the loving servant of the Lord presses him to his bosom, calls him "my child" and speaks of him as being now profitable to him and to Philemon. Oh! the wonders of divine grace.

"Whom I have sent again; thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels. Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel; but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly." What loving words these are! He gives Philemon to understand that Onesimus had endeared himself in such a way that he was as dear to him as his own heart. He would have liked to retain him and keep him at his side in Rome, for he would have performed all the services for Paul which Philemon would have rendered to him if he were in Rome. But without Philemon's consent he would do nothing, so that his action might not be of necessity, forced by what Paul had done, and not voluntarily.

"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?" How delicately he expresses it all! He does not speak of Onesimus as having run away, as trying to escape forever from serfdom, but that "he departed for a season." God's providence is beautifully touched upon, when Paul thus states that he perhaps departed for a season (Greek, an hour) so that Philemon might receive him forever, not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved. And so that Philemon might not take offense at Paul asking him to receive his runaway slave as a brother beloved, he tells Philemon that he is a beloved brother especially to himself--and then how much more to Philemon who had a claim on him.

Human slavery, so universal in apostolic days, so full of misery, is indirectly dealt with in this letter to Philemon. It may be rightly called the first antislavery document and petition ever written and presented.

"Paul lays here broad and deep the foundation of a new relation between master and servant, a relation in which, while there is subordination of the one to the other, there is also a common brotherhood to be acknowledged and an equality before God to be maintained. Christianity would melt the fetters from the enslaved by the fervour of its love. Men's method commonly is, to strike them off by armed revolution" (Professor Moorhead).

And he continues, "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account." Verse 17 connects well with verse 12. If Philemon counted Paul as in Christian fellowship, he is to receive Onesimus as if he were Paul, "receive him as myself." Onesimus had probably confessed his theft to Paul, and again he uses the choicest words to approach this delicate matter. He does not call it "theft" outright, but writes "if he hath wronged thee" and that again he softens to "or oweth thee aught," then he declares himself ready to make good the loss and assume the debt in place of the slave Onesimus--"put that on mine account." These five words "put that on mine account" are translated in Rom. 5#13, by the word "impute." How blessedly this illustrates the gospel. indeed this Epistle to Philemon is a perfect and practical illustration of the gospel of grace, the gospel Paul preached, and which is unfolded in the larger Epistles. What the gospel does for the poor slave of sin, how he becomes a son and a brother, profitable instead of unprofitable, a member of the body of Christ, may be traced in these verses.

He wrote this Epistle, not as he usually did, by an amanuensis, but with his own hand! That shows again what a fine character he was. He had full confidence in Philemon not alone that he would grant him his request, but that he would even do more than he had asked.

We do not know from Scripture what became of Onesimus. According to the "Apostolical Canons" he was emancipated by his master. Another tradition says that he became a servant of the Lord ministering in Macedonia , and that he was martyred in Rome . We shall meet him with all the other saints in glory.

Verses 22-25

Paul during his first imprisonment always anticipated his release; he and others prayed for it (Phile. 22). And so he expects to come to Colosse, and asked Philemon to prepare him a lodging. The salutations from Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas and Lucas, with the word of blessing, conclude the Epistle.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

This Epistle presents many problems. Some refuse to call it an Epistle and look upon it as a treatise, but the leading question is about the author of this document. It is anonymous; the writer has carefully concealed his identity. It is the only portion of the New Testament of which this can be said. What was a possible motive for doing this? We may answer that He who inspired this great message guided the pen of the instrument to put himself out of sight. Dr. Biesenthal, in a very learned work on Hebrews, advances an interesting theory why the writer did not mention himself. He shows that the teaching of Christianity that animal sacrifices, once foreshadowing the great sacrifice and now completely ended and no longer necessary, was being felt in heathendom. In consequence the many sacrifices used in heathen worship at births, marriages and different other occasions were being more and more neglected. The priestly class which lived by these sacrifices and the very large industry of cattle raising was being threatened with utter ruin, on account of which a bitter antagonism was being stirred up against Christianity and its advocates. On account of this, Dr. Biesenthal, concludes, the writer of Hebrews kept his name a secret. Furthermore, this scholarly Hebrew Christian, advancing the strongest arguments for the Pauline authorship, shows additional reason why the Apostle Paul had very valid reasons to keep himself in the background. (This work, "Das Trostschriften an die Hebraer--The Message of Comfort to the Hebrews," has, as far as we know, never been translated into English.) His heart was filled with such burning love for his Hebrew brethren that he was constrained to send to them a special message of love and entreaty. At the same time he was deeply concerned about those who had believed. Under heathen persecution, as well as through ignorance concerning the full meaning of Christianity, a tendency towards apostasy threatened these Hebrew Christians, especially those who lived in Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple and the Jewish worship. And Paul knowing how he was disliked by the Jews, and how he had been discredited by the judaizing teachers, whose evil work he had exposed and so severely condemned in the Epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians, feared that if his name was made prominent, the message would at once be discarded. He therefore omitted his name.

The Question of Authorship

The question of authorship of Hebrews is of much interest. Many volumes have been written on it. Origen wrote, "The thoughts are Paul's, but the phraseology and composition are by someone else. Not without reason have the ancient men handed down the Epistle as Paul's, but who wrote the Epistle is known only to God." The question is then, did Paul write Hebrews and if he did not, who wrote this Epistle? Some are very positive that Paul did not write Hebrews, as will be seen by the following statement:

"The only fact clear as to the author is that he was not the Apostle Paul. The early Fathers did not attribute the book to Paul, nor was it until the seventh century that the tendency to do this, derived from Jerome, swelled into an ecclesiastical practice. From the book itself we see that the author must have been a Jew and a Hellenist, familiar with Philo as well as with the Old Testament, a friend of Timothy and well-known to many of those whom he addressed, and not an apostle but decidedly acquainted with apostolic thoughts; and that he not only wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem but apparently himself was never in Palestine. The name of Barnabas, and also that of Priscilla, has been suggested, but in reality all these distinctive marks appear to be found only in Apollos. So that with Luther, and not a few modern scholars, we must either attribute it to him or give up in the quest" (Weymouth).

This is very sweeping, and quite incorrect and superficial. It is not the final word. To follow the controversy in our brief introduction is quite impossible. All that has ever been written on it may be condensed as follows:--1. There is no substantial evidence, external or internal, in favor of any claimant to the authorship of this Epistle, except Paul. 2. There is

nothing incompatible with the supposition that Paul was the author of Hebrews. 3. The preponderance of the internal, and all the direct external evidence, go to show that the Epistle was written by Paul. The Pauline authorship can hardly be questioned after the most painstaking research.

Origen's words, that only God knows who wrote this Epistle, has been taken as final by many. But to whom did Origen refer when he said, "not without reason have the ancient men handed down the Epistle as Paul's?" He undoubtedly referred to the Greek Fathers, who, without one exception ascribed this Epistle to Paul. It appears that in no part of the Eastern church the Pauline origin of this Epistle was ever doubted or suspected. The earliest of these testimonies, that Paul wrote Hebrews, is that of Pantaenus, the chief of the catechetical school in Alexandria about the middle of the second century. This witness is found in Eusebius, the church-historian, who quotes Clement of Alexandria that Hebrews was written by Paul originally in the Hebrew language and that Luke translated it into the Greek. Clement of Alexandria was the pupil of Pantaenus and had received this information from him. Pantaenus was a Hebrew Christian and in all probability living only a hundred years after Paul, received what he taught Clement, by tradition. Apart from other similar testimonies that of Pantaenus and Clement is quite sufficient to show that the early church believed Paul to have written Hebrews.

And the internal evidences are overwhelmingly for the Pauline authorship. As to doctrine the parallels with his other Epistles are numerous and some of the peculiarities are also in full harmony with the teaching of the Apostle Paul. The personal allusions are altogether Pauline. These likewise show that Paul is the writer. The writer was a prisoner for he writes, "ye took compassion of me in my bonds" (10:34); and he hopes to be liberated "but I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner" (13:19). Here is the same thought as expressed in Philippians (Phil. 1:25); in Philemon (verse 22). And this prisoner is in Italy for he writes "they of Italy salute you." It was probably written from Rome. The writer also was well acquainted with Timothy whom he mentions in the Epistle (13:23). All these personal words have a decided Pauline stamp.

But some have said that Christ is not mentioned in Hebrews as the head of the body, not a word is said of that union with a risen and glorified Christ, one Spirit with the Lord, that cardinal doctrine so prominent in the great Apostle's testimony. From this omission it has been argued that another than Paul must be the author. But this inference is without foundation. For though Paul alone develops the mystery concerning Christ and the Church, it is only in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, with the First to the Corinthians practically, and in that to the Romans allusively. In the rest of his Epistles we find "the body" no more than in that to the Hebrews, and this is as distinctly in the ordering of the Holy Spirit, as in those which contain it fully. Each Epistle or other book of Scripture is prepared for the purpose God had in view when He inspired each writer. As the main object is that to the Hebrews in Christ's priesthood with its necessary basis, due adjuncts, and suited results, and as this is for the Saints individually, the one body of Christ could not fall fittingly within its scope, if it were a divinely inspired composition, whether by Paul or by any other. Its central doctrine is, not as one with Him as members of His body, but the appearing before the face of God for us (William Kelly).

Peter's Significant Statement

At the close of his second Epistle the Apostle Peter wrote "and account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you" (2 Pet. 3:15). Now Peter wrote to those of the circumcision, to believing Hebrews in the dispersion. He does what our Lord commanded him "to strengthen his brethren." And in the above words he speaks of the fact that Paul also wrote unto them. We do not hesitate to give this as an argument of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. No other Epistle of Paul answers to this statement of Peter. There is but one Epistle addressed to the Hebrews and Peter no doubt meant this Epistle, and he also knew that Paul was the writer. So that this in itself is quite conclusive. As another has said "Where do we find beside the apostle a man who could have written this Epistle? Who beside him would have ventured to write it with such decided apostolic authority? And who had greater reason to write anonymously to Israel than the apostle who loved his people so fervently, and who was so hated by them that they refused to listen to his voice and to read his writings?" (Mallet)

His Last Visit to Jerusalem and this Epistle

It seems to the writer that Paul's last visit to Jerusalem also explains this Epistle. As we learn from the book of Acts, Paul went up to Jerusalem against the repeated warnings given by the Spirit of God. His arrest was the result of having gone into the temple to purify himself with the four men who had a vow on them. This he was asked to do and to show that he

walked orderly and kept the law. He did wrong in this. It is true he acted through zeal and love for his brethren; yet he also knew that a believer, be he Jew or Gentile, is dead to the law and that all the ordinances of the law were fulfilled and ended. Yet the Jewish believers in Jerusalem still clung to the law, were zealous for the law, went to the temple and made use of the ordinances. When in Rome as prisoner the Spirit of God moved him to write this letter in which the greater glory and the better things of the new covenant are unfolded with solemn warnings not to be drawn back into Judaism. And at the close of the Epistle the final and important exhortation is given "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp (Judaism), bearing His reproach" (13:13). May not this Epistle have been written in view of Paul's failure in Jerusalem, showing these Jewish-Christians the necessity of separating from the shadow things of the Old covenant?

To Jewish Christians

That this Epistle was addressed to Jews who professed the name of the Lord Jesus is shown by its contents. This fact and their peculiar state must not be lost sight of in the study of this Epistle. We may assume that the Epistle was especially addressed to the Church in Jerusalem. As already stated these Jewish believers were all zealous of the law. They observed the ordinances of the law with great zeal; they went daily into the temple and were obedient to all the ceremonial law demanded of a good Jew. Then there arose a persecution against them. Some of them were stoned and they suffered great affliction and humiliation. The Epistle speaks of this. They were made a gazing stock both by reproach and afflictions; they endured joyfully the spoiling of their goods (10:33-34).

They were being treated in a shameful way by their brethren and looked upon as apostates. They were excluded from the temple worship and the ordinances, unless they abandoned faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and forsook the assembling of themselves.

"We can scarcely realize the piercing sword which thus wounded their inmost heart. That by clinging to the Messiah they were to be severed from Messiah's people was indeed a great and perplexing trial; that for the hope of Israel's glory they were banished from the place which God had chosen, and where the divine presence was revealed, and the symbols and ordinances of His grace had been the joy and strength of their fathers; that they were to be no longer children of the covenant and of the house, but worse than Gentiles, excluded from the outer court, cut off from the commonwealth of Israel,--this was indeed a sore and mysterious trial. Cleaving to the promises made unto their fathers, cherishing the hope in constant prayer that their nation would yet accept the Messiah, it was the severest test to which their faith could be put, when their loyalty to Jesus involved separation from all the sacred rights and privileges of Jerusalem" (A. Saphir).

They were under great pressure. They loved the nation, their divinely given institutions, their traditions and their promised glory. They did not possess the full knowledge of the better things of the new covenant; that they had as believers in Christ, the substance of what the old covenant only foreshadowed. There was grave danger for them to turn back to Judaism and therefore the repeated warnings and exhortations to steadfastness. They needed instructions, teachings, to lead them on to perfection, and they needed comfort in their trying position. Both are abundantly supplied in this Epistle.

The Vision of Christ

Hebrews gives a wonderful vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is revealed as the Son of God, and Son of Man; as the heir of all things; higher than the angels. We can trace His path of humiliation to death and what has been accomplished by the death on the cross. All the blessings put on the side of the believer are made known in Hebrews. But above all the great message is the Priesthood of Christ. This is the great center of this sublime Epistle. It is an Epistle of contrasts. There is the contrast between the Lord Jesus Christ and the angels; between Him and Moses, between Him and Aaron, between the Priesthood of Melchisedec and that of Aaron; between the offerings of the old covenant and the one great offering of Christ. This was the supreme need of these Jewish-Christians, to know Christ in all His fullness and glory. This knowledge would make them perfect, steadfast and fill them with comfort. And this is still our need. May the Lord bless us in meditating on this wonderful document.

The Division of the Epistle to the Hebrews

"Commencing in the style of a doctrinal treatise, but constantly interrupted by fervent and affectionate admonitions, warnings, and encouragements, this grand and massive book concludes in the epistolary form, and in the last chapter the

inspired author thus characterizes his work: "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words."

"We are attracted and riveted by the majestic and sabbatic style of this epistle. Nowhere in the New Testament writings do we meet language of such euphony and rhythm. A peculiar solemnity and anticipation of eternity breathe in these pages. The glow and flow of language, the stateliness and fulness of diction, are but an external manifestation of the marvellous depth and glory of spiritual truth, into which the apostolic author is eager to lead his brethren."

With these well chosen words Adolf Saphir, the Hebrew Christian scholar, begins his exposition of this Epistle.

The division of Hebrews is difficult to make because the different sections of this document often overlap and form a solid unity. It has been well said that "one feels as if he were endeavoring to dissect a living organism when he seeks to sever part from part in this marvellous Scripture."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, in the fullness of the glory of His Person as the living and eternal realization of Jewish promise and type, is the most blessed theme of this Epistle or treatise. This necessitated the various contrasts in which this document abounds and which we shall point out in the annotations. The glory of Christ, all He is, as well as His sympathy, grace and power as the true high priest who has entered heaven itself, is so fully made known to help, first of all, the weak faith of the Jewish Christians who received this message, that by it they might be established in their heavenly calling and become completely separated from Judaism, which was about to pass away. The two opening chapters introduce the great theme of the Epistle and are the foundation of the doctrine developed. The first chapter reveals the glory of the Person of the Messiah, that He is the Son of God. The second chapter unfolds His glory as the Son of Man. He, who is above the angels, was made a little lower than the angels to suffer and to die. He partook of all sufferings and temptations and is now as the glorified Man in God's presence, crowned with glory and honor, awaiting the time when all things are put under His feet. The fact that He suffered, and was tempted opens the way for the development of the central truth of the Epistle, His priesthood. He is called the Apostle and High Priest and shown to be greater than Moses and Joshua. Then follows the main section of the Epistle, which reveals Him as the true priest who has opened the way into the Holiest, where He is exercising now His priesthood. The contrast is made in this portion (4:14-10) between Him and the priests and sacrifices of the Jewish Dispensation. With the eleventh chapter begins the practical instructions and exhortations to walk in faith, to be steadfast and to leave the camp of Judaism. We divide, therefore, this epistle in four sections.

I. CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD AND HIS GLORY (1:1-2:4)

II. CHRIST, THE SON OF MAN, HIS GLORY AND HIS SALVATION (2:5-4:13)

III. CHRIST AS PRIEST IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY (4:14-10)

IV. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS (11-13)

The analysis which follows shows the different subdivisions, parenthetical sections and contrasts, found in these main sections.

Analysis and Annotations

I. CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD AND His GLORY

CHAPTER 1-2:4

1. The Son in whom God hath spoken (1:1-4)

2. So much better than the angels (1:5-14)

3. Admonition and warning (2:1-4)

Verses 1-6

Sublime is the beginning of this precious document. God who in many measures and in many ways spake of old to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days hath spoken to us in a Son, whom He constituted heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, having made (by Himself) purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance a name more excellent than they."

It is an abrupt beginning with no words of introduction, no salutations or words of thanksgiving and prayer. Only one other Epistle begins in a similar way; the First Epistle of John. The foundation upon which all rests, the Word of God, is the first great statement we meet. It tells us that God has spoken of old to the fathers in the prophets. The prophets were not, as so often stated by the deniers of divine inspiration "Jewish patriots and visionaries," but they were the mouthpiece of Jehovah "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). The words they uttered are the words of God. And this is true of Moses, the author of the Pentateuch and of all the other instruments used in the production of the Old Testament scriptures. And He spoke in many measures (or parts) and in many ways, in histories, ordinances, divinely appointed institutions, visions, dreams and direct prophetic utterances, which have a fragmentary character; they are not in themselves complete and final. And therefore we find in this epistle the law, the prophets and the Psalms more frequently quoted than in any other portion of the New Testament.

It is a striking characteristic of Hebrews that the names of the prophets, like Moses, David, Isaiah, etc., are omitted. God is the speaker. He spoke in the prophets concerning Him, who is now fully revealed in His glory, that is His Son, the promised Messiah. Our Lord declared of the Old Testament scriptures "they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39). Before He ever came into the world He also bore witness of this fact "in the volume of the Book it is written of Me" (Heb. 10:7). God's speaking in the Old Testament culminated in the manifestation of this Person. "At the end of these days hath spoken to us in a (or the) Son." The end of these days is the present dispensation as distinguished from the preceding Jewish dispensation. The words "to us" mean primarily in this epistle the children of the fathers to whom God spake by the prophets. (In a general way it applies, of course, to all believers during this dispensation. The opinion of some that Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the Epistles of Peter have no meaning and no message to the Church is pernicious.) "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). It was to the Jew first. He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and manifested in their midst the power of the kingdom promised to that nation. The Promised One came and God spoke in Him, who is God the Son. The original has no article in connection with the word "Son." It is simply "in Son." The reason for this omission is because the character of the One in whom God hath now spoken, and not so much the person, is to be emphasized. The prophets were servants, angels were servants, but He in whom God speaks now is Son; such is His relationship, one with God.

The declaration of the glory of His Sonship follows. He is eternally Son of God, the Only-Begotten, very God in eternity. He is Son of God in incarnation, taking on the form of man, making purification of sins and He is in resurrection the first begotten, declared Son of God by resurrection from among the dead. It is a marvellous revelation of Himself, corresponding to the similar statements in the beginning of the Gospel of John and the first chapter of Colossians. He is constituted the heir of all things as He created all things and is the creator. All things in heaven and on earth are His. He possesses all things which exist. This is God's eternal purpose concerning Him. All things are by Him and for Him. By Him the worlds were made. (Literally "the ages"; Hellenists understood by it the universe. Its meaning then is equivalent to creation. It is used thus in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint.) The vast universe is the work of His hands and He himself as very God is "the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance." He makes the invisible God visible. He is the perfect impress of God; God is fully revealed in His person who came from glory and dwelt among men. Furthermore, He is upholding all things by the Word of His power.

And He who was all this, and is all this, became man, appeared on earth, assuming manhood, to accomplish the work which He alone could do. By Himself He made purification of sins. The Son of God alone did this and none was with Him. What a blessed, sure, eternally secure foundation of our salvation! The passage shows the personal and perfect competency of the Son of God to effect this mighty work. It was done on the cross, in the death in which He glorified God

and which has glorified Him forever. And therefore He arose from the dead and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." It is significant that nothing is said in the text of His resurrection, in the sense as it is spoken of in other scriptures, that God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory (1 Pet. 1:21). Nor is it said that He was told to sit down, but He sat down and took Himself the exalted place at the right hand of God. It is presented in this way because His character as Son is here in view. The place He has taken at the right hand of the Majesty on high is only proper and possible for a divine person. The fact that He took this place and sat down attests the perfection, the completeness and acceptance of the work He undertook and finished on the cross. He is now on the throne of God. David's throne and His own throne He will receive when as the First-Begotten He returns from the glory. Such is the Messiah, the Christ, promised to Israel; He is God, the creator and upholder of all things, the heir of all things, come down from heaven, in whom God spoke on earth and is still speaking from heaven, who made purification of sins and has gone back to heaven.

Constituted now heir of all things, destined according to God's eternal decrees to be head of all things, He, as the glorified Man, has "become so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance a name more excellent than they." The contrast between Him and angels is now made. The Epistle being addressed to Hebrews explains this comparison and contrast on Christ with angels. In the estimation of a Hebrew, next to Jehovah Himself, angels were looked upon as the highest and holiest beings. Then furthermore the law was given through angels (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19), and other angelic ministrations had been prominent in Israel's history, so that these beings occupied a high place in the Jewish mind. But Christ, the man Christ Jesus, has become so much better than the angels; He is above the angels. His name is above every other name. He is on the right hand of the Majesty on high in the form and likeness of Man. As the Only-Begotten He is the creator of angels. In incarnation He was made a little lower than the angels, and now having finished the work for which He became man, He has received by inheritance that highest position and a more excellent name than angels. Into this wonderful place He takes His own people for whom He suffered and died. In Him all believers are above the angels. Angels are but servants, never said to occupy a throne, for they cannot reign. But Christ has a throne and His redeemed shall reign with Him.

Verses 5-14

Upon this the Spirit of God quotes seven passages from the Scriptures in which He speaks of Christ and His exaltation and glory in contrast with angels. All seven are taken from the book of Psalms. Psalms 2; 89; 97; 104; 45; 102 and 110. The destructive criticism declares that there are no Messianic predictions in the book of Psalms. That blessed portion of the Old Testament has suffered much from the hands of these destroyers of the faith. They say that the Second, the Forty-fifth, and the One hundred and tenth Psalms have nothing to say about Christ, that the King mentioned in these psalms was some other unknown King, but not the King Messiah. How significant that the Holy Spirit quotes now from these very psalms telling us that the Messiah, Christ, is predicted in them. The Hebrews had no difficulty in accepting this for they know these psalms speak of the promised Messiah. (The Lord Jesus used the One hundred tenth Psalm in confounding the Pharisees. He showed that that Psalm speaks of Himself and that it is the testimony of the Spirit. Such is "higher criticism"; it sets aside the testimony of the Son of God and the Spirit of God.)

The first quotation is from the Second Psalm. Never did God address angels in the way He is addressed of whom this psalm bears witness. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." This psalm reveals the royal glory and world-wide dominion of Christ, the one whom the people (Israel) and the nations reject. He is to be enthroned as King upon the holy hill of Zion . As Son He will receive the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. The title here refers to His incarnation, and, secondarily, to His resurrection from the dead (Acts 13:33-34). It is therefore not the fact of His eternal sonship which is before us in this statement; it speaks of Him as Son of God in time. The eternal Son of God became incarnate; but this did not lower His eternal Sonship. It is therefore His birth, His entrance into the world of which this psalm bears witness. "But it is of all moment for the truth and His own personal dignity to remember that His Sonship when incarnate as well as in resurrection is based on His eternal relationship as Son, without which the other could not have been."

Psalm 89:26, 2 Sam. 7:14 and 1 Chron. 17:13 are mentioned next. It brings out the relationship in which the incarnate Son of God, the promised Messiah, is with God. God accepts and owns Him. "I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to me a Son." And this relationship was audibly declared and confirmed at His baptism and when on the mount of transfiguration. Such a relationship could never be the portion of angels. In Psalm 89:27 His future glory is made known as it is in the second psalm. "Also I will make Him, my Firstborn, higher than the Kings of the earth." He is the Firstborn; He will have

the preeminence.

The next quotation and argument is from Psalm 97:7. "And again when He brings in the Firstborn into the habitable earth, He saith, let all the angels of God worship Him." This no longer refers to His incarnation, but to His second coming. He is to be brought into the world and then He will receive the worship of the angels of God. Some have applied this to His first coming. But then He came as the "Only-Begotten" and was sent into the world. Here it is said that as the First-Begotten (from the dead) He will be brought into the world. He, who was cast out from the world and rejected by man, will reenter it in power and glory; God will bring Him back into the habitable earth. When this event takes place the angels will bow in worship before Him, for He comes with His holy angels. It is therefore not His first advent, but His second, which is here contemplated. When He was born, angels praised the sender and not the sent One, but when He comes again He will be the object of angelic worship. This shows His glorious superiority to all the angels.

Psalm 104 speaks of angels as servants. "He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." They are spirit and not flesh. They are made to do His will and can never be anything else but servants. And then the contrast is shown what the Son is by the quotation from the Forty-fifth Psalm. Angels are servants and cannot reign nor can they ever occupy a throne, "but unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." He is addressed as God in this psalm in which He is revealed as the coming King Messiah. He has a throne which is forever and ever, and as Messiah, and the promised King, He will have an earthly throne and rule with a sceptre of righteousness, He loved righteousness and hated iniquity when down here and therefore He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Thus we learn from this psalm His deity. He has a throne forever and ever. His humanity: He was on earth and loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Who are the fellows mentioned? Angels are not His fellows and could not be. His fellows are all they who are made one with Him through grace and who will be ultimately conformed to His image. It includes the believing remnant of Israel and all who put their trust in Him.

"This is a remarkable passage, because, while on the one hand the divinity of the Lord is fully established as well as His eternal throne, on the other hand the passage comes down to His character as the faithful man on earth, where He made pious men--the little remnant of Israel who waited for redemption, His companions; at the same time it gives Him (and it could not be otherwise) a place above them" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Still more remarkable is the sixth quotation from Psalm 102. Wonderful as His glory is in the Forty-fifth Psalm, the One hundred second Psalm surpasseth it. No human being would have ever known the real meaning of this psalm if it had not pleased the Spirit of God to give it in this chapter. The little word "and" shows that in verses 25-27 the Son of God is addressed by God as the creator of all things. It is Jehovah's answer to the prayer of His Son suffering as man and dying. "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days, Thy years are throughout all generations." These words as well as verses 1-11 in this psalm are the expressions of the Man of Sorrows, the suffering Messiah. And Jehovah answers Him and owns Him in His humiliation, approaching the death of the cross, as the Creator. He was ever the same; His years cannot fail. He, the Son of God, had laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of His hands. And He will do, as the Sovereign One, what God attributes to Him. "They shall perish, but Thou abidest; they shall grow old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou roll them up, and they shall be changed, but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." Such is He, whose glory the Spirit of God reveals in the Holy Scriptures, who became Man, suffered and died, and risen from the dead, sits at the right hand of God. He is the unchangeable One, creator and sustainer of the universe.

The final quotation is from the One hundred and tenth Psalm, which is more frequently quoted in this Epistle than elsewhere. The preceding psalm, the One hundred and ninth, predicts His rejection by His own. In the opening verse of this psalm the Messiah is seen again in His deity and humanity. He is David's Lord and David's Son. His work is finished on earth. He has taken His place of rest (the symbol of the work done) sitting down at His right hand and waiting for the hour when God makes His enemies the footstool of his feet by bringing in again the First-begotten into the world. To no angel did God ever say, "Sit on My right hand."

Once more are angels spoken of as ministers. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" They minister now to those who are the heirs of salvation, who bear the title of sons in His Son and who possess His life. How little God's people make use of this comfort. An active and simple faith is needed to perceive in what men carelessly regard as accidents of time and place, the positive workings of angels' ministry. They minister to

God's people now in a way unknown to us. "It is a truth which brings the shadow of God's majesty with a peculiar nearness over the believer's soul. That we are seen of angels is an assurance to which the Spirit elsewhere practically bids us heed (1 Cor. 11:10). A happy thought, yet one of sobering effect to be thus seen; to be the objects of near gaze, and very contact, to those holy visitants of watchful love, who, standing as the bright apparitions of heavenly majesty beside the throne on which the Son of God now rests, are sent forth to speed upon their way the pilgrim brethren of the Lord" (A. Pridham).

Chapter 2:1-4

This is the first parenthetical exhortation of this epistle, well suited to the condition of those Hebrews to whom it was first addressed. They are exhorted to give more earnest heed to the things which they had heard, that is, the gospel of salvation in this Christ, whose glory is displayed in the opening chapter. This salvation was at first spoken by the Lord when He was on earth. He began its proclamation. It was continued by those who heard Him, that is by His apostles, and finally God the Holy Spirit had put His witness to it with signs and wonders and gifts. If then the word spoken through angels (the law dispensation) was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just retribution, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" It is a warning to Jews who were halting between two opinions and to those who had in a measure accepted outwardly the truth of Christianity without having laid hold in earnest and in faith of that salvation. If this great salvation, which God offers now not through angels, but in His Son, is rejected or neglected there can be no escape.

II. CHRIST, SON OF MAN, His GLORY AND His SALVATION

CHAPTER 2:5-18

1. The Man crowned with glory and honor (2:5-9)

2. His humiliation, suffering and the results (2:10-18)

Verses 5-9

Angels are once more mentioned and the fact is stated first of all that angels are not called of God to reign: "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection, the world to come whereof we speak." "The world to come" is not heaven or the eternal state. The literal translation is "the habitable world to come"; it is the existing earth, inhabited by human beings in the dispensation which will follow the present age. The world in the dispensation to come, called in Ephesians "the dispensation of the fullness of time" is not put in subjection to angels. A quotation from the Eighth Psalm follows, from which we learn that man is to have dominion and to rule over this world to come. Dominion over the earth was given to Adam (Genesis 1:28), but sin coming in, and death also, this dominion and rule was lost; the glory and honor which rested upon Adam was changed into shame and dishonor. Through man's fall Satan became the usurper, the prince of this world. Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, the Second Man in whom and through whom the lost dominion is restored.

It is interesting to study the order of the psalms with which the book of psalms begins, divinely arranged by an unknown instrument. The righteous Man in Psalm 1 is the Lord Jesus; the Second Psalm shows Him as the Messiah-King. Then Psalms 3-7 show the suffering, sorrows and soul-exercise of the godly during the time when He does not yet reign, especially the suffering of the Jewish remnant during the tribulation and then comes Psalm 8, Christ, the Second Man set over all things. The Annotated Bible on the Psalms follows this more fully.

The Eighth Psalm reveals this Second Man, the Lord from heaven, the Creator in creature's form. He was made a little lower than the angels. The Son of God took the position of man to make peace in the blood of His cross "to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20). All things are therefore put in subjection under His feet and nothing is left that is not put in subjection under Him. He will have dominion over all and His name will be excellent in all the earth. Satan knows that the dominion of the earth will not be left forever in his horrible grasp. He offered the kingdoms of the world and their glory to the Son of Man, attempting to keep Him from going to the cross, in which, through the death of Christ, the devil, who has the power of death, is brought to nought.

The work is done. Christ is the Second Man; He will have dominion over the earth in the world to come, the dispensation to come. He will reign and rule and His fellows, the partakers of His salvation, will reign with Him. "But now we see not yet all things put under Him." The time is not in this present age in which Satan is god and ruler. Only when the First-begotten is brought back from the glory, in His second coming, will all things be put under Him. Faith knows this from the unfailing promises of God. But faith also has another vision; while Satan is not yet dethroned and Christ enthroned, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, who was made a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death; so that by the grace of God He should taste death for all things." Glorious vision! He suffered death. He perfectly glorified God on the earth where God had been dishonored. He came down and took the lowest place and now He is exalted to the highest. The Man who suffered and died fills the throne and is crowned with glory and honor. And as surely as He is there now, so will He in God's own time occupy His own throne with all things put under his feet. He tasted death for that--for all things--for a ruined creation which He has redeemed and will restore.

Verses 10-18

This salvation work is now more fully mentioned in the second part of this chapter. He is spoken of as the captain (author) of the salvation of the many sons He is bringing to glory. And as the originator and leader of their salvation He had to suffer and die. Not His person was to be perfected, for He is perfect; but He had to be perfected through suffering as a Saviour. "For it became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." Here God's eternal purpose is wonderfully revealed. He purposed before the foundation, knowing the coming ruin of man, to bring many sons unto glory. This is divine love. But God's holiness had to be vindicated, and therefore the Son of God became man to suffer as the captain of their (the many sons) salvation.

As disobedience had led man from life to death, so, by obedience unto death the sinless Lamb of God had to win in righteousness the path of endless life for those who trust in Him as the originator and captain of their salvation. And those who accept Him are the many sons, whom God is bringing through Him, to glory everlasting. And both He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. It is a wicked perversion of the truth when it is taught, that He, and all the human race are of one. This is the common error taught so much in the so-called theory of "The Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man." The statement shows the wonderful relationship which divine grace has established between the captain of salvation and those who are saved by Him. He, Christ, is the sanctifier, setting those apart unto God, who accept Him as Saviour. Such are born of God and become children of God, destined to be brought by Him as sons to glory. In this sense He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified by Him are of One, that is, of God. Higher still is the truth revealed in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, that believers are not only "of one" but are one with Him.

Again quotations from the Scriptures follow. The first is from the Twenty-second Psalm. "For this cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying I will declare Thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Ps. 22:22). This Psalm shows first Christ on the cross as sin-bearer. In verses 20 and 21 is the prayer of the Suffering One. And He was heard. God's answer was His resurrection from the dead. That resurrection and His exaltation are revealed in the second portion of this Psalm (verses 22-31). The beginning of this section is quoted here. And when He was risen from the dead He gave this blessed new message at once. "But go unto My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17).

Here we learn the blessed identification of Him that sanctifieth and with them that are sanctified, and that on the ground of resurrection. And therefore He is not ashamed to call us brethren, which, however, does not authorize believers to call Him "brother" as it is done so often. (Never before His death and resurrection did He address His disciples as "brethren." Only once did He hint before His death at this relationship to come, in Matthew 12:48-50.) And by His Spirit He is in the midst of those who are gathered unto His name, the Church, and sings praise unto God, as they praise God in His blessed and worthy name. The Twenty-second Psalm also speaks of "the great congregation," Israel, gathered unto Him and of the ends of the earth and the nations who shall remember and shall worship before Him. It is His coming glory when all things are put under Him in the age to come.

The next quotation is from Psalm 16. (It may also be brought in connection with Is. 8:17. The Septuagint has it "I will trust in Him" 2 Sam. 22:3.) "I will put my trust in Him." It is the prophetic expression of His personal faith on earth. As man He trusted in the Lord and waited for Him (Isaiah 8:17). "The Seed of David, and the object of the promises, is thus

represented as awaiting, in perfect confidence, the righteous award which in due time should be made to Him who alone is worthy, by the God whom He had glorified in perfect obedience; although for an appointed season His gracious labor might seem to have been spent for nought and in vain, while man and Satan appeared only to prevail" (Isaiah 49).

The last quotation is from Isaiah 8:18. The children, which the Lord had given to Isaiah, were for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord. The two sons of Isaiah had received their names of significant meaning from heaven. Believers are children, belong to Him and are signs and witnesses both to unbelieving Israel and the world. In a special sense this passage, no doubt, applies to the believing remnant of Israel, which owned Him, while the nation rejected Him. And some day, the day of His glory, He will declare triumphantly "Behold I and the children which God gave unto Me." Then He will be glorified and admired in all that believed (2 Thess. 1:10) and the redeemed will be for signs and wonders in a still more blessed way.

Then follows a restatement of the fact of His incarnation and its special bearing on the calling of the children, God has given Him, the many sons He brings to glory. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also in like manner took part of the same (His incarnation) that through death He might bring to nought him who hath the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver as many as through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It was for the children's sake, all who accept Him and whom God brings through Him to glory, that He took on flesh and blood and by doing so He arrayed Himself for death. He took on flesh and blood apart from sin. Satan's work is perfected in death. "That the Lord Jesus might enjoy the children as the gift of God, He must first take away the yoke of the oppressor. But because the right of Satan to destroy was founded on the victory of sin, which made man the lawful prey of death, He, who loved the children though as yet they knew Him not, took also flesh; that in their stead He might undergo that death which should forever spoil the devil of his claim" (A. Pridham). The limit of this work of the Lord Jesus to the children as its object, should be carefully observed.

Jewish saints in the Old Testament, believing the promise and expecting the Messiah, were in bondage and in fear of death. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," but the death of Christ once for all to sin has received the sting and brought to nought him who has the power of death. A believer is delivered from the fear of death, for he no longer dies the sinner's death, but falls asleep in Jesus and that with the promise to awake in due time in His likeness. "For verily it is not angels upon whom He taketh hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." And who were they whom He took hold on? Not angels, but the seed of Abraham. Those are the children for which He came, took on flesh and blood and wrought His work on the cross. The expression "seed of Abraham" is as a generic term, descriptive of the whole family of faith. Believers of Jews and Gentiles are comprehended in this term. They that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

His priesthood is next introduced for the first time in this Epistle. He was made like unto His brethren in all things "that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted," and thus in suffering and temptation (apart from sin) in His humanity, He was fitted to be the priest to sympathize with His own in all their trials and conflicts.

"He suffered--never yielded. We do not suffer when we yield to temptation: the flesh takes pleasure in the things by which it is tempted. Jesus suffered, being tempted, and He is able to succour them that are tempted. It is important to observe that the flesh, when acted upon by its desires, does not suffer. Being tempted, it, alas! enjoys. But when, according to the light of the Holy Spirit and the fidelity of obedience, the Spirit resists the attacks of the enemy, whether subtle or persecuting, then one suffers. This the Lord did, and this we have to do. That which needs succour is the new man, the faithful heart, and not the flesh. I need succour against the flesh, and in order to mortify all the members of the old man" Synopsis of the Bible.

CHAPTER 3

1. As Son over the house of God, greater than Moses (3:1-6)
2. The danger of unbelief (3:7-13)

3. The need of faith (3:14-19)

Verses 1-6

He now addresses believing Hebrews as "holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling," and exhorts them to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus." Hebrews address each other as "brethren" (Acts 2:29, 7:2, 22:1). Believing Hebrews are here addressed by the Spirit of God as "holy brethren." Trusting in Christ they were sanctified and belonged to those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren. They are called "partakers of the heavenly calling" in contrast with their former "earthly calling" of Israel. The two titles of the Lord Jesus, Apostle and High Priest, correspond to the preceding opening chapters of the Epistle. As Apostle (a Sent One), the Son of God came from God to man. And then as Man who suffered and died, He has gone from man to God as High Priest, typified by Aaron. As the Lord Jesus Christ is in this Epistle called the Apostle, the Spirit of God may have, for this reason, kept the pen of the apostle, who wrote this document, from calling himself an apostle.

Then follows the contrast with Moses. Moses was faithful in all his house (the tabernacle) but only as a servant. Christ is over God's house, which He has built, for He is God. And in this house He is not a servant, but a Son. Both the universe and the Church, as the House of God, are here blended together. The house in the wilderness, the tabernacle, was a type of the universe. "And every house is built by some one, but He that built all things is God." Christ is the builder of the universe, the house, and the upholder of it and so He is counted worthy of greater honor than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath built it hath more honor than the house. The Apostle of our confession, the Sent one of God, the Son of God, is also the High Priest. After His finished work on the cross, having made propitiation for the sins of the people, He passed through the heavens into the Holiest not made with hands. (The three parts of the tabernacle, the outer court, the holy part, and the Holiest typify the first, the second and the third heaven.) Ultimately in virtue of redemption, all having been cleansed by the blood, God will dwell in the house. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." And those things have come and are given through Christ, who is Son over His house, whose house are we. This is His spiritual house, the house of God composed of living stones, the sanctified, the holy priesthood. The Son of God, the builder of all things, has now as High Priest, His own house, which are we "if we hold fast the confidence (boldness) and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." It is a warning to those Hebrews who had confessed Christ, who were facing trials and many difficulties, not to give up the confidence and the rejoicing in the hope. They are urged to hold it fast and are solemnly warned against unbelief. They were in danger of forsaking Christianity, and turning back to Judaism. And these words of warning are also given to us, for they are needful for the exercise of the conscience. A true believer will continue in confidence firm to the end. Such a continuance is the proof of the reality of our confession.

("it is clearly not our standing which is in question; for this being wholly of God and in Christ is settled and sure and unchanging. There is no "if" either as to Christ's work or as to the gospel of God's grace. All there is unconditional grace to faith. The wilderness journey is before us (as the next verses show). Here it is that "if" has its necessary place, because it is our walk through the desert, where there are so many occasions of failure, and we need constant dependence in God.")

Verses 7-13

The danger and calamity of unbelief is next called to their remembrance. Psalm 95 is quoted. The Holy Spirit saith "Today if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts." Such was the word of warning addressed to Israel in the past, but it also has its application in the present. The word "today" expresses God's wonderful patience and long suffering towards Israel as well as towards all during this age of grace. The "today" is now; the great morrow comes, when the "today" ends and the kingdom of power and glory with its attending judgments upon those who did not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ comes, and the once rejected King Messiah appears. The fathers of the Hebrews had tempted God in the wilderness. He was wroth with that generation and swore in His wrath "they shall not enter into My rest." It was God's solemn sentence of exclusion from His rest. They hardened their hearts, did not obey His voice and their unbelief shut them out from God's rest.

Even so these Hebrews, professing Christianity were in the same danger. "Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you

an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God." But while it was "today," God still waited to be gracious and so they were to exhort each other daily, lest any of them be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Danger surrounded them on every side. "The heart of unbelief which barred the land of Canaan from their natural fathers was yet within their flesh. Not only were the lusts of nature in their ordinary shape forever combating against the will of God, they were exposed also to a more specious, and therefore a more dangerous form of evil in the still existing rivalry which they who made their boast in their traditions were opposing to the cross of Christ. Of all the evils with which Satan can afflict the heart, atheism, religion without faith in God, is by very much the worst. For it lulls the conscience, while it weaves its web of unblest, unsanctifying exercises about the heart's affections so as effectually to exclude the light of God. It was to this peace-corroding yet seductive evil that these Hebrew Christians stood practically exposed."

"Now the remedy and safeguard of all evil is the truth of God. It is only by listening to the word of Him who speaks to us as children with a knowledge of our need, that believers can be kept in their true place. The possession of truth in the way of doctrine is not enough. God daily speaks and must be daily heard if we would really know Him" (A. Pridham).

All this is true of God's people at all times, for faith and obedience are the essential conditions of blessing and the tests of profession. God is faithful and will certainly not permit that any of His own perish. Faith reckons with this, but also heeds the warning, knowing and owning the tendency of the flesh to depart from God, and hence the need of His constant and never-failing grace is recognized and a walk in godly fear is the blessed result. There are teachers who claim that these solemn exhortations have no meaning for Christians today and even have made the statement that this epistle was not for the church at all. Such claims show a deplorable ignorance of the truth of God. All believers must heed the warning "that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

("Sin separates us from God in our thoughts; we have no longer the same sense either of His love, His power, or His interest in us. Confidence is lost. Hope, and the value of unseen things, diminish; while the value of things that are seen proportionately increases. The conscience is bad; one is not at ease with God. The path is hard and difficult; the will strengthens itself against Him. We no longer live by faith; visible things come in between us and God, and take possession of the heart. Where there is life, God warns by His Spirit (as in this epistle), He chastises and restores. Where it was only an outward influence, a faith devoid of life, and the conscience not reached, it is abandoned" J. N. Darby.)

Verses 14-19. The need of faith, the holding fast of the beginning of our confidence unto the end, is now more fully presented. All Israelites came out of Egypt . But with whom was he wroth for forty years? it was with them that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Their sin was unbelief And those who believed not were kept out of His rest. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" What the rest of God is we shall follow in the annotations of the next paragraphs.

CHAPTER 4

1. What the rest of God is (4:1-11)

2. The power of the Word of God (4:12-13)

Verses 1-11

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you might seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." These words of exhortation belong properly to the preceding chapter.

What is the rest of which these verses speak? It is generally explained as the rest which the true believer finds and has in the Lord Jesus Christ in believing; that his conscience has rest. It is frequently identified with Matt. 11:28-29. While it is blessedly true that all who come to the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour find rest in Him from the curse of the law and the burden of sin, while it is equally true that those who follow Him in obedience and learn of Him find rest day by day for their souls, yet it is not this present rest which is before us in these verses. The rest which is meant is called by God "My rest"; it is the rest of God and is future, the rest in coming glory, an eternal rest. It is God's rest, because He made it Himself and He will enjoy it in glory with those who have believed in Christ, in whose perfect work God has His rest,

because it satisfies His holiness and His love. Into this rest the believer enters at His coming. Then work will be over and all burdens cease. Righteousness reigns and groaning creation is delivered and all the promised glory will be accomplished. God rests then in His love and rejoices (Zeph. 3:17). Till that day God works, for sin and the curse is unremoved, but all will be changed when His Son appears in glory and all things are put in subjection under Him. The perfect, complete rest of God is in the new heaven and earth, when God dwells among men and sin and death are forever gone. He then is all in all. This is the rest which remains for the people of God.

"God must rest in that which satisfies His heart. This was the case even in creation--all was very good. And now it must be in a perfect blessing that perfect love can be satisfied with, with regard to us, who will possess a heavenly portion in the blessing which we shall have in His own presence, in perfect holiness and perfect light. Accordingly all the toilsome work of faith, the exercise of faith in the wilderness, the warfare (although there are many joys), the good works practised there, labour of every kind will cease. It is not only that we shall be delivered from the power of indwelling sin; all the efforts and all the troubles of the new man will cease. We are already set free from the law of sin; then our spiritual exercise for God will cease. We shall rest from our works--not evil ones. We have already rested from our works with regard to justification, and therefore in that sense we have now rest in our consciences, but that is not the subject here--it is the Christian's rest from all his works. God rested from His works--assuredly good ones--and so shall we also then with Him.

"We are now in the wilderness; we also wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places. A blessed rest remains for us in which our hearts will repose in the presence of God, where nothing will trouble the perfection of our rest, where God will rest in the perfection of the blessing He has bestowed on His people.

"The great thought of the passage is, that there remains a rest (that is to say, that the believer is not to expect it here) without saying where it is. And it does not speak in detail of the character of the rest, because it leaves the door open to an earthly rest for the earthly people on the ground of the promises, although to Christian partakers of the heavenly calling God's rest is evidently a heavenly one" (Synopsis of the Bible).

The argument and exhortation of verses 3-11 is therefore easily understood. God had rested in creation on the seventh day from all His work. But that rest was broken and is also the type of another rest of God to come. Those who believe not cannot enter into that coming rest and it is shown that Joshua (verse 8, not Jesus, but Joshua) and the rest in Canaan is not the true rest of God, for if it had been why would David, long after Joshua, have spoken of it again? Nor has this rest come now for the people of God; it is still in the future. A Sabbath-keeping remaineth for the people of God. We are on the road toward it, beset by dangers and difficulties as Israel was when passing through the wilderness. And therefore the exhortation to be diligent to enter into that rest and not to be unbelieving and disobedient. Entrance into the rest is by faith. We who have believed do enter into rest. While the believer is assured of this future entrance into the rest of God, he also uses diligence and earnestness while on the way, watching and praying. True faith is evidenced by such a walk.

Verses 12-13

The Word of God and its divine living power is here introduced by the Holy Spirit. It is the method of God, to use His Word, to bring to light and judge the unbelief and workings of the heart. It judges everything in the heart which is not of Him. Its use, its constant use, is the supreme necessity of those who believe and are on the way to the rest of God, for it is His divine Word which brings us into God's presence. It is a searching Word and under its power the conscience becomes aroused and the blessed and needed work of self-judgment begins. Life, power and omniscience, three great attributes of God, are here given to His Word. The Word also gives power and spiritual energy.

("Soul and spirit" as thus named together can only be the two parts of the immaterial nature of man; which Scripture, in spite of what many think, everywhere clearly distinguishes from one another. The soul is the lower, sensitive, instinctive, emotional part, which, where not, as in man, penetrated with the light of the spirit, is simply animal; and which also, where man is not in the power of the Spirit of God, will still gravitate towards this. The spirit is intelligent and moral, that which knows human things (1 Cor. 2:11). In the "natural man," which is really the psychic man, the man souled (1 Cor. 2:14), conscience, with its recognition of God, is in abeyance, and the mind itself becomes earthly. Important enough it is, therefore, to divide between "soul and spirit." "Joints and marrow" convey to us the difference between the external and the internal, the outward form and the essence hidden in it" Numerical Bible.)

III. CHRIST AS PRIEST IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

CHAPTERS 4:14-10

The Great High-Priest (4:14-16)

With this statement the main section of the Epistle begins, and the great theme, the priesthood of Christ, is introduced. This section covers six chapters, ending with the tenth. Here we learn that Christ, the true priest, has passed through the heavens and is now in a heavenly sanctuary, the way into which His own work has blessedly opened. The different contrasts with the priests and sacrifices of Judaism, the old covenant and the new, are made in these chapters. The concluding verses of the fourth chapter one might say, contain all the truth of His priesthood which the succeeding chapters develop and expand.

He is the great high priest who is passed through the heavens. He has entered heaven itself, the third heaven, the holiest. The earthly tabernacle in which Aaron and his successors ministered had three parts. Through these Aaron passed as he entered into the holiest and these parts are typical of the heavenly things. Christ also passed through, but not through the places made by hands--He passed through the heavens and into the holiest. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:24). And He who passed through the heavens is Jesus, the Son of God; He who was made a little lower than the angels and after His sacrificial death arose, is now clothed with a glorified human body in the presence of God. His priestly ministry there is in behalf of His people. He is, as high priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities; He was in all points tempted as we are, apart from sin. ("Yet without sin" is an incorrect translation and is responsible for the very erroneous teaching that our Lord, while He did not sin, might have sinned. It was absolutely impossible for Him to sin, for He is the Son of God and God cannot sin.) He lived on earth and passed through life; He suffered and was tempted; He experienced all the trials His people have to pass through in their lives and infinitely more than His saints can ever suffer, and therefore He sympathizes with all our infirmities. In all the difficulties, perplexities, trials and sorrows, the saint of God finds perfect sympathy in Him as priest. His heart filled with that love which passeth knowledge, is touched, beyond our finite comprehension, with the feeling of our infirmities.

As to sin, temptation from within, the lust of an evil heart, He knew absolutely nothing. He knew no sin. He was tempted in all things, apart from sin. Sin, therefore, is excluded. Nor does a child of God desire sympathy with indwelling sin. It must be judged, put into the place of death, and not sympathized with. And this fact that He is the great High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities, our weaknesses and our trials; the knowledge that He, who is exalted in glory, concerns Himself about us and our trials down here, gives encouragement to hold fast our confession. He will not leave, nor forsake, nor fail His saints.

We have evil temptations from within; Christ had none. Temptation from sin was absolutely incompatible with His holy person. By a miracle he was even as to humanity exempt from the taint of evil. It is of holy temptations this Epistle treats, not of our unholy ones. The Epistle of James distinguishes them very definitely in Chapter 1. Compare verses 2, 12, on the one hand, and verses 13-15 on the other. We know the latter too well. Jesus knew. But He knew the former as no other before or since. He was in all things tempted according to likeness, i.e. with us, with this infinite difference 'apart from sin.' He knew no sin. He is therefore the more-- not the less--able to sympathize with us. For sin within, even if not yielded to, blinds the eye, and dulls the heart, and hinders from unreserved occupation with the trials of others" (J.N. Darby.)

And while we are not told to go to this great High Priest (He is constantly occupying Himself about us) we are told to come boldly to the throne of grace. We look to the Lord Jesus Christ, trust His love and sympathy, and knowing that He is there we can go with boldness to the throne of grace. And there we find all we need.

CHAPTER 5

1. What the High Priest is and represents (5:1-4)
2. The fulfillment in Christ made High Priest (5:5-10)

3. The spiritual condition of the Hebrew-Christians (5:11-14)

Verses 1-4

In developing the priesthood of Christ and showing how it excels the earthly priesthood and is more glorious than the priesthood of Judaism, the principles of priesthood of the levitical system are first stated. Upon this follows the comparison of the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron. The transcendent priesthood of Christ is thus established by this contrast. These opening verses have nothing to do with our Lord. They show how the high priest was taken from among men and being merely a man who was to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant, himself clothed with infirmity, he was obliged not alone to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, but also for himself. This can, of course, never apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He is sinless. He therefore cannot be meant in these introductory words of this chapter. And the earthly priests did not take this honor to themselves. God's call was necessary.

Verses 5-10

How the priesthood, foreshadowed in Aaron, was first of all fulfilled in Christ is the theme of this section. Here we have His call to be priest. "So Christ also hath not glorified Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee" (Psalm 2). As He saith also in another place, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec" (Psalm 110). His call from God is to be King-Priest. The second psalm reveals Him as Son of God, King to be enthroned and to rule over the nations, and He is priest after the order of Melchisedec. This name is here mentioned for the first time. His Melchisedec priesthood the Spirit of God unfolds fully in the seventh chapter. The call of Him is according to the eternal purposes of God. He came to offer Himself as the sacrificial Lamb on the cross. This was indicated when He went into Jordan, baptized by John. It was then that the Father's voice was heard declaring His sonship. He had to pass through death and rise again to be the priest after the order of Melchisedec.

His suffering and death are therefore next mentioned in these verses: "Who in the days of His flesh having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death and having been heard for His godly fear, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." These words refer chiefly to the portal of the cross, Gethsemane. There He prayed with strong crying and tears, alone with His Father in deepest agony, fallen on His face, and His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down on the ground. He went into all the anguish of death, deprecating the cup He had to drink, yet in meek and perfect submission. What a terrible weight was there upon His holy soul! And He was heard for His godly fear. He was saved, not from dying, for that would have left man in his sins and unredeemed; He was saved out of death. His prayer was answered by His resurrection. It was in that agony that He learned obedience. Though Son of God, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. Having come to obey and to suffer (which as Son of God was unknown to Him), He obeyed in everything and submitted to everything. He did not save Himself, but drank the cup and died the sinner's death.

What He is in resurrection, the results of His sacrificial death, are next stated. "And being made perfect, He became, unto all that obey Him, author of eternal salvation; being saluted (or welcomed by God) of God as high priest after the order of Melchisedec." In the second chapter we saw that the captain of our salvation had to be made perfect through sufferings (2:10). Here we meet the same statement, that He has been made perfect. It means the completeness of His work through sufferings, in resurrection and heavenly glory. And through this finished work in which He was perfected as Saviour, He also became unto all that obey Him (all who believe on Him and own Him thus as their Saviour) the author of eternal salvation. Returning to glory, God saluted, or welcomed Him as priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Verses 11-14

Here another parenthesis begins which closes with the end of the sixth chapter. The seventh chapter resumes the instructions concerning Melchisedec and the priesthood of Christ. Their spiritual state was that of babes as still under the ordinances and requirements of the law. They clung to Judaism and could not fully break loose from the shadow things of their system. They were dull of hearing and while they ought to have been teachers (having believed in Christ) there was need of teaching them again what are the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God. They needed milk and were not fit for the "solid food." They had not gone on in the gospel, into that maturity which the Holy Spirit has revealed as to the believer's standing and perfection in Christ. As long as they were occupied with ordinances they were but infants and in

danger of apostasy.

Ritualistic Christendom today corresponds to the state of many of these Hebrew-Christians of the first century, only ritualism is worthy of greater condemnation. The fearful evil of ritualism (Romish and so-called Protestant) is that it takes and imitates Jewish forms and ordinances and through these things sets aside and corrupts true Christianity. It is the bondage of the flesh.

("We may observe that there is no greater hindrance to progress in spiritual life and intelligence than attachment to an ancient form of religion, which, being traditional and not simply personal faith in the truth, consists always in ordinances, and is consequently carnal and earthly. Without this people may be unbelievers; but under the influence of such a system piety itself--expressed in forms--makes a barrier between the soul and the light of God; and these forms which surround, preoccupy, and hold the affections captive, prevent them from enlarging and becoming enlightened by means of divine revelation. Morally (as the apostle here expresses it) the senses are not exercised to discern both good and evil" Synopsis of the Gospel.)

CHAPTER 6

1. Return to Judaism the crucifixion of the Son of God afresh (6:1-8)

2. Persuaded of better things: Comfort and hope (6:9-20)

Verses 1-8

A solemn warning follows, addressed to these Hebrews who were halting and in danger of turning back to Judaism, and doing so would crucify the Son of God afresh. "Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to full growth; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God, of a teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." It is of much importance to see that these things are not "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" (as the authorized version erroneously states). These things mentioned are the elementary things which the Jews had before Christ came and as they were still occupied with them, He exhorts to leave the word of the beginning of Christ, the Messiah, and to go on to full growth. The full growth is Christianity as revealed in the finished work of Christ, the glory of His Person, His priesthood and the fact that the believer is in Christ and complete in Him.

While these Hebrews had believed in Christ, that He had come, they had not gone on to this maturity and lacked the spiritual knowledge of what Christ had done and the blessed results of His work and priesthood. They were therefore to leave the elementary things which they had and believed in as Jews, and abandoning them, reach the true Christian maturity. And these elementary things consisted in repentance from dead works and of faith in God. This was known and taught in Judaism. But it is faith in God, but nothing is said of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When baptism is mentioned and laying on of hands it has nothing whatever to do with Christian baptism, and much less does the laying on of hands mean "confirmation." (Confirmation as practiced in the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, and several other Protestant denominations is a merely ecclesiastical invention without the slightest scriptural foundation.) The word "baptism" is in the plural--"baptisms"--the different washings the Jews practice in connection with the ceremonial law, and so also the Jewish imposition of hands. These Jewish washings and purifications were only shadows of what was to come. It had come; and yet these Jews, though believing that Christ had come, still lingered in these things. Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, the things concerning the future were likewise the teachings they had in Judaism. But Christianity gives a higher truth, namely, "the resurrection from among the dead" and that the believer is passed from death unto life and shall not come into judgment.--"And this will he do if God permit"-- that is in the coming unfolding of true Christianity, the full growth, as given in chapters 7-10.

Before the author of the Epistle does this he shows what it would mean if these Hebrews turn back to Judaism altogether, and instead of going on to full growth would abandon the Christian ground they occupied as professing believers in Christ. Such a course would make it impossible to renew them again to repentance, for they, by falling away, crucified afresh for themselves the Son of God, putting Him to open shame. They committed the crime, which was done by them through ignorance (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17), now knowingly of their own will and choice. For such a wilful falling away there was

no remedy. The things mentioned in verses 4 and 5 show the possibility that a person may be enlightened, and have tested, and even participated, by listening to the testimony of the Spirit concerning Christ, and seen miracles, the powers of the age to come--without having fully accepted the offered salvation.

"The warning here has been a sore perplexity to many who are far as possible from the condition which is here contemplated. The description of these apostates, solemn as it is, does not speak of them as children of God, as justified by faith, or in any way which would imply such things as these; and the apostle, after describing them, immediately adds, as to those whom he is addressing; 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, even things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.' This is the most distinct assurance that he had no thought of one who had known salvation incurring the doom of an apostate" Numerical Bible.

All the blessings offered upon Christian ground are to such outward professors like rain, which instead of bringing forth from the ground useful herbs, brings thorns and briars, worthless, nigh unto cursing, and then the end, to be burned. Of a true child of God this can never be said.

("When once we have understood that this passage is a comparison of the power of the spiritual system with Judaism, and that it speaks of giving up the former, after having known it, its difficulty disappears. The possession of life is not supposed, nor is that question touched. The passage speaks, not of life, but of the Holy Ghost as a power present in Christianity. To "taste the good word" is to have understood how precious that word is; and not the having been quickened by its means. Hence in speaking to the Jewish Christians he hopes better things and things which accompany salvation, so that all these things could be there and yet no salvation. Fruit there could not be. That supports life" Synopsis of the Bible.)

Verses 9-20, Words of comfort and hope conclude this chapter. He addresses them now as "beloved," of whom he is persuaded of better things, the things which accompany salvation. Their true faith had been manifested by works. And God is not unrighteous "to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards His name in that ye have ministered unto the saints and do minister." These are things which accompany salvation. He encourages them to be followers of them who through patience and faith inherit the promises. He calls their attention to Abraham, the father of the faithful. He endured patiently and obtained the promise. And He gave not only the promise of His Word, but also His oath. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." What assurance therefore--God's Word and God's oath. And this makes manifest to the heirs of promise (believers) the immutability of His counsel, so that we might have strong consolation. Therefore those who trust and hope for future glory have a strong and satisfying consolation. But there is more than that. There is a personal guarantee, for the Lord Jesus as a forerunner has entered into heaven, where He now is as high priest after the order of Melchisedec. He, who is our hope, is there as a forerunner and this is the anchor of the soul; it anchors in Him who hath entered within the veil. He who is seated in glory is the promised One, the object, bearer and dispenser of all the promises of God. In Him and His work all is made secure. His presence there speaks of the ultimate realization of all the promises of glory for His people.

CHAPTER 7

1. The priesthood of Melchisedec in contrast with the Levitical priesthood (7:1-19)
2. The holy and heavenly priesthood of Christ (7:20-28)

Verses 1-19

The interrupted argument concerning the priesthood of Christ is now resumed. It connects with chapter 5:10. There we find Melchisedec mentioned for the first time, and here the historical Melchisedec is first of all described. The record is given in Genesis 14:18-20. He met Abraham, who returned from the smiting of the Kings, and blessed him. Abraham gave him the tenth of all. His name means "King of Righteousness"; but he was also King of Salem, that is, "King of Peace." First righteousness and peace after-ward. This is God's order--not peace and righteousness, but righteousness and peace. It is so spiritually for the believer; it will be so in millennial times when "righteousness and peace will kiss each other."

Who was Melchisedec? Some have said he was Shem and not a few maintain that he was the Lord Himself, one of the

theophanies, a pre-incarnation manifestation of the Son of God. The latter view is certainly wrong, for Scripture states that Melchisedec is "made like unto the Son of God", that is, he is a pattern, a similitude of Him; Melchisedec was therefore not the Lord Himself. It is vain to speculate on the identity of this King-Priest, for the Holy Spirit on purpose does not mention who he was. When we read, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," it does not mean that Melchisedec had no father and no mother, etc. But it means that Scripture gives no record of these facts; Moses being divinely guided in omitting it all in the book of Genesis, and thus making Melchisedec appear as a man without father and mother, without descent, having no beginning and end of days, who has a priesthood invested in himself. And this for the purpose of furnishing a type of our Lord as the royal priest.

Melchisedec foreshadows fully the millennial glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Zech. 6:9-13. He will receive His own throne and be a priest upon that throne. Significantly he appeared suddenly when Abraham was returning from smiting the allied kings. (Genesis 14 gives the record of the first war of the Bible.) And then he blessed Abraham and made known to him God as the Most-High (the millennial name of God), the possessor of heaven and earth. Even so the true Melchisedec will some day appear, and after the smiting of the kings (the battle of Armageddon, Rev. 16:14-16; 19:19) will begin His glorious rule. Nor must it be overlooked that Melchisedec brought to Abraham bread and wine, the blessed emblems of the great sacrificial work of the true Melchisedec, which points us, who are by faith the children of Abraham, to the blessed memorial feast, in which His love and grace, as well as glory, are remembered. Christ is therefore now for His own the Priest after the order of Melchisedec; the full display of His Melchisedec priesthood arrives in the day of His coming glory.

The chief object of bringing forward the person of Melchisedec and his connection with Abraham is, to show first, the superiority of Melchisedec to Levi and his priesthood as better and higher than the Levitical priesthood. Abraham gave him the tenth part of all the spoil. The whole Levitical priesthood was then not in existence, inasmuch as Levi, unborn, was in the loins of Abraham; in Abraham, Levi, therefore, gave tithes to Melchisedec. Melchisedec, as priest, blessed the father of the nation, and therefore he was greater than Abraham, for "without controversy, the less is blessed of the greater." The priesthood of Melchisedec was therefore superior to that of the sons of Levi, the Aaronic priesthood.

After this argument another one is introduced. The question is concerning the Levitical priesthood, if it could give perfection. The one hundred and tenth psalm announced the coming of a priest after the order of Melchisedec and therefore superior to Aaron. If then perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what need was there that this other priest of a higher order than Aaron should arise? Because perfection was not by that earthly priesthood, nor by the law, therefore this better priest had to come to bring the needed perfection and that necessitated a change of the law also. "The law, doubtless, was good; but separation still existed between man and God. The law made nothing perfect. God was ever perfect, and human perfection was required; all must be according to what divine perfection required of man. But sin was there, and the law was consequently without power (save to condemn); its ceremonies and ordinances were but figures, and a heavy yoke. Even that which temporarily relieved the conscience brought sin to mind and never made the conscience perfect towards God. They were still at a distance from Him. Grace brings the soul to God, who is known in love and in a righteousness which is for us."--J.N.D.

The law in all its ordinances was a witness of imperfection, though it foreshadowed the good things to come. The law was therefore not to abide. With the cessation of the Levitical priesthood the entire law-covenant would terminate. And He of whom these things are spoken (the Lord Jesus Christ) "pertaineth to another tribe, of which no one hath given attendance at the altar (as priest). For it is certain that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." His coming, therefore, has taken from the tribe of Levi the honor and set aside their priesthood. And He who sprang out of Judah, the priest after the similitude of Melchisedec (combining priesthood and royalty) hath been made, not after a law of fleshly commandment, but after the power of an indissoluble life. His priesthood is not a thing of time and change, a fleshly priesthood like Aaron's but it is a priesthood in the power of an indissoluble life. He has passed through death, and now in heaven, not on earth, He is the Melchisedec priest, who has no end of days, who lives eternally.

Then follows a conclusion, a summing up of the whole argument. In the stated fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, "There is a setting aside of the commandment going before (the law and its ordinances) on account of weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect) and the bringing in of a better hope through which we draw near to God." The law is then set aside on account of its weakness and unprofitableness, for it could not perfect anything. All the priestly ordinances and ministrations could not make atonement, nor could bring nigh

unto God. It was all imperfection. Yet perfection and bringing His children nigh unto Himself is God's gracious and eternal purpose. And God has accomplished this now in the person of His ever blessed Son, the priest after the order of Melchisedec. This is the bringing in of a better hope; by Him we draw near unto God. This truth is more fully developed later.

Verses 20-28

An additional argument is given. The priesthood of Christ was established by an oath, while that of Aaron was not. Swearing an oath God said as to Him, who sat down at His own right hand, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." How superior, then, this priesthood! By so much, also, hath Jesus become surety of a better covenant." And furthermore, they were many priests, for they were mortal men and died. But Christ continueth forever and hath the unchangeable priesthood. And this ever-living priest is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him, seeing that He always liveth to make intercession for them." He saves completely and keeps His own by His priestly, all-powerful intercession, for eternal glory. And what a high priest He is! Such a high priest! Well may His own in holy joy and praise cry out--"Such a high priest!" He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. "In His official dignity and glory He is made higher than the heavens." And He has no need, day by day, as the earthly high priests, first to offer up sacrifices for His own sins, then for those of the people. This He did once for all when He offered up Himself. What a contrast with the Jewish priests. They were sinners--He, separate from sinners and absolutely holy; they with the many sacrifices, which could accomplish nothing for man--He with the one great sacrifice which has accomplished all. And so He maketh intercession for them who have believed in Him, the many sons He brings to glory. He is holy and heavenly--even so are all His own, saved by grace, holy and partakers of the heavenly calling (3:1).

CHAPTER 8

1. Christ, the High Priest (8:1-6)

2. The old covenant and the new (8:7-13)

Verses 1-6

The new priesthood which the better priest exerciseth in heaven furthermore implies also a change in the sacrifices and in the covenant. This is now more fully developed in the last three chapters of this section. There is first of all a summary. The priest we have is not ministering on earth but "we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man." Every high priest had to offer gifts and sacrifices, so it was of necessity that He also should have something to offer. What He has offered is brought out in the ninth and tenth chapters. As high priest He offered up Himself on the cross and then, as the high priest who had brought this perfect offering, He passed through the heavens and into heaven itself. If He were upon the earth and His priesthood went no further than the earth, He would not be a priest. He has no place among the Levitical priests, the priests who offered according to the law, whose office and ministrations were but shadows of heavenly things; but He hath obtained a more excellent ministry, because He is the mediator of a better covenant, which has for a foundation better promises.

As Christ came not from Aaron's family He could not be a priest after that pattern; His priesthood is wholly different, for it is heavenly and exercised in glory. With this more excellent priesthood, foreshadowed in the earthly Levitical priesthood, the latter has been completely set aside. This is the truth these Hebrew believers needed more fully to lay hold on, because the earthly tabernacle was still standing and the earthly priests were still exercising their empty and meaningless functions. And that which is put away, which is gone, because the one great offering was brought, and the true high priest has entered into the holiest and is in the presence of God for His people, Satan has successfully introduced and established upon Christian ground as one of the most soul-destroying inventions. Ritualistic Christendom with a priesthood patterned after the extinct Jewish priesthood, with a worship more or less after the model of Israel's worship, is the shade of the departed shadow. It is apostasy from the truth of the gospel of grace; it is a wicked denial of the gospel of our salvation. This priestly assumption of men is the worst possible corruption of the doctrine of Christ.

Verses 7-13

The preceding verse showed that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant. This leads next to a contrast between the first (the old) and the new covenant. A covenant contains the necessary principles established by God under which man may live with God, in which He deals with man. There are only two covenants. The old covenant which was established at Sinai, the law-covenant, and the new covenant which in its fullest meaning has not yet been ratified, for it also relates to the people of Israel as we shall soon learn from this chapter. Strictly speaking the gospel, the proclamation of the salvation of God, is not a covenant. Still those who accept the gospel possess all the spiritual blessings of this new covenant, and much more than Israel can ever possess, when at last as a converted nation this new covenant will be established with them.

The argument is simple. The fact that a new covenant is promised shows that the old covenant was insufficient. "For if that first one had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for the second." It could not accomplish what was in God's heart to bring His people into the closest and nearest relationship with Himself. The first covenant, the law, could not do this, and therefore "finding fault, He saith unto them, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not regard them, saith the Lord."

This first covenant was conditional, and the people did not keep this covenant and the Lord, because they were disobedient, did not regard them. That first covenant was unto their condemnation. And therefore the Lord had announced through the prophet Jeremiah that a new covenant was to be consummated for Israel and Judah, the same people with whom the first covenant was made. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind, and with them in their hearts; and I will be God unto them, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me of the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). This new covenant is unlike the old one in that it has no condition attached to it. In it the Lord speaks alone in words of sovereign grace--"I will." It is the same what Jehovah promised to the nation through the prophet Ezekiel (chapter 36). And this grace covenant awaits its fulfillment for that nation in coming days.

The ground of this new covenant is the sacrificial death of Christ, His blood, as we learn from His own words when He instituted His supper. Because He died for that nation (John 6:51-52) all Israel --the house of Israel and the house of Judah --will be brought into the promised blessings through this grace covenant. In the meantime, while Israel has not yet entered into this new covenant, Gentiles, who are by nature aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise (no new covenant being promised to Gentiles), believing in Christ, are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:12-13), enjoy every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, become members of the body of Christ and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom. 11:25) then God will turn in mercy to His people Israel, whom He hath not cast away, and this new covenant will be fully established and all the promises as to restoration, temporal blessings, as well, spiritual blessings, so richly promised throughout the Old Testament prophetic word, will through grace come upon them. Then their sins and iniquities will be remembered no more. It all comes to pass when He comes again, who alone can turn away ungodliness from Jacob. What light and joy these facts of the old covenant set aside and the promises of the new covenant must have brought to the hearts of these Hebrew believers who read first this great message.

("Modern Judaism [both rabbinical and rationalistic] is not able to account for the cessation of sacrifices and the Levitical dispensation. The former acknowledges that in the destruction of the temple and the present condition of Israel without high priest and offerings, divine judgment on the nation's sin is expressed: the idea of atonement through a vicarious sacrifice is not quite extinct, as appears in the rite of the cock performed on the eve of the day of atonement, though devoid of all Scriptural authority. Rationalistic Judaism has departed still further from the truth. Rejecting the idea of substitution and expiation in connection with sacrifices, it regards the present condition of Israel as a more spiritual development, misinterpreting the protests of David and the prophets against a mere external view of the ceremonial law (Ps. 40:7; Hos. 6:6; Jer. 7:21-23). The old has indeed vanished; but according to the will of God, because the true light now shineth, because the substance has come in Christ" A. Saphir.)

CHAPTER 9

1. The first tabernacle and its worship (9:1-10)
2. The blood and the perfect work accomplished (9:11-23)
3. The Priest in heaven (9:24-28)

Verses 1-10

The Spirit of God now brings forth the greatest and most blessed facts concerning Christ, the offering He brought, and what has been accomplished by that offering. First the worldly sanctuary, the tabernacle, which was connected with the old covenant is briefly mentioned. It was erected by divine command, exhibiting divine wisdom and foreshadowed, like the levitical priesthood, the better things to come. Yet it was a "worldly sanctuary," that is, it was tangible according to this present world and built of materials of the earth. The antithesis to worldly is heavenly, uncreated, eternal. Everything in this tabernacle had a spiritual meaning. But it is not the purpose here to explain these things, the shadows of spiritual realities, for the apostle writes "of which we cannot now speak particularly" He does not give a complete description of the tabernacle at all. Nothing is said of the outer court, nor of the brazen altar, the golden altar of incense and other details. His object is not to explain the tabernacle but to demonstrate one great fact. He speaks of the two principal parts of the tabernacle, divided by the interior veil. Into the second the high priest entered in only once every year, not without blood--"the Holy Spirit signifying this, that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle had yet its standing." This is the truth he demonstrates. the way into the holiest, into God's presence was barred; the veil was in the way and concealed Him. All the gifts and sacrifices brought in that tabernacle could not give perfection as to the conscience--they could not lead the people into the holiest and give peace to the conscience.

Verses 11-23

With verse eleven begins the setting forth of the perfection which now has come. From here to the close of the tenth chapter we have the heart of this great epistle. The most blessed truth of the great work of Christ accomplished for His people is now gloriously displayed. The greatest contrast between the old things and the new is reached. Two little words of deep significance stand at the beginning of this section--"But Christ." The gifts and offerings, the meats and drinks, the divine washings, the carnal ordinances, all and everything could not do anything for sinful man-- but Christ. It is well for the understanding of what follows to give a summary of what is here taught. "But Christ having come, a high priest of the good things that are come, by the better and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building (creation)--neither by the blood of goats and bulls, but by His own blood, He hath entered in once for all into the holy places, having found an eternal redemption." Christ having come, perfection has come through His own precious blood. The blood of Jesus; has opened the way into the Holiest and the believer is admitted into the presence of God by that new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. The next chapter brings this out more fully, that believers on earth have a free, a full, a perfect access to God. The believer can now go in perfect liberty, not into an earthly tabernacle, but into heaven where His holiness dwells and be perfectly at home there in virtue of the work of Christ and His own presence there. Such is the believer's position in the presence of God through the entrance of our high priest into the heavenly sanctuary.

And the believer can go in without doubt and fear, for he has no more conscience of sin, his conscience is made perfect before God through Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. The question of sin is settled forever. "A perfect conscience is not an innocent conscience which, happy in its unconsciousness, does not know evil, and does not know God revealed in holiness. A perfect conscience knows God; it is cleansed, and, having the knowledge of good and evil according to light of God Himself, it knows that it is purified from all evil according to His purity.

Now the blood of bulls and goats, and the washing repeated under the law, could never make the conscience perfect. They could sanctify carnally, so as to enable the worshipper to approach God outwardly, yet only afar off, with the veil still unrent. But a real purification from sin and sins, so that the soul can be in the presence of God Himself in the light without spot, with the consciousness of being so, the offerings under the law could never produce. They were but figures. But,

thanks be to God, Christ has accomplished the work; and is present for us now in the heavenly and eternal sanctuary, He is the witness there that our sins are put away; so that all conscience of sin before God is destroyed, because we know that He who bore our sins is in the presence of God, after having accomplished the work of expiation. Thus we have the consciousness of being in the light without spot. We have the purification not only of sins but of the conscience, so that we can use this access to God in full liberty and joy, presenting ourselves before Him who has so loved us (Synopsis of the Bible).

And thus these Hebrews (as well as we) know that the true high priest is in the sanctuary above, not with the blood of sacrifices, but He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself As man on earth, in the perfection and value of His person, He offered Himself, by the eternal Spirit, without spot, to God. And therefore every sinner who comes to God through Him is purged from dead works to serve the living God. Being therefore perfectly cleansed, perfectly brought into God's presence, in possession of an eternal (in contrast with earthly) redemption and an eternal inheritance, the believer can serve the living God. All this was unknown in the legal covenant. It is then that through the death of Christ and the subsequent bestowal of the Holy Spirit believers are constituted true worshippers in the heavenly sanctuary, a holy priesthood. Christ is the perfect mediator. And therefore no earthly priesthood is needed. The attempt to introduce priestly mediation of sinful men between Christ and His people, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren is anti-Christian, the offspring of Satan. Adolph Saphir, the author of an able exposition of Hebrews has exposed the Romish blasphemy in aping the defunct Judaism in words, which are worthy to be quoted.

"What a marvellous confusion of Jewish, pagan, and Christian elements do we see here! Jewish things which have waxed old, and vanished away; preparatory and imperfect elements which the apostle does not scruple to call beggarly now that the fulness has come--revived without divine authority, and changed and perverted to suit circumstances for which they were never intended. Pagan things, appealing to the deep-seated and time-confirmed love of idolatry, and of sensuous and mere outward performances; the Babylonian worship of the Queen of Heaven; the intercession of saints and angels, the mechanical repetition of formulas, the superstitious regard of places, seasons, and relics. Buried among these elements are some relics of Christian truth, without which this ingenious fabric could not have existed so long, and influenced so many minds--a truth which in the merciful condescension of God is blessed to sustain the life of His chosen ones in the mystical Babylon .

"This so-called church, vast and imposing, opens its door wide, except to those who honor the Scriptures, and who magnify the Lord Jesus. It can forgive sins, and grant pardons and indulgences, extending the astounding assumption of jurisdiction even beyond the grave; yet it cannot bring peace to the wounded conscience, and renewal to the aching heart, because it never fully and simply declares the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, by which we obtain perfect remission, and the power of the Holy Ghost, who joins us to Christ. This community speaks of sacrifice, of altars, of priesthood, and stands between the people and the sanctuary above, the only High Priest, who by His sacrifice has entered for us into the holy of holies. And in our day this great apostasy has reached a point which we would fain regard as its culminating point, when it places the Virgin Mary by the side of the Lord Jesus as sinless and pure, and when it arrogates for man infallible authority over the heritage of God."

(Dr. M. Luther describes the Romish harlot in these excellent words: "The Church of Rome is not built upon the rock of the divine word, but on the sand of human reasoning." It is a rationalistic church. And Lutheranism, Episcopalianism and other sects are turning back to it and support the Satanic counterfeit of a man made priesthood.)

Verses 15-23

These verses introduce once more the question of covenant. The covenant of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator is now identified with a testament of which He is the testator. When there is a testament there must also of necessity be the death of the testator, before the rights and possessions acquired in the testament can be possessed and enjoyed. The first covenant was inaugurated by blood. "For when Moses had spoken every commandment to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of bulls and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop (Lev. 14:4, Num. 19:6) and sprinkled both the book and the people, saying, this is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you." So also the tabernacle and the vessels were sprinkled with blood. Yea, almost all things are according to the law purified with blood "and without shedding of blood is no remission." The blood was used in a threefold manner. The covenant itself is founded on the blood. Defilement is washed away by the blood and the guilt is taken away through the blood that hath been shed.

And all this is only fully realized through the blood shed by the Lord Jesus Christ, He died and all the blessings of the new and better covenant are righteously willed to the believer.

Verses 24-28

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." After His great sacrifice He entered heaven itself, where He now is, appearing in the presence of God for His people. "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the consummation of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." The sacrifice He brought needs not to be repeated, it is all-sufficient for all eternity. If He were to offer again it would be necessary also to suffer again. Both are impossible. (The Romish assumption of the Lord's Supper being a sacrifice and that the blasphemous mass is an unbloody sacrifice are completely refuted by verse 26, by this entire chapter and by the teaching of the New Testament.) At the completion of the ages of probation (the age before the law and the age under the law), when man's utter ruin and hopeless condition had been fully demonstrated, He appeared in the fullness of time (the completion of the ages) and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And here let us remember that the full and complete results of this work are not yet manifested. Sin will ultimately be blotted out of God's creation. The blessed words which came from His gracious lips, when He gave Himself on the cross--"It is finished"-- will find their fullest meaning when all things are made new, when the first heaven and earth are passed away and a new heaven and new earth are come, when all things are made new. Then His voice will declare once more "it is done" (Rev. 21:1-6).

But now for those who believe sin is put away. It is appointed unto men--natural men-- once to die and after this the judgment. From the latter the believer is exempt. His own words "He that heareth my words, and believeth in Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24) assure us of this. And when the believer dies, it is no longer as penalty. A day will come at last when it will be fulfilled "Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And He who was once offered to bear the sins of many (those who believe in Him) shall appear the second time. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, apart from sin, for salvation." It is His second coming. When He comes again He has nothing to do with sin, as far as His people are concerned. This was settled forever in His first coming. But He comes for their salvation their complete deliverance from all the results of sin, and His own will be changed into His image.

("Without sin" is in contrast with "to bear the sins of many." But it will be remarked, that the taking up of the Church is not mentioned here. It is well to notice the language. The character of His second coming is the subject. He has been manifested once. Now He is seen by those who look for Him. The expression may apply to the deliverance of the Jews who wait for Him in the last days. He will appear for their deliverance. But we expect the Lord for this deliverance, and we shall see Him when He accomplishes it even for us. The apostle does not touch the question of the difference between this and our being caught up, and does not use the word which serves to announce His public manifestation. He will appear to those who expect Him. He is not seen by all the world, nor is it consequently the judgment, although that may follow. The Holy Ghost speaks only of them that look for the Lord. To them He will appear. By them He will be seen, and it will be the time of their deliverance; so that it is true for us, and also applicable to the Jewish remnant in the last days" Synopsis of the Bible.)

CHAPTER 10

1. The all-sufficiency of the one offering (10:1-18)
2. Exhortations (10:19-25)
3. Warning (10:26-31)
4. Encouragements (10:32-39)

Verses 1-18

The precious truth the apostle has unfolded in the preceding chapters concerning Christ, His one offering He made, His own blood by which He entered once for all into the holy place the one all sufficient sacrifice, which has an eternal value and can never be repeated, is now still more practically applied. This one offering sanctifieth and it hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, so that the believer thus sanctified and perfected can enter into the holiest as worshipper. The sacrifices brought in the first covenant did not make the worshippers perfect. If such had been the case there would have been no need to repeat them year by year continually. The repetition of these sacrifices in the law dispensation was a memorial of sin. "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again of sins every year." The day of atonement was repeated every year and each time the high priest entered in the holiest with the blood of others. But the worshippers were not purged by it; the conscience as to sins remained, and those worshippers could not enter in themselves. For it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Yet the sins of Jewish believers before the cross were forgiven, not because the blood of an animal was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, but in anticipation of the one great offering, known to God in all its value and meaning.

(See Romans 3:25. The remission of sins that are past are the sins of Old Testament believers. The work of Christ on the cross declares God's righteousness in having passed over the sins of those who believed the promise.)

All is now changed. The one offering has been brought; by His own blood He entered the heavenly sanctuary, and all who believe are purged, the conscience is cleansed, we draw nigh and enter the holiest, not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the blood of Jesus.

Verses 5-9 are of deep interest. It reveals what passed between God the Father and God the Son. When about to enter the world these words were spoken by Him to the Father; "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me; in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then I said Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. (What a testimony the Son of God bears as to the character of the Old Testament Scriptures! As He said on earth "they testify of Me.") it is a startling revelation, the Spirit of God acquainting us with what transpired between the Father and the Son. He comes into the world to do God's eternal will.

"He is the Son of God from all eternity, and in that mysterious eternity before the creation of the world, in His pre-mundane glory, this mind was in the Son, that He would humble Himself, and take upon Himself the form of a servant, and obey the whole counsel of God concerning the redemption of fallen man. His whole life on earth, embracing His obedience and His death, His substitution for sinners, was His own voluntary resolve and act.

True, the Father sent Him; but such is the unity and harmony of the blessed Trinity, that it is equally true to say, the Son came. The love of the Lord Jesus, the sacrifice of Himself in our stead, the unspeakable humiliation of the Son of God, have their origin not in time but in eternity, in the infinite, self-subsistent, co-equal Son of the Father. He took on Him our nature. By His own will He was made flesh. From all eternity He offered Himself to accomplish the divine will concerning our salvation, He must needs be God, to have the power of freely offering Himself; He must needs take upon Him our nature to fulfil that sacrifice. Only the Son of God could undertake the work of our redemption; only as man could He accomplish it" (A. Saphir).

He speaks of "a body hast Thou prepared Me." This means His virgin-birth. The body the Son of God took on was a prepared body, called into existence by a creative act of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

The sentence, "A body hast Thou prepared Me," is the Septuagint translation, or paraphrase, of the Hebrew, "ears hast Thou digged for Me" (Ps. 40:6). This reading, or interpretation, is here fully sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. The ear is for learning, and the opened ear stands for obedience (is. 50:5). In taking on the human body He took the form of a servant. See also Exodus 21. And thus He offered Himself, as One who had the power to do so, out of love for the glory of God, to do His will. He undertook of His own free will the accomplishment of all the will of God and He took on the prepared body in incarnation in order to accomplish the eternal will of God. In this prepared body He lived that blessed life of obedience, suffering from man for God, and then He gave that body, according to the will of God, in His death, when He suffered from God for man, in being made sin for us.

"God's rights as the Lawgiver have been fully satisfied by the unsullied and complete obedience of the Lord Jesus. He magnified the law which man had taken and dishonored. Having fulfilled it in His life, He gave Himself to death, that He

might silence forever its demand on the believing sinner's life. By man and for man the will of God has been fulfilled. In the life and death of the Lord Jesus the active measure of both grace and truth has been attained. God's will was the redemption of His people. But that His grace might triumph, His holiness must first be satisfied. The cross of Christ has effected this. God's will, when finished, is thus found to be atonement. Blood has been shed, in obedience to His commandment, which is of virtue to remove all sin. It pleased Him to bruise His Son for sinners. He has laid upon Him the iniquity of all His people. By making Him an offering for sin, He has finished His intention of salvation. He has established grace in perfect righteousness" (A. Pridham). And thus "He taketh away the first (the ordinances of the law, the burnt-offerings and sacrifices) and established the second (the will of God perfectly done). "By the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

This is a great and most blessed truth. His people, those who believe in Christ, are according to the will of God, to be sanctified, that is set apart to God. And this sanctification of all who believe is accomplished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The will of man has no part in this; the work by which believers are sanctified is absolutely and wholly of God. It was done once for all when Christ died on the Cross; before we were in existence it was all done. In this faith rests, knowing that He hath sanctified us, that His work, not ours, nor our experience, has accomplished our sanctification. Believers belong to God for ever according to the efficacy of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And this setting aside abides; it is as settled and permanent as the peace which was made, the peace with God, the abiding possession, of all who are justified by faith. There is also for those who are sanctified in Christ, a practical sanctification which is wrought by the Spirit of God in the believer (12:14).

Once more a contrast is made between Him and the levitical priests. The priests stood ministering, always bringing the same sacrifices over and over again. And they could never take away sins. But He having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down forever at the right hand of God. (it is not "eternal," but continuously, without interruption; He is at rest, His work is finished.) The work is accepted and believers are accepted in Him. Those who are sanctified are perfected in perpetuity by what He has done. He is forever seated, we are forever perfected by virtue of His work. And there at the right hand of God He is also waiting in patience till it pleases God to make His enemies the footstool of His feet. That will be when He comes the second time. And the Holy Spirit bears witness to it. That witness is in the Word of God, there the Spirit of God speaks. "If we could have heard the counsel of eternity, the word of the Father to the Son, ere time began, we could have no greater certainty than now, when we listen to Scripture, the echo in time of the counsel in eternity." We see here in this chapter up to verse 15 the three persons of the Godhead in connection with redemption. The will of God is the source of the work of redemption; the Son of God accomplished it; the Holy Spirit bears witness of it. Here again is an allusion to the new covenant in verses 16-17. (See 8:10-12.) Blessed assurance which all believers have "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." This is the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 19-25

And now the great truth is reached which the Holy Spirit wanted these Hebrew Christians to lay hold of and for which He so wonderfully prepared the way. He has shown that by the sacrifice of Christ the believers' sins are put away; a perfect and everlasting cleansing has been made, remission assured and an eternal redemption obtained. By the will of God believers are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; they are perfected and therefore in the eyes of a holy God, believers are without sin. This gives liberty to come into God's presence. The veil is rent and we can enter in. There is no more barrier, we have a free and unfettered access. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." And we do not go in alone but we find Him in the holiest who has done the work. He is there as a great high priest to welcome us and to minister in tenderness to our needs.

Upon this follow three exhortations. 1. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water (corresponding to the washing of the priests, Ex. 29:4, and typical of regeneration)." We are then a holy priesthood fit and fitted in Christ to offer up spiritual sacrifices. 2. "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering for He is faithful who hath promised." And we shall hold fast if we draw near and constantly realize our nearness, our blessings and privileges in Christ. 3. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom is with some, but encouraging one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." It is the public confession of God's people that they are one and belong together. And they saw the day approaching which is here not the day when His

people will be gathered together unto Him, caught up in clouds to meet Him in the air, but the day of His appearing.

Verses 26-31

A solemn warning is now once more added. It warns against deliberate apostasy of those who have known the truth (though not regenerated). They are enemies, adversaries and for such wilful going astray there remaineth no longer any sacrifice for sins "but a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." This was the great danger for these Hebrews who had professed faith in Christ, yet lingered around the levitical institutions as the temple with its worship was still standing. If they renounced the truth of Christianity by turning back to Judaism they trampled under foot the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing; for such horrible, deliberate contempt there was no repentance and no remedy. They cannot escape judgment. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God-- He who hath said "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense."

("Observe here the way in which sanctification is attributed to the blood; and, also, that professors are treated as belonging to the people. The blood received by faith, consecrates the soul to God; but it is here viewed also as an outward means for setting apart the people as a people. Every individual who had owned Jesus to be the Messiah, and the blood to be the seal and foundation of an everlasting covenant available for eternal cleansing and redemption on the part of God, acknowledging himself to be set apart for God, by this means, as one of the people--every such individual would, if he renounced it, renounce it as such; and there was no other way of sanctifying him. The former system had evidently lost its power for him, and the true one he had abandoned. This is the reason why it is said, 'having received the knowledge of the truth'" Synopsis of the Bible.)

Verses 32-39

Words of encouragement and comfort conclude this main section of the Epistle. They had suffered for Christ's sake and he calls to their remembrance their former days. They had endured even with joy the spoiling of their goods, because they knew that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance. He exhorts them to be patient and not to cast away their confidence. The promise was sure. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry." Hab. 2:3-4 is quoted. He was sure that they are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe (literally: of faith) to the saving of the soul. The chapter which follows describes the action of this faith through the example of their forefathers who walked and lived according to the same principle.

IV. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS

CHAPTER 11

1. Faith in regard to creation and salvation (11:1-7)
2. The patience of faith (11:8-22)
3. The energy of faith (11:23-40)

Verses 1-7

The disastrous effect of unbelief has been pointed out in the earlier part of this epistle (3:12, 19; 4:2) as well as the necessity of faith. After the great theme of the epistle, the sacrificial work and priesthood of Christ had been fully demonstrated, faith, in the closing verses of the previous chapter is mentioned once more "the just shall live by faith." To live and walk by faith is inseparably connected with the possession and enjoyment of the good things which have come, the perfection the believer has in Christ. And now the Spirit of God gives a remarkable record of the saints of old and shows how prominent faith was in their lives and experiences. It is one of the great and marvelous chapters not only of this epistle, but of the whole Word of God.

There is a divine order here in the way the names are mentioned as well as many and deep spiritual lessons into which we

cannot fully enter. (The purpose of our work makes this impossible. Saphir, A. Pridham and others will be helpful in a more analytical study of this chapter.) First three antediluvians are mentioned--Abel, Enoch and Noah. The main part of the chapter is devoted to Abraham and his life of faith, trust and patience, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are also mentioned. That those who lived before the inauguration of the law covenant and the levitical institutions are prominently used in this faith-chapter is not without meaning. These illustrious heads of the Hebrew nation had the promise; the grace-covenant had been established with them, the covenant which was to remain. They had no law and carnal ordinances, no tabernacle, no priest and yet they pleased God by their faith. And now in possession of the promise, fulfilled in Christ, these Hebrew Christians were to live in faith and manifest the patience of faith, even as Abraham (whom they called "our father Abraham") did.

The first statement speaks of faith, not so much as a definition, but as a declaration of the action and power of faith. The Revised Version is better in its rendering than the King James translation. "Now faith is the assurance (or substantiation) of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith makes real to the soul that which we hope for and is a demonstration of that which we do not see. It is therefore assurance and a settled conviction respecting things hoped for, though unseen. "it is the soul's hand that grasps the promised blessings and makes them its very own. Faith lays hold on what is future, but sure, and brings it into the life of the believer, so that in the presence and power of it he lives and walks. It is far-sightedness. It sees and foresees. It pierces into the unseen, it seizes the promised riches of God and makes them a present reality, and therefore the life of the believer may become opulent with noble deeds, because ruled and stimulated by a great motive."

It is by faith we know that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. God called all things into existence. Matter is not eternal; the universe is not a producing cause. God has created all things by Him and for Him, who is the eternal Word (Heb. 1:2; John 1:1). Man is unable by searching to solve the mystery of creation. How ridiculous have been the cosmogonies of ancient nations. The evolution theories are equally absurd.

(It would be a good thing if the men of science today would give heed to such a text as this. Take Darwin 's Origin of the Species, where he never gets, indeed, to the origin, and owns that he cannot prove that any species ever did originate after the fashion he decrees. And think of originating in his manner Eve out of Adam! Given even the rib, she could not have sprung out of that simply. There must have been what did not appear--the power of God. If it is not perfectly scientific to believe that in her case, we may as well give up Scripture at once, for you cannot expunge the miraculous out of it. If it be only a question of less or more, how unreasonable to measure out the power of God, and how enormous the pretence of being able to say just how much this power, or how or when it shall be fitting for it to be displayed!

(After all, Scripture is at once the most scientific and rational of books, while it is, besides, a miracle of the most stupendous kind, always ready to hand, and with its own power of conviction for any who will examine it. And this one may say in the face of all the higher critics in the world, who are simply the Darwinians of theology, and who, like them, theorize after the most stupendous fashion and then talk about the credulity of faith" Numerical Bible.)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This we believe that the worlds were framed by the Word of God. Abel is next mentioned. The truth of salvation is seen in his case. Sin and death had come in. By faith, trusting in the promise, acknowledging his true condition, he brought a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. He approached God with that more excellent sacrifice. He obtained witness that he was righteous. He was justified by faith. And Abel himself who died by the hand of his brother is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.

Enoch was translated by faith that he should not see death. In Abel the truth of righteousness by faith is illustrated. Enoch, walking with God, believing God and prophesying (Jude 14-15) went to heaven without passing through death. The power of death was destroyed in his case; the power of that life he possessed was manifested in his translation. How blessedly Abel and Enoch show forth that by faith righteousness and life are bestowed upon those who believe. The great sacrifice, typified by Abel's more excellent sacrifice and also by his death, has conquered death, Through death Christ has destroyed him who had the power of death (Heb. 2:14).

Enoch is a type of the Church. He prophesied of coming judgment (the deluge) but did not pass through that judgment. Even so the true Church, when the Lord comes, will be taken from earth to glory without dying, before tribulation, wrath

and judgment come upon this age, which ends like the days of Noah. Enoch also received testimony before he was translated that he pleased God, for he walked in faith in His presence and in His fellowship. This is the walk into which all God's people are called and which faith and the power of the indwelling spirit make possible. Without faith (a faith which clings close to Him, trusts in His word and is obedient) it is impossible to please Him.

Verse 7 speaks of Noah and his faith. In this verse we find mentioned the ground of faith (warned of God); the realm of faith (things not seen); the exercise of faith (he feared); the work of faith (he prepared an ark); the result of faith (he saved his house); the testimony of faith (he condemned the world) and the reward of faith (heir to righteousness). It is the most remarkable verse in the whole chapter. Enoch was caught up to heaven before the deluge came. Noah was warned of the unseen judgment to come (which Enoch had warned would come) and was roused with godly fear. He is a type of the godly remnant of Jews at the end of this present age, who will pass through tribulation and judgment, after the true Church has left the earth, and having passed through the judgment, as Noah did, will inherit the earth. Noah represents the faith and exercise of this Jewish remnant, which will be saved out of the judgments at the close of this age.

Verses 8-22

The obedience and patience of faith is the theme of verses 8-22. Obediently Abraham went out, not knowing whether he was going. He obeyed the voice, believed the promise of God. Faith made of him a stranger in the land of promise as in a foreign country. He had no permanent place, but as a pilgrim he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob--"for he waited for the city which hath foundations, whose architect and maker God is." God revealed to him the heavenly city and in patience he waited for that city, and while he waited he dwelt there content in perfect reliance on God. It was by faith that Sarah received strength to conceive seed "because she counted Him faithful that promised." And then they died in faith "not having received the promise, but having seen them (by the eyes of faith) afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth." This faith in its power and action is exemplified. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac. He manifested in this act that absolute confidence in God, which, at His command, can renounce even God's own promises as possessed after the flesh, confident that God would restore them through the exercise of His power, overcoming death. "Observe here that, when trusting in God and giving up all for Him, we always gain, and we learn something more of the ways of His power: for in renouncing according to His will anything already received, we ought to expect from the power of God that He will bestow something else. Abraham renounces the promise after the flesh. He sees the city which has foundations; he can desire a heavenly country. He gives up Isaac, in whom were the promises: he learns resurrection, for God is infallibly faithful. The promises were in Isaac: therefore God must restore him to Abraham, and by resurrection, if he offered him in sacrifice" Synopsis of the Bible.

By faith Isaac and Jacob acted. And Joseph, a stranger in a strange land, yet believing the promises as to the land, reckoned in faith on their fulfillment and thus gave commandment concerning his bones (Gen. 50:25).

Verses 23-40

Faith in this section illustrates the energy connected with it which surmounts any obstacle and difficulty, and, trusting, brings forth the manifestations of God's power in deliverance. Such was the faith of the parents of Moses. They hid the child and were not afraid. "Faith does not reason; it acts from its own point of vision and leaves the result to God." And how this energy of faith is illustrated in Moses himself. His faith renounced the wealth, power, glory and splendor of Egypt. He gave up a princely position, the possibility of an earthly throne and identified himself with the people who had become slaves, because he believed them to be the people of God. Faith taught him not to fear the wrath of the king; faith fears nothing, but God and faith has nothing to fear. The secret was "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." By faith he celebrated the passover and the sprinkling of blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

And what more? The Red Sea, the walls of Jericho, the harlot Rahab. "Rahab the harlot! Those who seek for proofs of the divine authorship of Scripture may find one here. Was there ever an Israelite who would have thought of preferring that woman's name to the names of David and Samuel and the prophets, and of coupling it with the names of the great leader and prophet of the Jewish faith 'whom the Lord knew face to face?' And what Jew would have dared to give expression to such a thought!" Sir R. Anderson, K.C.B.

God's power opened the way to faith through the Red Sea for the salvation of His people while the unbelieving Egyptian

perished. Jericho 's walls fall and Rahab's house, standing upon the wall, is preserved because she believed. And then Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets and the heroes of faith which follow. Their names are not given, but God knows them all as well as the countless thousands of martyrs who are constantly added to this list. "The strongest thing in the world is faith--it has an eagle's eye and lion's heart. It has a lion's heart to confront dangers and hardships, and an eagle's eye to descry the unseen glories and the sure victory. The heroism of faith is a wonderful thing. It may suffer indescribable tortures and agonies, as often it has, but it is unconquerable, invincible. Some were tortured (tympanized, i.e., stretched in a wheel as the drumhead), 'that they might obtain a better resurrection,' as were the mother and her seven sons who were put to death one after the other, and in sight of each other, by the Syrian monster, Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. 7). Some were stoned, as Zechariah (2 Chron. 24) and Jeremiah, according to tradition. Some were sawn asunder, as was Isaiah under Manasseh. Some were slain with the sword, as Urijah, (Jer. 26:23), and James the brother of John (Acts 12). They might have rustled in silks and velvets and luxuriated in the palaces of princes had they denied God and believed the world's lie. Instead, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, themselves accounted no better than goats or sheep, nay, they like these reckoned fit only for the slaughter. The world thought them unworthy to live here, while God thought them worthy to live with Him in glory" Professor Moorhead).

"God having provided some better thing for us, that not apart from us should they be made perfect." The Old Testament saints who died in faith have not yet been raised from among the dead; their spirits are in His presence. New Testament saints constituting the Church, the body of Christ, have provided for themselves some better thing." But the Spirit of God does not here enlarge upon this and only gives the information that the perfection of the Old Testament saints in resurrection from among the dead will not be apart from us, the New Testament saints. And that will be when the Lord comes for His saints with the shout (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

CHAPTER 12

1. Looking away unto Jesus (12:1-2)
2. The Contradiction of sinners (12:3-4)
3. Chastened as sons (12:5-11)
4. Exhortations (12:12-17)
5. The end of faith (12:18-24)
6. The final warning (12:25-29)

Verses 1-2

"Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with steadfastness the race lying before us."

Some teach that the Old Testament saints are spectators of us and that they look upon us now from heaven. Dean Alford also states that they are lookers on and adds "Whosoever denies such reference, misses, it seems to me, the very point of the sense." Others have gone so far as to say that they not only look on but help the believer in his conflict on earth. But this view is unscriptural. We know that angels are spectators (1 Cor. 4:9; 11:10); angels are ministering spirits to minister unto the heirs of salvation, but the disembodied spirits of the righteous are neither spectators nor do they minister to the saints on earth. The preceding chapter contains "the cloud of witness"; they witness to us by their lives and the victory of their faith and this is the encouragement for us. The Christian's life is a race; the glory at His coming is the goal. The runner of the race does not burden himself with weights, unnecessary things. Everything that impedes spiritual progress must be laid aside, as well as the sin that so easily besets us, which is the sin of unbelief. Against this sin they had been emphatically warned. "It is a sin that easily besets us, because it is but the mind of nature acting, according to its instincts, against the will of God." And the runner's eyes are to be on the goal (Phil. 3). The believer runs the race with steadfastness and divests himself of every weight and the sin that easily besets, if he looks away from everything and looks away "unto

Jesus, the author and finisher of faith (Leader and Perfecter), who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, having despised the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." He is the great exemplar of faith. He is to be constantly before us, and His people are to follow Him in the path of faith and trust. What light these words shed on His blessed life and especially His death on the cross! He endured the cross and despised the shame, connected with it, for the joy that was set before Him. See Isaiah 53:10-12. The joy set before us is to be with Him forever. Oh, for the daily vision of that goal.

"The flesh, the human heart, is occupied with cares and difficulties; and the more we think of them, the more we are burdened by them. It is enticed by the object of its desires, it does not free itself from them. The conflict is with a heart that loves the thing against which we strive; we do not separate ourselves from it in thought. When looking at Jesus, the new man is active; there is a new object, which unburdens and detaches us from every other by means of a new affection which has its place in a new nature: and in Jesus Himself, to whom we look, there is a positive power which sets us free" J.N. Darby.

Verses 3-4

The believer's life is also a conflict, trials which come from sin in the world, a world which is always, and always will be, antagonistic to Christ. Those Hebrews had their share of it; they were persecuted and hated for His Name's sake (10:32-34). Peter also wrote about these persecutions they endured. And now they are called to consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest they would be wearied, disheartened and fainting in their minds. These persecutions were the fellowship of His sufferings; and they had not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Looking away unto Him gives strength to resist and to conquer.

Verses 5-11

In these verses the trials of the believer are viewed as chastenings from the Lord. As a loving father, who loves his children, He chastised them. They were not to forget this, that He speaks to them, not as to sinners, but as unto sons, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The chastening they were to endure. God, as Father, permits trials and tribulations to come to believers for their own good. Such experiences are not an evidence of divine displeasure, but evidences of sonship. "God dealeth with you as with sons; for who is the son whom the father chastiseth not. But if you are without chastening, of which all are made partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." And therefore chastisements must not be despised, nor viewed as a discouraging experience; for the chastisement is for our eternal good and He does it in love. Paul's thorn in the flesh was such an experience which was needful for Him. Grace sustains in all chastisements. Then we have a contrast between the chastising of earthly fathers and that of the heavenly Father. The one is father of our flesh; God is the Father of spirits, the Creator and source of life, spiritual and ever-lasting, as well as physical and temporal. The one for a brief period; God during our whole lifetime. The one with imperfect knowledge, in much infirmity "after their own pleasure;" God with unerring wisdom, and in pure love. The aim of the one, our earthly future; the aim of God, to make us partakers of His holiness. Yet imperfect as is the earthly father's discipline, we gave it reverence, "as was right" and according to God's will, and for our safety. How much more ought we to be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, of whom is our true life.

And when we are disciplined it is not a joyous experience; it brings heart-searching, humiliation, confession, repentance and self-loathing, but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which have been exercised in this way.

Verses 12-17

Words of exhortation and encouragement follow. The first three exhortations refer to ourselves (verses 12-13); to others and to God (verse 14). To follow peace (pursue peace) with all men is to characterize those who have peace with God and who know the way of peace. Holiness must also be pursued, for without that none shall see the Lord. In Christ, believers are sanctified once for all, as this Epistle has so clearly demonstrated. The holiness which qualifies a man to see the Lord, is Christ, and His blessed finished work. Abiding in Him the believer pursues the way of holiness, practical holiness, separation from evil in all things. It does not mean a certain "holiness experience" by which a believer is fitted, by

eradication of the old nature, or by something else, to see the Lord. In Christ the believer is sanctified; as Martin Luther used to say "My holiness is in Heaven." The exhortation here means to pursue that holiness into which grace has called us, which grace has given and for which grace gives daily power. Closely connected with this is the warning which follows in verses 15-17. The man who falls short of the grace of God, who lacketh that grace which is in Christ Jesus, his heart not resting in Him, is a mere professing believer and Posseseth not the holiness, which grace alone can give. He is a root of bitterness and a profane, and earthly-minded person, as Esau was who sold his birthright.

(The time came when he regretted that for a paltry gratification he forfeited his right. Afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For though he sought carefully with tears to change his father's mind he found (in Isaac) no place for change of mind. This seems to be the meaning of this difficult passage, Esau is never represented as an apostle, as one who professed and appeared to be a believer, and then fell away. So (apart from other reasons) the meaning of the apostle cannot be that Esau, as an apostate, was not able to find repentance. But we know that, notwithstanding his vehement and urgent entreaties, Isaac could not change his mind, or repent him of what he had done in conferring the blessing on Jacob, which God approved of" Saphir.)

Verses 18-24

These verses contain a great contrast. The grace of God has brought and is bringing believers to better things than those which characterize Judaism. What the end of faith will be, the goal of glory is here unfolded. Believers have nothing now to do with Sinai, the law and its terror. Then follows a marvellous enumeration of the earthly and heavenly glories to which we have come through faith and which faith beholds. First Mount Zion is mentioned. It is the place the Lord has chosen for His rest (Ps. 132:13-14). When that promised new covenant is fully established with the house of Israel and Judah, when sovereign grace has manifested its powers in the salvation and restoration of His people Israel, then Zion will be the earthly center, and God's appointed King will establish His rule there (Ps. 2). From the glory of the coming millennium we are taken to the glory above "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ." It is the city for which Abraham looked in faith, the eternal home of the saints of God.

"And to an innumerable company of angels, the universal gathering"; we shall know and behold all the tenants of the unseen world. "The Church of the firstborn ones which are written in heaven"--this is the Church in particular; there will be an unbroken and eternal fellowship with all the saints who constitute the body of Christ. "And to God the judge of all," whose grace in Christ has put His own beyond all condemnation and who will, in His Son, judge the world in righteousness. "The spirits of just men made perfect" are the Old Testament saints, distinguished in this way from "the Church of the firstborn ones"; they receive their perfection when the Church is gathered home (11:40). "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel." Through Him and His precious blood these earthly and heavenly glories will be accomplished. And faith looks to these. It is the blessed goal for the heirs of God, the many sons He brings to glory.

Verses 25-29

A final warning follows, not to refuse Him that speaketh. (Compare with 2:3.) He that spoke on earth (giving the law) is the same that speaketh from heaven--the Son of God. To refuse Him means no escape from perdition. His voice then shook the earth. The prophetic word predicts another shaking of earth and heaven (Hag. 2:6). That will be when He comes again. Then follows the judgment of all who obeyed not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The things that can be shaken will be removed and things that cannot be shaken remain. "Therefore let us, receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and fear; for our God is a consuming fire."

CHAPTER 13

1. The practical walk (13:1-6)
2. The call to separation (13:7-16)
3. Conclusions (13:17-25)

Verses 1-6

No comment is needed on the simple exhortations with which this concluding chapter of this Epistle begins. Brotherly love stands in the foreground. Hospitality and loving kindness to prisoners and those who suffer adversity is especially enjoined. The great high priest in glory sympathizes with such a condition of His saints and we too are to be sympathizers as well as intercessors with Him. The life is to be clean and undefiled. Walking in faith there should be not covetousness but happy contentment in view of His never failing promise.

Verses 7-16

The first exhortation in these verses is that they should remember their leaders who had spoken the Word of God to them, to follow their faith and to consider the issue of their walk. These leaders had passed away from the earthly service into the presence of the Lord. One abides the same. He must be exalted above everything and He alone can satisfy the hearts of His people. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He is the unchanging Jehovah who had spoken of old "I am the Lord who changeth not." What a One to follow and to trust. From Him and His gracious riches the enemy tries to lead away God's people and ensnare them. Christ is the person whom Satan hates and all wicked and strange doctrines are invented by him to dishonor that worthy name and to spoil God's children.

Then follows the call to separation, the great exhortation at which the Holy Spirit aimed from the beginning of this document and which He now presses upon the conscience. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who are serving the tabernacle." That altar is Christ for those who have left the shadow things behind and who have found in Him their all in all.

Those who still cling to the Jewish things have no right of access; they have no right to eat if they serve the tabernacle, for everything has passed away since the substance in Christ has come. They had put Christ outside. All had been done as foreshadowed by the legal sacrifices. "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." And now all is done and the whole Jewish system has no more meaning. To remain in it and practice the old things, which are gone, is a denial of Christ and His work as the sin-bearer. The camp is the people who continued in the things of the law, who denied thereby that the new sacrifice had been brought; who still used an earthly priesthood and denied thereby that the new and living way into the holy place had been made by the blood of Jesus, the rent veil.

Ritualistic Christendom with its man-made priesthood, its so-called "saving ordinances," its legal principle, so prominent, not only in the worst form of apostate Christendom (the Romish church), but in other systems and sects, is but another camp in which the truth of Christ and His all sufficient work is denied. Outside of the camp is found the cross of Christ with all its grace and glory. And therefore the exhortation, which seems to us was the all-important message for these Hebrews (and for us as well) "let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In other words, leave all behind, be separate from all, which denies the cross and the work accomplished there. And "outside the camp" must mean "inside the veil," to enjoy the perfection in Christ, to be in God's holy presence as a true worshipper. "For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

This priesthood of which Peter speaks (1 Pet. 2:5) is mentioned here also. "By Him therefore (not by an earthly priest or in an earthly tabernacle) let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." And besides this, which is done inside the veil, there is another aspect to the sacrifice we bring in His name--"to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Verses 17-25

They were to obey the leaders and submit themselves. These leaders watched over their souls as those that shall give account in the coming day of Christ. And by obedience and submission they honored Him who has made them the overseers of the flock of God. Well it would be if all workers would never lose sight of the fact that they are accountable to the Lord. The writer of the Epistle, no doubt the apostle Paul, requests their prayers, "pray for us." ("The fact is that none

need the prayers of God's people more than those who are active and prominent in the Lord's work. Practically occupied with preaching and teaching others, how great the danger is of going on with a conscience not good about themselves! And what can more decidedly defile or harden?") In true humility, so characteristic of Paul he writes "for we persuade ourselves that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honestly." Most ask prayer because their conscience is bad. He beseeches them that they may do this, so that by their prayer of intercession he might be restored to them the sooner. (See Philemon 22.) He valued the prayers of the saints.

Then follows that blessed prayer so well suited to this epistle and its great truths. "Now the God of peace that brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work to do His will, working in you what is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever (unto the ages of the ages). Amen."

In the final words the apostle beseeches them to bear with the word of exhortation as contained in the letter. The mention of Timothy is another evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews. Brief salutations and the benediction closes this wonderful portion of the Word of God. "Grace be with you all. Amen."

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

The Epistles of James, First and Second Peter, the three Epistles of John and the Epistle of Jude constitute the so-called Catholic, or General Epistles. They were thus named in earliest days, and in the ancient manuscripts these seven Epistles are grouped together as we have them in our English version; however, they always follow the book of Acts. It is claimed that they were named General Epistles because Christians in general are addressed in them, which does not hold good with the second and third Epistles of John, for these were addressed to individuals. The first Epistle in this group, following the book of Acts in the manuscripts, is the Epistle of James.

Its Peculiar Character

That there is a great difference between the great Pauline Epistles and the Epistle of James is seen at a glance. If one reads even the Epistle to the Hebrews, addressed to the same class of people, believing Hebrews, to whom the Epistle of James is also addressed, and reads James immediately after, a great and notable change is seen at once. The character of the Epistle of James is essentially Jewish. In the second chapter the word synagogue is used as the place of their assembly, "if there come unto your synagogue a man, etc." They were then still in the synagogue. Nothing about the Church, the body of Christ is mentioned in this Epistle, nor do we find here the great doctrines of Christianity and the corresponding Christian relationship. The law is also prominent; and there are other Jewish features which will be pointed out in the annotations. The character of the entire Epistle corresponds with those to whom the Epistle was originally addressed "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." It is evidently a document written at an early date during the transition period and before the great doctrinal Epistles of the apostle to the Gentiles had been produced, in which the fulness of redemption, the body of Christ, the church, and its unity and other cardinal doctrines of our faith are revealed.

What do we mean by "transition period"? That the beginning of Christianity had a decidedly Jewish cast is known to all Bible students. For years all the believers were Jews. There was a great Jewish-Christian assembly in Jerusalem and many more throughout Judea. As we learn from the book of Acts there were many thousands of Jews who believed, but who were also zealous for the law; they still made use of the temple worship, went there at the accustomed hours of prayer. There were also many priests who at one time were obedient to the faith, believed that the Crucified One was the Messiah; they also continued undoubtedly in their priestly ministrations in the temple. They still had their great national hope of a restoration of the kingdom. That hope indeed was preached by Peter in Acts 3:19-20.

That the Epistle of James is put in all the ancient manuscripts next to the book of Acts is therefore of significance. We breathe in this Epistle the same Jewish-Christian atmosphere which we find in the beginning of the book of Acts.

James, the Author of the Epistle

What we have stated above identifies the author of this Epistle. Who is James (Greek: Jacobos--Jacob)? Certainly not James, the apostle, the son of Zebedee. He was martyred in the year 44, as recorded in Acts 12:2. Nor can the author be James, the son of Alphaeus, another apostle. His name is mentioned for the last time in the New Testament in Acts 1:13. We hear nothing more about him, and it is inconceivable that he should have held a position of authority which belongs to the author of this Epistle. There is another James, who is designated as "the brother of the Lord." He has been generally accepted, even by critics, as the author of the Epistle.

The Apostle Paul speaks of him in Gal. 1:19. Three years after his conversion he returned to Jerusalem to interview Peter,

and Paul adds, "but of the other apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother,"

James, the brother of the Lord, belongs to those mentioned in John 7:5: "For neither did His brethren believe in Him." James and his brethren did not believe on Jesus, the Virgin-born Son of God, as the Messiah. But in the first chapter of Acts we find mentioned among those who waited in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father "Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brethren." They had been converted and were now believers. How were they convinced that Jesus was the Christ? There can be no question that the James mentioned, distinct from the apostles, in 1 Cor. 15:7, to whom the risen Christ appeared, is the brother of the Lord. He saw the Lord risen from the dead; He had appeared to him and that became the great turning point in his life and he and his brethren believed.

He early held in Jerusalem the position as leader. When Peter had been miraculously led forth from prison and appeared in the midst of a company of believers, he said, "Go show these things unto James and to the brethren" (Acts 12:17). He was the acknowledged head of the Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem. He is the spokesman in the first council held in Jerusalem, in the language of our day "the presiding officer" (Acts 15:13). Through him the Holy Spirit gave a very important revelation. Years later when Paul undertook the fateful journey to Jerusalem and had reached the city, he called on James, and after salutation reported to him "what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry." And James spoke the fatal words which enticed the Apostle Paul to conform to the keeping of the law, when James told him, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous for the law" (Acts 21:19-26). According to ancient sources, like Eusebius, James was a godly man and a strong observer of the ceremonial law, and, though he was ready to see the hand of God in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles (confirmed by the second chapter of Galatians), he adhered closely to the law and the Judaistic form of Christianity to the end of his life. "Had not a Peter and above all Paul arisen, Christianity would perhaps never have completely emancipated from the veil of Judaism and asserted its own independence. Still, there was a necessity for the ministry of James. If any could win over the ancient covenant people it was he. It pleased God to set so high an example of Old Testament piety in its purest form among the Jews, to make conversions to the gospel, even at the eleventh hour (preceding the destruction of Jerusalem) as easy as possible for them. But when they would not listen to the voice of this last messenger of peace, then was the measure of divine patience exhausted and the fearful and long-threatened judgment broke forth. And thus the mission of James, the brother of the Lord was fulfilled. According to Hegesippus James died a year before the destruction of Jerusalem " (Dr. P. Schaff--Kirchengeschichte). The Jewish historian Josephus records this in the following paragraph: "Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but on the road, so he assembled the Sanhedrin or judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others. And when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned" (Josephus, Book 20).

For various reasons this Epistle was, even among the church fathers, treated with suspicion. It seems that the uncertainty as to the writer, and that it was addressed entirely to Jewish believers, raised these doubts. These doubts were revived during the Reformation and Luther especially called it "an Epistle of straw," meaning by it that it did not contain the wheat.

"On the whole, on any intelligent principles of canonical reception of early writings, we cannot refuse the Epistle a place in the canon. That that place was given it from the first in some parts of the church; that, in spite of many adverse circumstances, it gradually won that place in other parts; that when thoroughly considered, it is so consistent with and worthy of his character and standing whose name it bears; that it is marked off by so strong a line of distinction from the writings and Epistles which have not attained a place in the canon; all these are considerations which, though they do not in this, any more than in other cases, amount to demonstration, yet furnish when combined a proof hardly to be resisted, that the place where we do now find it in the New Testament canon is that which it ought to have, and which God in His providence has guided His church to assign to it."--Dean Alford, Prolegomena.

When Was It Written

James lived and labored in Jerusalem. There is no likelihood that he ever left the city of his fathers, hence we cannot doubt that the Epistle was written by him in Jerusalem and sent forth from there. As to the exact date scholars have been divided on that. That it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and not after, is obvious, for James died before the city was taken by the Romans. But does not the Epistle of James refer to Paul's teachings in Romans as to righteousness by faith, and therefore, it is argued, James must have written the Epistle after Romans, and perhaps also Hebrews, had been written. But the argument is weak. James did not answer Paul's teaching at all; he was guided by the Spirit of God to

emphasize a holy life, as a justification of real faith before man. That he cites Abraham, as Paul did in Romans, is no evidence that he had the Epistle to the Romans in his possession. "It is much more probable, that all which James saith respecting works of faith has respect to a former and different state and period of the controversy, when the Jewish Pharisaic notions (as to the boast in the law) were being carried into the adopted belief in Christianity, and the danger was not, as afterwards, of a Jewish law-righteousness being set up, antagonistic to the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ, but of a Jewish reliance on exclusive purity of faith superseding the necessity of a holy life, which is inseparably bound up with any worthy holding of the Christian faith." Some of the most painstaking scholars, like Drs. Neander and Schaff have assigned to the Epistle a very early date. The absence of any mention of the decision at the church council (Acts 15) in the Epistle strengthens the early date. The date must be put around the year 45 A.D. and this makes the Epistle perhaps the earliest of the New Testament writings. Why should it not be so, considering that the Judaistic church in Jerusalem was the beginning of Christianity and the message of the Epistle harmonizes so fully with the character of that church?

The Twelve Tribes Scattered Abroad

As already stated James addressed the Epistle "to the twelve tribes scattered abroad." We hear much in our days about "the ten lost tribes." But were they lost when James wrote his Epistle? If they were lost how could he have addressed this Epistle to them? But further-more he addresses also those among the twelve tribes who were believers, so that it is but logical to assume that the twelve tribes, perhaps remnants of them, were known in the days of James, and that a number of each of the tribes had accepted Christ, the Messiah. Of course, like so much else, the term "twelve tribes" has been spiritualized as if it meant "the real Israel of God," that is, all believers, Jews and Gentiles. But this cannot be done. The fact that the literal tribes of Israel are addressed has been recognized by most expositors. James as the head of the Jerusalem church came in touch with many Israelites, who, according to their age-long custom, came up to Jerusalem to the feasts. Perhaps many of these visitors becoming acquainted with James and their believing brethren were also convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah and believed on Him. They went back to their different communities in Central Asia and beyond, in the dispersion, and formed their synagogues. Later James learned from them the spiritual conditions in these different centers in the dispersion and addressed this Epistle to them as well as to those who were not believers.

We must also remember that a similar Jewish-Christian remnant will be in existence once more in Palestine during the coming great tribulation; it is the godly remnant, which we have pointed out many times in the prophetic books and in the Psalms. Then the gospel of the kingdom will again be preached, and as it was in the Jewish beginning of the age, signs and miracles will follow, in healing (James 5:14) and otherwise. The Epistle of James will then have a special meaning for this remnant.

Is the Epistle of James for us?

The Jewish character of this Epistle has lead some to say "it is for the Jews and not for us." We have known believers who refuse to read this Epistle. But that is a serious and deplorable mistake. Here are written great and needed truths which are as needful for us as they were for those to whom the Epistle was originally addressed. The Christian who passes by the Epistle of James rejects a most important part of the Word of God and as a result he will suffer loss. We quote from another: "I am persuaded that no man, I will not say despises, but even attempts to dispense with the Epistle of James except to his own exceeding loss. Luther would have been none the worse, but all the stronger, for a real understanding of this writing of James. He needed it in many ways; and so do we. It is, therefore, a miserable cheat that any should allow their own subjective thoughts to govern them in giving up this or any portion of the Word of God; for all have an important place, each for its own object. Is it too much to ask that a document be judged by its express and manifest design? Surely we are not to take Paul's object in order to interpret James. What can be conceived more contrary, I will not say to reverence for what claims to be inspired, but even to all sense and discrimination, than such a thought? And it is thus that men have stumbled and fallen over this--it is little to say--precious and profitable, and above all, practically profitable position of the Word of God.

"At the same time we must read it as it is, or rather as God wrote it; and God has addressed it, beyond controversy, not merely to Christian Jews, nor even to Jews, but to the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad. Thus it embraces such of them as were Christians; and it gives a very true and just place to those who had the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only it

is a mistake to suppose that it contemplates nobody else. People may come to it with the thought that all the Epistles were addressed to Christians, but this is simply wrong. If you bring this or any other preconception to the Word of God, no wonder His Word leaves you outside its divine and holy scope. For He is ever about us, and infinitely wise. Our business is to gather what He has to teach us. No wonder, therefore, when persons approach the Scripture with preconceived thoughts, hoping to find confirmation there instead of gathering God's mind from what He has revealed--no wonder that they find disappointment. The mischief is in themselves and not in the divine Word. Let us prayer fully seek to avoid the snare" (William Kelly).

The exhortations in this Epistle are, therefore, of great value; and there are many precious gems to be found scattered throughout the Epistle of James, the brother of the Lord.

The Division of the Epistle of James

We have already pointed out that this Epistle is not a doctrinal document. Addressed as it is to the twelve tribes in the dispersion it has nothing to say about Gentile believers, nor about their place in the Church, the body of Christ. They were believers, yet distinctly Jewish believers. This is seen in the opening verse in which James calls himself "the servant of God," an Old Testament expression; but he adds "of the Lord Jesus Christ." He and those to whom he wrote were serving God, still zealous for the law, adhering to it in every way, yet they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and served Him. Their national hope as the people of God was theirs still. The Epistle is taken up entirely with the difficulties these Jewish believers had; it refers to the trials (like Peter's first Epistle) they were undergoing, exhorts them to faith. It points out the serious errors in the lives as believers; while they believed their lives did not correspond with such a belief. The correction of the faults, while common to all believers, has a striking Jewish aspect. They had respect of persons, looked to outward circumstances, and they are reminded of the royal law of the Scriptures, and insistence is made that their faith in the Messiah must be evidenced by works. They are exhorted to be more than mere hearers of the Word, by which they had been begotten anew, but to be doers of it. Many of them evidently wanted to be teachers, had great ambitions, but their Jewish character, looseness of their tongues in speaking evil, had become prominent and that is corrected. There is a repeated reference in the Epistle to the godly of their nation, to Abraham and Isaac, to Rahab, Job and Elijah. There is also quite a little which links with the Sermon on the Mount. Finally there are exhortations to godliness, prayer, the life of trust and a reminder of the coming of the Lord. The prominent word seems to be the word "patience." We find it five times. The trying of faith is to work patience (1:3); patience is to have her perfect work (1:4); they are to be patient unto the coming of the Lord (5:7); and be like the husbandman who waits in patience, and finally they are reminded of the patience of Job. The exhortations may be grouped around this word patience.

I. Exhortations to Patience in Suffering God's Will (1:1-18).

II. Exhortation to Patience in Doing God's Will (1:19; 4:17).

III. Exhortation to Patience in Awaiting God's Will (5:1-20).

We shall follow in our analysis and annotations the chapter division as we have them in our Bibles.

I. TRIALS AND THE EXERCISE OF FAITH (1)

II. THE ROYAL LAW: FAITH AND WORKS (2)

III. THE EVILS OF THE TONGUE CORRECTED (3)

IV. FURTHER EXHORTATIONS TO RIGHT LIVING (4)

V. THE COMING OF THE LORD AND THE LIFE OF FAITH (5)

Analysis and Annotations

I. TRIALS AND THE EXERCISE OF FAITH

CHAPTER 1

1. Trials and the power of faith (1:1-4)
2. The resources of faith (1:5-8)
3. The realization of faith (1:9-11)
4. The conquest of faith (1:12-15)
5. The result of faith (1:16-27)

Verses 1-4

The first verse is the introduction. The writer is James, but he does not add, as he might have done, "the brother of the Lord." It would have identified his person at once, and being the Lord's brother, he had a perfect right to call himself thus. But he did not. His humility shines forth in this omission; others called him by that title, but he avoided it. He is "servant of God," and he served God as "servant of the Lord Jesus Christ," a godly believing Jew. He writes to the twelve tribes in the dispersion of like faith. But the beautiful words of greeting in other Epistles, "Grace and peace be unto you," are not used by him. Greetings only are sent, and in this respect it is like the Apostolic document which was issued by the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. (See Acts 15:23.)

The practical character of his letter is at once apparent. "Count it all joy when you fall in divers temptations." They were all undergoing trials and tests as believing Jews, who had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The First Epistle of Peter, which is also addressed to believing Hebrews tells the same story. They were in heaviness through manifold temptations. Their faith was severely tried as with fire (1 Peter 1:6-7). James exhorts these sufferers not to be grieved or disturbed over these trials, but rather to count it a joy. These trials were the evidences of their sonship and that their faith was real. Faith must be tried; the trial itself worketh patience, that is, endurance. This belongs to the practical experience of a believer. "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). If endurance has its perfect work, if the believer continues steadfast and in patience he will be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. The word "perfect" has been misinterpreted by some as if it meant an assumed Christian perfection or sinlessness. It does not mean that, but it means the perfect work of patience, enduring to the end, when self will is subdued and the will of God is fully accepted. The result is that there is no deficiency in the practical life of the believer. The Lord Jesus is an example of it. He never did His own will, but patiently waited for the will of God and yielded a perfect obedience. Faith is power to suffer and to endure trials and testings.

Verses 5-8

Such endurance is impossible without prayer. In the midst of trials and hardships, the various perplexities which come upon the believer, they, as well as we, lack wisdom; we often do not know what to do. Wisdom is needed, not human wisdom, but that wisdom which is from above. This wisdom enables us to discern His will and to follow the right guidance. It is obtained by an utter dependence on God, and the expression of that dependence is prayer. He giveth to all liberally, nor does He upbraid. We can come to Him at all times, and habitually wait on Him for guidance and direction; and as we wait on Him thus and count on Him there will be no disappointment. Often believers think they have divine guidance, but it is but following some kind of an impression, certain impulses, which may come from ourselves, or from the enemy. But constant waiting on the Lord and trusting in Him, this is wisdom. All this necessitates childlike faith, which means counting on His faithfulness and on an answer from Him. If we doubt his faithfulness or question His answer we cannot receive anything from Him. Hesitance about God, a double-mindedness, depending upon something else besides God is in reality unbelief. "For he that wavereth (is not positive in his utter confidence and dependence) is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." If the believer is double-minded, looking to the Lord and at the same time

looking elsewhere, he dishonors Him, and He cannot honor the believer and answer his prayer. How blessedly it was expressed by David, which perhaps was remembered by these believing Jews, when the inspired king wrote: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:5).

Verses 9-11

Faith makes things real. It lifts above the circumstances of life. The brother of low degree in the midst of his trials can glory in realizing faith that he is exalted, while the rich believer can rejoice in faith in his trials, that he is made low, that he can suffer loss, and learn from his own poverty and lowness, realizing that all his riches are but for a moment, transitory "because as the flower of the grass he will pass away." This is the realization of faith in the believer; the believer of low degree in the midst of trials realizes that he is exalted, he glories in that, while the rich learns his low estate, that riches will fade away, but that he possesses an inheritance that fadeth not away.

Verses 12-15

Here is a beatitude: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." Overcoming faith will be rewarded. As the poor believer, or the rich believer, endures temptation, is proved and overcomes through faith, the Lord will give to him the promised crown of life.

The sources of temptations are mentioned in connection with this beatitude. There are two sources of temptations. There are temptations, the trial of faith which comes from God for our own good; there is a temptation of the flesh, of inward evil, which is not of God, but of the devil. Trial of faith God permits, but when it comes to temptations of evil, to do evil, to be tempted in this fashion, God never is the author of that. God cannot be tempted with evil, nor tempteth He any man.

This passage settles the question with which so many believers are troubled: "Could the Lord Jesus Christ sin?" They generally quote in connection with this Hebrews 4:15, that He was tempted in all points as we are. They claim that "all points" includes temptation to sin coming from within. Even excellent Christians are at sea about this question. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very God. Being manifested in the flesh does not mean that He laid aside His Deity. James says, "God cannot be tempted with evil," for God is absolutely holy. Therefore our Lord could not be tempted with evil. He had nothing of fallen man in Him; the prince of this world (Satan) came and found nothing in Him. Furthermore, the correct translation of Hebrews 4:15 is as follows: But was in all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin. In all other points our blessed Lord was tempted, but never by indwelling sin, for He was absolutely holy in His human nature, given to Him by the Holy Spirit.

It is otherwise with man fallen, he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. The working, as revealed in verses 14-15, is illustrated in the case of David when lust brought forth sin and death (2 Sam. 11).

Verses 16-27. Evil has been traced to its source, and now we come to the other side. From God cometh every good and perfect gift and He is a God who does not change; with Him there is no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. The greatest good and the greatest gift from such a God is the gift of His Only Begotten Son. Those who believe Him that sent the Son of God into the world (John 5:24) are born again by the Word of Truth (John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23; Eph. 1:13) to be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. His own holy nature is thus communicated to those who believe; it is the result of faith. Of that new nature, the divine nature, it is written in 1 John 3:9: "He that is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." It means that there is no evil, in the new nature; it is a holy nature, it will never tempt to sin. But the believer has an old nature, and that is evil, nor can it ever be anything else, "for that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Thus, begotten again by His own good and gracious will, we are the first fruits of that new creation which in God's own time will be revealed.

This new nature must produce the fruits of righteousness, hence the practical exhortation. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Hearing is the attitude of true faith, ever listening to that which God speaks in His Word; then slow to speak, because speech gives expression to what we are; and it needs caution not to let the old nature express itself; and slow to wrath, which is the flesh. Wrath does not work that practical righteousness which is pleasing to God. Then there is to be, as a result of true faith, a laying aside of all filthiness, all superfluity of naughtiness; this is the same putting off of which

we read in the Pauline Epistles (Col. 3, etc). This putting off is not the working of the law, but it is the result of the implanted Word, which received in meekness, saves; it is both the means of true salvation and the working out of that salvation into results of righteousness. But it needs more than hearers of the Word; we must be doers of it.

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed indeed." What is the law of liberty? It is not the law of Moses as some have imagined. The perfect law of liberty is explained in the context. It is the Word of God by which the believer is begotten again, it is the implanted Word, which teaches, instructs, guides and directs; it is the life which flows from the new nature, subject to the Word of God. It has often been aptly described as a loving parent who tells his child that he must go here or there; that is, the very places which he knows perfectly the child would be gratified to visit. Such is the law of liberty; as if one said to the child: 'Now, my child, you must go and do such and such a thing,' all the while knowing you cannot confer a greater favor on the child. It has not at all the character of resisting the will of the child, but rather of directing his affection in the will of the object dearest to him. The child is regarded and led according to the love of the parent, who knows what the desire of the child is--a desire that has been, in virtue of a new nature, implanted by God Himself in the child. He has given him a life that loves His ways and His Word, that hates and revolts from evil, and is pained most of all by falling through unwatchfulness into sin, if it seemed ever so little. The law of liberty therefore consists not so much in a restraint of gratifying the old man, as in guiding and guarding the new; for the heart's delight is in what is good and holy and true; the Word of God on the one hand exercises us in cleaving to that which is the joy of the Christian's heart, and strengthens us in our detestation of all that we know to be offensive to the Lord" (Wm. Kelly).

This is the law of perfect liberty and in doing this there in blessedness. Then follows a definition of pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father. Religion does not mean here the inner life, but the outward manifestation of it. The fatherless and the widows are God's special objects of love and care; to visit such in their affliction is Christlike. How often this is quoted by those who do not believe in the gospel of grace and in the cross of Christ, as if works of kindness were the true religion, by which man is saved and pleasing to God. The whole chapter shows how erroneous such an application is. And the other definition "to keep himself unspotted from the world," a true life of self surrender and separation, is generally overlooked.

II. THE ROYAL LAW: FAITH AND WORKS

CHAPTER 2

1. The faith of Christ with respect to persons (2:1-5)
2. The royal law (2:6-13)
3. Faith must be manifested by works (2:14-26)

Verses 1-5

Here we have the synagogue mentioned, sufficient evidence that these Jewish believers were still gathering together in the Jewish fashion, and were not an ecclesia, an assembly, gathered out. The Epistle to the Hebrews, written many years after the Epistle of James, exhorted them to leave the camp behind and go outside of it (Hebrews 13:13). Now in the synagogue among unbelieving Jews the rich man with his gold ring and fine clothing was accorded all honor, received the foremost place, while the poor man was told to stand up. (The same spirit prevails in many "churches" too, with their pew rents, sometimes auctioned off to the highest bidder, while the poor are not welcomed in such aristocratic surroundings.) Such a practice is not according to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, who Him self became poor so that by His poverty we might be rich. Faith, so prominent in the opening chapter of this Epistle, is here again insisted upon. Their action, even, in so small a matter as preference of the rich and influential, was not according to that faith, which worketh by love. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?"

Verses 6-13

They had despised the poor, who were believers and walked in faith, while the rich oppressed them and dragged them before the judgment-seats. These of course were not believers, but mere professors, which again shows the mixed conditions of their gatherings. Furthermore, these rich people with their shameful behavior had blasphemed "that worthy Name" by which they were called, the name of the Lord of glory. This respect of persons was a sin against the royal law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" "If ye have respect to persons ye commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors." If it is the matter of keeping the law, it must be kept in every detail and the entire law "for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." They were in their consciences still under the law, not having fully seen "the law of liberty" which is the perfect law, flowing as we have learned from the first chapter, from the new nature guided by the Holy Spirit, producing the walk in the Spirit, thus fulfilling the righteousness of the law. James, therefore, appeals to the Ten Commandments as a witness to arouse their consciences. Then he mentions once more the law of liberty. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment shall be without mercy to him that hath shown no mercy. Mercy rejoiceth over judgment." The perfect law of liberty produces mercy in the believer, but where no mercy is shown, no mercy can be expected, but judgment. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2).

Verses 14-26

This section of the Epistle has produced much perplexity in the minds of some and led to a great deal of controversy. As it is well known, Dr. Martin Luther, thinking that James tried to answer and contradict Paul's statement in Romans, called James "an Epistle of straw." Others also hold that James corrects the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, the one being the inspired statement unfolding the gospel of grace, the other the defense of that gospel. But how could James answer either Epistle when they were not at all in existence, but written years later? When Paul wrote Romans and Galatians he knew James' Epistle. But did Paul try to correct James' argument? Not by any means. Both James and Paul wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Any thought of correcting a mistake impeaches the inerrancy of the Word of God.

There is no difficulty at all connected with this passage. The Holy Spirit through James shows that true faith which justifies before God must be evidenced by works. "What should it profit, my brethren, though a man say that he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save?" What kind of faith does he mean? It is a faith which assents to certain dogmas, consisting in a mental, intellectual assent, but it is not the living faith. A living faith manifests itself in works. That is what James insists upon. In their synagogue were those who professed to believe, but they did not show by their actions that they had the faith given by God; they only said that they had faith; works, as the proof of true faith were absent. "If a brother or a sister be naked (the fatherless and widows of the closing verse of the previous chapter), and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" The answer to this question is, it certainly profits nothing. Such a behavior shows that the professed faith is dead. "So also faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself" The quality of faith is defined in the nineteenth verse. "Thou believest there is one God"--that which the Jew boasts Of, that he believes in one God, and not like the heathen in many gods--"thou doest well; the demons also believe and tremble." Demons who also believe are still demons; so a man may believe and still be the natural man, live and act as such. The seal of true faith is works.

This the Holy Spirit now illustrates through the case of Abraham and Rahab, so different from each other, the one the Father of the faithful, the other the harlot of Jericho. The works of both bear witness to the character of true faith which produced them. In the case of Abraham he offered up his only son. Of Abraham it was said "he believed God." That he acted as he did, in unquestioning and unhesitating obedience, was the proof that he believed God. What he did was the seal put on his faith, by which he was justified before God. Rahab also believed, and her faith was demonstrated when she received the spies, hid them and associated herself with the people of God, while she separated herself from her own people. Thus faith was seen as a perfect faith, as the true faith, by works. This is what the Holy Spirit teaches through James. In Romans justification before God is taught, which is by faith only. James does not say that our works justify us before God; such are not needed before an omniscient God, for He sees the faith of the heart, which man does not see. It is in exercise with regard to Him, by trust in His Word, in Himself, by receiving His testimony in spite of everything within and without--this true faith God sees and knows. But when our fellow-men ask, show me, then that faith shows itself by works. It is our justification before man. The argument is concluded by the terse comparison: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

III. THE EVILS OF THE TONGUE CORRECTED

CHAPTER 3

1. The tongue and its work (3:1-12)
2. The wisdom which is earthly and the wisdom that is from above (3:13-18)

Verses 1-12

The practical character of this Epistle is still more evidenced by the contents of this chapter. The tongue is the member of the human body which is made prominent. The human tongue is a great and wonderful gift of the Creator; with which no other earthly creature is endowed. It is written: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It therefore reveals the real 'condition of the heart and by what it is governed.

The opening verse exhorts to caution as to teaching: "My brethren, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive a greater judgment." Here another Jewish characteristic is mentioned. They are naturally forward and love to be heard, taking leadership. It seems as if many wanted to be teachers and exercise public ministry. Perhaps this may refer to the "speaking in tongues" also, and the abuse of it as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:20-33. In the first chapter the exhortation was given "slow to speak"; here it is applied to teaching. The exhortation is interesting in its bearing. First, is the warning not to assume leadership in teaching for self-display; even teaching as given to the members of the body of Christ must be carefully exercised, for it carries with it great responsibility, for one may preach to others and be himself disapproved (1 Cor. 9:27). If one is a teacher he must also practice what he teaches, otherwise he shall receive a greater judgment, not as to salvation, but as to disapproval before the award seat of Christ.

in the second place, the exhortation shows that ministry among these Jewish Christians was in perfect liberty; they did not possess among themselves a special class in whom public teaching was vested. The next verse broadens and refers to speaking in general. The perfect man is he who does not offend in a word and therefore is able to govern the whole body. This introduces the tongue and its twofold possibility. "Behold we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature when it is set on fire by Gehenna." Horses, with their powerful bodies, are governed, led about and directed by the bit in their mouths; great ships which are driven about by gales and hurricanes, are steered by a small rudder, and so the human tongue is a little member which controls the whole man. It is like a tiny spark, yet that spark can set everything on fire and produce a disastrous conflagration. "Behold how much wood is kindled by how small a fire"--this is the correct rendering of the text. The tongue of the natural man, unrestrained by anything, is a fire. It defiles the whole body. Our Lord speaks of this. "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23).

The tongue is the medium to reveal all these evils of the heart, and by its use for evil becomes the seducer of others. It can set everything on fire, if it is set on fire by Gehenna, (translated, hell); when it is under the control of the author of sin.

"For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed and hath been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we the Lord and Father, and therewith curse we men, made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth the fountain send forth out of the same opening sweet and bitter? Can a fig-tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield sweet."

James vehemently attacks this evil, yet in the spirit of love, as seen by the repeated address, "My brethren." Sins of the tongue are especially prominent among Jews; evil speaking, backbiting and lying, so frequently mentioned in their own Scriptures. He speaks of the power man has to tame every kind of beasts and birds, even the creeping things, as serpents

and things in the sea; but man, the conqueror of the brute creation, is helpless when it comes to the taming of the tongue; the tongue can no man tame. David knew of this, for he wrote: "I said, I will take heed of my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me" (Psa. 39:1). All resolutions man makes to keep his tongue in subjection are unsuccessful. But if man has a new nature with the Holy Spirit dwelling there, the tongue can be governed and its evils overcome. Yet what sin is more frequently found among God's people than the sins of the tongue? It needs a constant watching and words must be weighed. Idle words, words which are not according to truth, or which reflect upon the character of another child of God, insinuating evil, magnifying faults, or words which belittle, words of envy and strife are the sins of the tongue prevalent among God's people. How well then to consider constantly the exhortation of the first chapter of this Epistle: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (1:19). The tongue is a restless evil; it is unceasingly at it and carries in its sinful use deadly poison.

Blessing and curse may be expressed by the tongue. While on the one hand, the tongue is an instrument of evil and for evil, the tongue of the believer, on the other hand, should be an instrument of righteousness and for the glory of God. What greater occupation on earth is possible than true worship in Spirit and truth! Through the tongue we can praise and exalt the Lord, bear testimony to that worthy Name, tell others of Him and become channels for eternal blessing. But how quickly, if uncontrolled, it may be used in the service of sin. Peter uttered with his tongue his great, God-given confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But a short time after, that same tongue became the mouthpiece of Satan, when he rebuked the Lord for saying that He would go to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. What an inconsistency the tongue of man reveals! No such thing is found in nature anywhere. A tree does not produce two kinds of fruit; a fig tree bears no Olives; a vine does not produce figs; nor does the same fountain gush forth salt water and sweet water.

Verses 13-18

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him shew out of a good behavior his works in meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your heart, boast not and lie not against the truth. This is not the wisdom which cometh down from above, but it is earthly, sensual, demoniacal. For where envying and strife is, there is disorder and every evil thing." This exhortation, also, is suited to the Jewish believers to whom it was originally addressed. They are noted still for their jealousies, their strife and self-exaltation, these fruits of the fallen nature of man, the works of the flesh; they are, of course, also found among Gentile believers. Envyings, the sectarian spirit, the party spirit, producing bitterness and contentions, these things are not the manifestations of the wisdom which is from above, the fruit of the new nature and of the Spirit, but it is the earthly wisdom, springing from the natural man, behind which stands the author of sin.

"But the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without contention, without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace." This is the other side, the manifestation of the wisdom from above, the true fruits of the new nature and of the Spirit of God. It is first pure and then peaceable. It is pure, because it comes from God and leads to God. That which is from God cannot tolerate evil; it repudiates it. It aims at the glory of God and maintains His holy character. As a result it is peaceable, it seeks the fruits of peace among men, through the exercise of that love which the Holy Spirit describes in 1 Corinthians 13. It is gentle: "Let your gentleness be known to all men" (Phil. 4:5); it is easy to be entreated, ready to yield. It knows nothing of stubbornness, prejudice and opinionativeness, the sources of so much strife and contention among believers. When a man is conscious that his wisdom is of a superior kind, one can understand his unwillingness to have his mind or will disputed; but the truth is, that there is nothing which so marks the superiority of grace and truth and wisdom, that God gives, as patience, and the absence of anxiety to push what one knows is right and true. It is an inherent and sure sign of weakness somewhere, when a man is ever urgent in pressing the value of his own words and opinions, or caviling habitually at others. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, and produces peace.

IV. FURTHER EXHORTATIONS TO RIGHT LIVING

CHAPTER 4

1. Fightings and worldliness rebuked (4:1-6)
2. The Godly walk (4:7-17)

Verses 1-6

A strong rebuke follows the statements concerning the wisdom from beneath and the wisdom from above. It must be borne in mind that these exhortations are addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad; to say that these words mean believers only would be a serious mistake; while Christians are contemplated, those of the tribes of Israel who are not believers are equally in view. It applies therefore to those who were born of God, real believers, and to those who were not, an entirely different matter from the Pauline Epistles, which are exclusively addressed to the saints.

There was much strife and contention amongst them. Whence come wars and fightings? Certainly not from the wisdom which is above, which is first pure and then peaceable. But wars and fightings are the fruits of the old nature, the flesh. They come from the pleasures which war in the members. The gratification of the lusts of the natural man produces fightings and not the new nature, that which is from above; this includes all forms of lusts, not only those of the flesh, but the lust for power, the lust for preeminence and leadership, the lusts of the mind. "Ye lust and have not"; there is nothing that can satisfy the heart of man; any kind of lust will end in disappointment and remorse. "Ye kill and covet and cannot obtain." This is the way of the world in sin and away from God; it shows that James speaks to the unbelieving of the twelve tribes, and pictures their condition. "Ye fight and war. Ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it in your pleasures." The natural man is also religious and as such prays. But their prayers sprang from the old nature, the desires of the flesh; they received not because they asked amiss. They prayed for selfish things, incited by selfish motives, so that they might gratify their sinful natures. Even true believers often ask and receive not, because they ask amiss, out of selfish reasons, to minister to their own pleasures and gratification. If the Lord would answer such prayers He would minister to that which is evil.

The world and its unsatisfying pleasures controlled those described in the foregoing words, some of whom may have been professing believers. The wisdom which is earthly, sensual and demoniac, they followed. And now the writer breaks out in a passionate exclamation: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore would be the friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." Here others than unbelievers are contemplated. The sphere of the natural man is the world; his walk is according to the course of this world; he is governed by the lust of the flesh, the lust of eyes and the pride of life. As such he is an enemy of God by wicked works and by nature a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3).

The true believer, saved by grace, is not of the world, even as our Lord was not of the world (John 17:16). Grace has severed the believer from the world; the cross of Christ has made him dead to the world and the world dead unto him. Hence the exhortation in John's Epistle "Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16). And believers may turn back to the world, like Demas, and love it for a time. James calls such adulteresses; they leave Him to whom they are espoused, even Christ, and turn to another. The term must have reminded the Israelites of the Old Testament passages in which unfaithful, apostate Israel is pictured as an adulteress and playing the harlot (Jeremiah 3:9; Ezekiel 16:23; Hosea 2). It is a solemn exhortation which every true believer should consider carefully; friendship with the world means enmity against God. Verse 5 should be rendered as follows: "Or think ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the Spirit, who dwelleth in us, long unto envying?" All the Scriptures testify that worldliness and godliness cannot exist together; think ye then that these Scriptures speak in vain? And the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the believer, does not lust unto envy, for He opposes the flesh and those who walk in the Spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. But he giveth more grace, yea grace sufficient to overcome by faith the world, for faith is the victory that overcomes the world. He quotes Proverbs 3:34. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Verses 7-17

Exhortations to a godly, holy walk follow. Submit yourselves, therefore to God; be subject unto Him, have no friendship with the world, but be His friend. There is one who would drag the believer back into the world, as Pharaoh tried to get Israel back to Egypt. Guard against it by resisting the devil and he will flee from you. This is a blessed promise which all His faithful people have tested at all times. We are not to flee from the devil, but to resist him as we do so in the name of our Lord, the enemy will be helpless and flee from us. Another blessed exhortation follows. "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." Next James addresses again those who had not yet fully turned to the Lord. It is a call to

repentance. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall exalt you."

The attitude towards other brethren is made clear in verses 11 and 12: "Speak not one against another, brethren." Speaking evil, the sin of the tongue is once more mentioned by James. There are seven verses in which exhortations to guard the tongue and speech are given: 1:19, 26, 2:12, 3:9, 16, 4:11 and 5:9. It seems that this must have been the besetting sin of these believing Jews. Evil, of course, must always be judged, whether it is unsound doctrine or an evil conduct; this belongs to the responsibility of a believer. But God alone, the Righteous judge, knows the heart and its motives. Speaking against a brother and judging him, that is, pronouncing a sentence of condemnation upon him, is the same as speaking against the law and judging the law. But if one judges the law, the same is not a doer of the law, but a judge; doing this we take the place of Him who is both, the lawgiver and the judge, that is the Lord.

The final paragraph urges dependence on the Lord and warns against making plans for the future without looking to the Lord and His will concerning His people. "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." Such a language shows self-will, forgetfulness of God, and self-confidence. It is planning with God left out. No one knows what the morrow may bring forth; but God knows. "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will and we live, we will also do this or that."

The child of God who walks in godly fear, trusting the Lord, planning as under Him, will constantly remember that all depends on the Lord and on His will. It is a wholesome habit to add always, when we speak of the future, "if the Lord will and we live"; this is pleasing in His sight and a testimony of our submission to Him and dependence on Him. Otherwise it is the boasting, vain-gloriousness of the self-secure world, which boasts and plans, without thinking of God and His will. The last verse must not be detached from what goes on before. "To him, therefore, that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Sin does not consist only in doing evil, but if we do not the good we know, it is also sin. If we do not act according to the fact that we are entirely dependent on God as to the future, we sin.

"This verse should forever settle the question of sinless perfection for a Christian: 'To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' This is much more, of course, than the prohibition of positive evil. There is a negative evil which we have carefully to keep before us. The responsibility of knowing what it is good to do is one that, while we may in a general way allow it, yet deserves far deeper consideration than we often would even desire to give it. How solemn it is to think of all the good that we might do, and yet have not done! How slow we are to recognize that this, too, is sin! We are so apt to claim for ourselves a kind of freedom here which is not Scriptural freedom; and there is no doubt, also, that we may abuse a text like this to legality, if there be legality in our hearts. We are to be drawn, not driven. Yet the neglect of that which is in our hand to do--which we, perhaps, do not realize our capacity for, and that only through a spirit of self-indulgence or a timidity which is not far removed from this--such neglect, how hard it is to free ourselves of it, and how much do we miss in this way of that which would be fruitful in blessing for ourselves as well as for others! for, indeed, we can never sow fruit of this kind without reaping what we have sown; and the good that we can do to others, even if it requires the most thorough self-sacrifice, yet will be found in the end to have yielded more than it cost, and to have wrought in the interests of him who has not considered even or sought this" (Numerical Bible).

V. THE COMING OF THE LORD AND THE LIFE OF FAITH

CHAPTER 5

1. The oppression by the rich and their coming doom (5:1-6)
2. Be patient unto the coming of the Lord (5:7-12)
3. The prayers of faith and the life of faith (5:13-20)

Verses 1-6

The two classes whom James addresses stand out very prominently in this final chapter of his Epistle. The rich oppressors certainly are not believers but the unbelieving rich; they are not addressed as "brethren"; but others are in verse 7 and exhorted to patience. Both classes, the unbelieving rich and the believing remnant are confronted by the coming of the Lord. "Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have heaped together treasures in the last days."

The present age, which began with the death and resurrection of our Lord, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, is spoken of as "the last days" and "the last time" (Heb. 1:2 and 1 John 2:18); this age will be followed by the dispensation of the fullness of times, the times of restoration as promised by God's holy prophets (Eph. 1:10; Acts 3:19-21), the age of the kingdom when Christ reigns and His saints with Him. And this present age will end with the coming of the Lord to execute judgment, to right all wrong and judge all unrighteousness. These rich Israelites heaped treasures together, and, as we shall see later, acted outrageously, thereby showing that they did not believe in the day of the Lord, when He will be manifested in judgment glory. Yet their own Scriptures announced exactly that which James here states. See Isaiah 2:10-20 and especially Zephaniah 1:14-18. In anticipation of that coming day he calls on them to weep and howl, and announces the fate of their treasures.

Let us remember that the Epistle was written years before the destruction of Jerusalem. When Jerusalem fell, and even before its fall, many of the rich Jews became paupers; they were ruined, tortured and murdered, as Josephus tells us. The fall of Jerusalem with its awful horrors, in the year 70 A.D., was a judgment of the Lord, but not the day of the Lord and the coming of the Lord. What happened then to the stubborn unbelieving masses will happen again, only on a larger scale during the coming great tribulation and when the Lord returns in power and in great glory. We believe therefore, that this exhortation to the rich has a special bearing for the future, during the very end of the age.

But they were oppressing the poor as well. "Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out; and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the just One; he doth not resist you." Oppression of the poor, yea, the poor of their own people is another characteristic of the Jewish people. The prophet Amos rebuked it in his day, when the poor were downtrodden and robbed by the rich. It is so today and will be so in the future. And the money which was taken from the poor was used by the rich to live in luxury and wanton pleasures. The spirit they manifested in heaping treasures together, oppressing the poor and needy, robbing them, and living in pleasure, is the same which condemned and killed the Just One, the Lord Jesus Christ, who did not resist. To apply these words primarily and altogether to our Lord can hardly be done. What was done to the Lord of glory these unbelievers did to His true followers. It will be so again during the great tribulation, under Antichrist, when the godly remnant will be persecuted by those who side with the false Messiah. See Psalm 79:1-3; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:9-25; Revelation 11, 12 and 13.

Verses 7-12

"Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord is at hand." He addresses in these words the believers, the suffering remnant amongst the unbelieving masses which attended the synagogue. They are to be patient and suffer in patience, without resisting. The coming of the Lord, which is mentioned twice in these verses, is His visible and glorious manifestation, the same which our Lord speaks of in Matthew 24:30-31. The first Epistle to the Thessalonians, which contains that unique revelation of the coming of the Lord for His saints, the resurrection of the holy dead and the sudden transformation of the living saints, to be caught up together in clouds to meet Him in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18) had not yet been given. The mystery "we shall not all sleep but be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinth. 15:51-52), was then unknown. And let us note here, that this is one of the mysteries nowhere made known in the Old Testament.

The coming of the Lord, we repeat, is that coming which is so many times announced in the Prophetic Word of the Scriptures. "The first generation of Christians expected to witness in the near future the personal reappearance of Christ on earth to close the old dispensation by punishing unbelievers, and delivering the Christians. These expectations were partly realized when the fall of Jerusalem closed the old Jewish dispensation by the destruction of the temple and the final

cessation of the Levitical worship of Jehovah. At the same time misery and ruin befell the Jewish nation which had rejected and crucified our Lord. As regards any more exact fulfilment, the statements of the New Testament must be interpreted according to the principle laid down in 2 Peter 3:8 and 1 John 2:18." (This passage is from the New Century Bible. One is grateful to find this paragraph in a work which is more or less on the side of the destructive criticism.) That the destruction of Jerusalem and the judgment of the nation was predicted by our Lord is known to all, that the event when it came in the year 70 is the coming of the Lord, is not true.

James exhorts his suffering brethren to be like the husbandman who has to wait between the sowing time and the harvest. But here is another wrong interpretation. The latter rain of which James speaks has been foolishly interpreted as meaning a spiritual latter rain, another Pentecost. This is one of the star arguments of present day Pentecostalism with its supposed revival of apostolic gifts. The former and latter rain of which James speaks has no such meaning; it is purely the rainfall in nature. In Palestine there are two distinct rainy seasons, one in the spring, the other in the fall. (See Deut. 11:14.)

Then follow other words of encouragement. "Murmur not, brethren, one against the other, that ye be not judged; behold the judge standeth before the door." Among themselves they were to guard against any friction and fretfulness, always remembering Him who is the judge, and who standeth before the door. They were also to remember the examples in suffering and patience of the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, the patience of Job, and how blessedly his suffering ended through the pity and mercy of the Lord. There is a warning also against oath making, such a common thing amongst the Jews. (See our Lord's warning in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:33-37).

Verses 13-20

The Epistle closes with practical exhortations to prayer and the exercise of faith. "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray." A short but weighty instruction. Instead of murmuring, as their forefathers did, instead of complaining in suffering, prayer must be exercised. The godly in Israel always made prayer their refuge and especially are the Psalms rich in this direction. "Is any cheerful? Let him sing psalms." The Psalms were used extensively in the synagogue. To teach upon this statement, as had been done, that the church should sing nothing but the Psalms, and reject the great hymns of the saints of God of all ages, born often in adversity and in deep soul exercise, is far fetched. Much in the Psalms does not express true Christianity at all. "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the assembly; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." This exhortation demands a closer scrutiny and examination. Of late this instruction by James has been greatly misapplied by faith-healers. There are many extremists who teach that here is a commandment to the church how sickness among the saints should be dealt with; that means, to alleviate bodily ills, must be fully discarded and if they are used, it is unbelief in the power of God and a hindrance to faith.

There are men and women all over Christendom, who go about with a message of healing of diseases, who anoint the sick by the hundreds and thousands, claiming that this is the only way that illness is to be treated. Then these same healers claim miraculous cures which are, after careful investigation, mostly found to be falsehoods. Some of these advocates of this method of healing, denouncing means and the use of physicians, were taken sick and had to use means to overcome their bodily ills. The entire subject of "faith-healing" we cannot examine here; nor can we enlarge upon the claims of "Christian Science" and other metaphysical cults and systems. Supernatural healing of diseases is claimed by Romish Catholicism, by the shrines and holy places of the Greek Orthodox church, by Spiritism, Mormonism and in many pagan systems. We confine our remarks to the passage before us.

It has been explained by some that the words of James mean that which should be done in case sickness unto death has seized upon a believer. It is then interpreted to mean "Prayer shall save the dying man from the punishment of his sins; and after his death, the Lord will raise him up in resurrection." This view we reject. No prayer of faith is needed for the coming physical resurrection of a believer. Romanism has made out of it "the sacrament of extreme unction" which is another invention.

inasmuch as "the anointing with oil" seems to be the point most stressed by divine healers, we shall examine this first. What does it mean? Here we must remember the Jewish character of the Epistle. We have shown before that the believers who in James addresses were still closely identified with Judaism, hence they practised many things peculiar to Judaism.

Anointing with oil was extensively used in the ceremonies of the Jews. Kings and priests were anointed, oil being liberally poured upon the head, denoting outwardly the fact of consecration to office, and symbolically the Spirit of God, which they needed for the exercise of their functions. Furthermore, oil was also very widely used for health and comfort. It was and is still a great remedial agent in the Orient.

The Good Samaritan poured into the wounds of the man who had fallen among the thieves oil and wine. Oil was used in cases of fever and most generally in skin diseases. Anointing the sick with oil was a general practice, as can be shown from talmudical literature. In Mark 6:13, we read, "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." Would they not have been healed if they had not been anointed with oil? The anointing with oil was an old custom which the disciples made use of, but the Lord in commissioning them in connection with the kingdom message did not tell them that they should anoint the sick with oil; they did it, for such was the universal practice. If James commands these Jewish believers who were sick to be anointed with oil he reaffirmed therefore this old Jewish custom. Oil is something beneficial to the body, a remedy, just as wine is recommended by the Spirit of God as a remedy for the ills of the body (1 Timothy 5:23). It is therefore an open question whether oil may not stand here also for legitimate means to be used in case of illness. Divine healers carry with them a small bottle of oil and daub the forehead with a drop of oil, but this is not the anointing commanded here. Where is the authority to say that a drop of oil must be put on the forehead?

But it is very striking that apart from this passage, in this transition Epistle, nowhere else in the New Testament (except in Mark 6:13), do we read anything about this anointing with oil in case of sickness. Why did not Paul write to Timothy, who often had infirmities, "Call the elders, let them anoint you with oil," but instead of it, the divinely given remedy, "a little wine," is urged upon him. And Paul was sick himself, suffered with his eyes, which probably was the thorn in the flesh. Trophimus was sick in Miletus. But nowhere this Jewish ceremony, anointing with oil, is mentioned. The Epistles which are the high water mark of divine revelation, are the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians; we find nothing in these Epistles about healing of diseases by anointing and prayer. Nor is it mentioned in any of the other Pauline Epistles. In Corinthians the gift of healing is found among the gifts of the Spirit, but he who possessed that gift had no need of using oil besides. Our conclusion, then, is that the anointing with oil in this passage is something customary with the Jews, which is not meant to be perpetuated in the Church, for if such were the fact the Holy Spirit would have stated it elsewhere.

We pass over the question as to true elders, which are to be called. Many of those who go about as divine healers are women. Who has ever heard of "women elders"? In fact, in the public healing services which have become such a common thing in our days, the question of elders is entirely ignored. Big advertisements appear in the papers that services for the healing of the sick are to be held. As a result hundreds come and are ready to do anything, to believe anything, if only some hope is held out that they might be cured. They readily submit to the ceremony of having a little oil put on their foreheads, but the command, that the sick person, is to call for the elders of the church, those of authority, is ignored. The question is, "Do we still have the elders in the apostolic sense?" These are matters which are completely set aside by modern faith healers.

But the emphasis in the passage is on "the prayer of faith." The prayer of faith, not the anointing with oil, shall save the sick. No believer denies the efficacy of believing prayer, yet always guarded by the condition of "if it be His will." In case of sickness the child of God will not send for a physician in the first place, but the believer turns to the Lord and puts himself in His gracious and merciful hands. The passage here seems to be the matter of sickness as a chastening from the Lord on account of specific sins committed. In such a case when self-judgment has brought the matter into His light, the promise can be claimed "the prayer of faith shall save the sick."

"Was it intended to be a direction universally applicable to all cases, and to be carried out at all times, in all places, and under all conditions? Surely--most surely not. For note that there is no question at all as to the result: 'the prayer of faith shall save (it is certain) the sick and the Lord will raise him up.'

"Now, we know perfectly well that this is not and cannot be the invariable outcome of all sickness. The vast majority of mankind--yes, of Christians--has died as the result of some sickness: has this been because 'elders' have not been called? Have they come to the end of that life here because they were not anointed with oil, and the prayer that always goes up from loving hearts was not the prayer of faith, and since not of faith, was sin? Who would not reject such conclusions with abhorrence? Yet are they inevitable, if this Scripture be pressed as being the one divinely given direction in the case of all

sickness.

"In it every act, every movement, must be in faith: that is recognizing the Lord's hand in the sickness, and the Lord's mind in removing it. But where is the great and precious promise on which faith can always rest, that shall make healing sure? In one case only, and that is if the sickness does not come from constitutional weakness, as with Timothy, or the hardship of a Christian devotion as with Epaphroditus, or any other natural cause--but as a chastening of the Lord for some specific sins committed, and this confessed and put away, the chastening ceases.

"And this is naturally enough the point of view of such a writer as James. Freedom from sickness consequent on obedience was interwoven in the first covenant: 'And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest upon thee; but will lay them upon all that hate thee'--is that what the Christian desires today: his diseases put on anyone else who may hate him? yet is that involved in that covenant.

"What, then, more natural than that this writer, who, although Christian, is still on the ground of a regenerate and sincerely pious Jew, should regard sickness in a light that is common to both Christian and Jew--as a chastening for sin."--(F.C. Jennings, Our Hope.)

With this we leave this portion of the Epistle, which has led to so much misunderstanding. To help the reader in getting the true conception we add in a brief appendix, at the close of these annotations, the comment as it is given in the Numerical Bible.

"Confess, therefore, your sins one to another, that ye may be healed." This brings out fully the fact that the sickness in view is on account of specific sins. When the sins are confessed and judged, grace intervenes, and God in mercy heals. Rome builds upon this passage the miserable invention of the confessional. But it does not mean confession to a man-made "priest," but a simple confiding of believers among themselves.

The great value of prayer is next pointed out by James. "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working"; this is a rendering adopted by many. He cites the case of Elijah. He was a man "of like passions with us" as we learn from the historical record of the Scriptures, which tells us of his great infirmities, as well as of his remarkable faith. He prayed fervently and rain was withheld, he prayed again and God answered his faith. The God of Elijah is our God still, who delights to answer the fervent prayer of the righteous man; the power of prayer can never be separated from the character of him who prays.

"My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." With this the Epistle ends abruptly. Faith must be manifested by love towards those who err. The exhortation finds an application in a general way, but primarily to those who know the truth and have backslidden. This is learned from the words "if any among you"; the application in a general way is also fully warranted. The ending without greeting has led some critics to assume, that the Epistle is made up of passages from sermons, compiled quite late, by a man by the name of James. The internal as well as the historical evidences refute this assumption.

APPENDIX

James 5:14-16

By F.W. Grant

The anointing with oil in the name of the Lord seems to be the claim of an authority which those of whom we are speaking would be the last to assert. No doubt the emphasis is laid here upon the "prayer of faith," to save the sick, and the prayer of faith certainly should not be lacking with us. We need not doubt how much we should gain if there were a more simple and constant reference to the Lord in these matters, and we cannot but remember the example of old of one who sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians, and died. The use of means that are in our hand may easily be perverted to the slighting of this way of faith; and it would certainly be far better to leave out the means in any case rather than to leave out the Lord.

The distinct and united acknowledgment of our dependence upon Him in all these cases is due from us, and we suffer loss if God is not acknowledged; but then for this, no elders or anointing can be needed, and the prescription of these things makes it evident that something more is contemplated here than simply the prayer of faith. Even so, there is no prohibition of means, if there be no prescription of them; and in God's ordinary way of working He certainly works by them. He could sustain us at any time without food, but we do not ordinarily expect Him to do this, although the food may profit nothing except the Lord please to use it. We cannot but remember in this way the prescription of a little wine to Timothy, while at the same time he was in the very midst of an assembly which had its regularly appointed elders.

In Judaism let us remember how, at the beginning of it, God was pleased to act miraculously in a marked way; and in the beginning of Christianity in Jerusalem, we find the same signs and miracles accompanying the Word. This was a most suited testimony to the new doctrine being published, a testimony which was also recognized in our Lord's case by the Jews as that which was to establish a new doctrine (Mark 1:27). The waning of all miraculous powers when once the testimony was established is marked, and cannot be denied. People may impute it, as they do impute it, to a lack of faith on the part of Christians; but with regard to such things one might certainly expect faith to be manifested as much as in other things. In fact, they would be things most earnestly clung to, for the manifest benefit and the display of power in them.

On the other hand, the prevalence of corruption which, whatever may be our own individual views of truth, cannot be but acknowledged, would naturally make it less suited that the Church so failing should still preserve her ornaments; but the reason for the decline of miracles is evidently other than this. In the history of the Acts we find an apparent absence of such things, where, for instance, as in Berea, men were employed with the Word itself to test the doctrine by it. Although in general, as the Lord promised, miraculous signs did follow at the beginning those who believed, yet even then this was never universally true. It could not be pleaded as the necessary mark of Christian faith. "Are all workers of miracles?" says the apostle; and the question in itself supposes a negative answer. Thus, if a whole assembly lacked, there was no necessary failure, and need be no disappointment in this case; while in Corinth their "coming behind in no gift" was no necessary evidence of a right state of soul. It seems even, one would say, a matter of course that God never meant our daily lives to be full of manifest miracles. He never meant to demonstrate the truth after that fashion. He would leave it, rather, to its own inherent and spiritual power.

Men easily crave miracles; but the whole generation in the wilderness, the constant witness of these, nevertheless perished for their unbelief. The miracles work no faith, although they might, and would, awaken attention to that which God presented as an object for faith; yet to those who believe in Christ, when they saw the miracles, He did not commit Himself (John 2:23-25). Every way it should be plain today that what goes for such amongst men commonly is no longer the mark upon true faith or the truth itself which calls for faith. The same things exactly can be wrought by those who deny Christian fundamentals as by those who profess them; and where is the evidence then? No set of men in the present day can be found who can adjust broken bones without surgery. If God wanted to show what He was doing, do we think that a broken bone would be a greater difficulty to Him than anything else?

Moreover, the signs and wonders of the time of the end are spoken of as rather giving evidence to falsity than to truth, to Antichrist than to Christ; and there will be signs and wonders wrought yet, which, as the Lord has said, would deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect. Thus, then we can easily understand (and especially in such an Epistle as the present--an Epistle to that nation to whom God had testified by signs and wonders of old, and would repeat to them now, in evidence that Christ was in nothing behind Moses) how we should find a reference of this kind to powers which might connect themselves with the elders of the Christian assembly, and yet understand why James should leave us, as it were, at a loss how to apply these things to ourselves. We can never be wrong in believing that the prayer of faith is still really the power that will save the sick, let means be used or not used; but the use of means seems in general rather according to the Lord's mind than against it. His common way is to work through that which He has Himself ordained, and there are plainly herbs for the healing of men. The very presence of such powers is proof that the Lord has given them; and if He has given them, it is for us. Faith can acknowledge Him in these, as well as be perfectly happy in trusting Him apart from all consideration of these. The prohibition of them, if God designed it, would surely be furnished to us.

Moreover, God at no time intended that things should be left, as it were, absolutely in man's hands, even though it were the hand of faith, as the doctrines taught suppose. The prayer of faith may be that which saves the sick, and yet, after all, that be far from meaning that we can find in every case a faith which should do so. God has His own will and His own way; and while we can always reckon upon Him to answer the soul that looks to Him, yet the way of His answer we do not

always know. The apostle prays that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, but it did not depart. God turned it to greater blessing. That was an answer to the prayer, but it was not such an answer as men usually count as that. Could any one suppose that among Christians, if everything were absolutely right, the sick would always be raised up, that death would hardly obtain at all, except in the extremest old age? We may imagine any such fancies, but fancies they are, and nothing else. Yet it is plain there is an appeal to God advocated here which we are always right in making, and from which we may always expect an answer in the goodness of Him whom we address. More than this, the Lord may give distinct light as to His mind that will enable one, as to anything, to ask with assurance, without the possibility of denial. If we are near enough to God for this we have cause indeed to be thankful; but we had better be humble about it, and be very sure that we have it before we claim it.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelien

Introduction

The genuineness of this Epistle is confirmed by the most ancient sources. Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with the Apostle John, cites the Epistle of Peter. Papias of Hierapolis made use of the Epistle likewise. This was about the middle of the second century. Two quotations of Peter's Epistle are found in a very ancient source, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," a kind of manual going back to 100 A.D. All the other documents of the first and second centuries show that the Epistle was unanimously known and accepted as Peter's.

The critics have not left it unattacked. We do not need to quote the different theories advanced by Cludius, Eichhorn (the man who coined the phrase "higher criticism"), De Wette, Bauer, Davidson, Pfleiderer, Hamack, and others. The main objection seems to be that the expressions used in this Epistle are too much like the thoughts and expressions of the Apostle Paul as used in his Epistles, so, as it is assumed, Peter could not have written it. This theory was expanded into the hypothesis that some one must have written it who had spent considerable time with Paul, so that he adopted Pauline ideas and phrases; John Mark has been suggested by some to be that person. Critics have pointed out many parallels with different Pauline Epistles. "In considering these parallels, allowance must be made for ideas and phraseology, hymns, prayers, confessions of faith, and other matter, which were the common property of the primitive Church; and would introduce a degree of similarity into the writings of different authors. But much of the thought and language of First Peter belongs to what was characteristic of the teaching of Paul and his followers as distinct from that of the Palestinian or Jewish churches. The parallels in any case, show a dependence upon Pauline teaching.

"But we may go further. There is a great variety of opinion as to the precise character and extent of the dependence of First Peter on the writings of Paul. It has been suggested that it is just possible that Paul himself was the author of First Peter, the passages in which Peter's name occurs being later insertions; and again that this Epistle and Ephesians were the work of one author. But that dependence, especially on Romans, is very widely recognized" (New Century Bible).

All these objections, speculations, and theories denying the Petrine authorship are answered by the fact of inspiration. Peter no doubt knew and read the Epistles of Paul; in fact he speaks of them in his second letter (2 Peter 3:15-16). But that does not mean that he copied and reproduced the statements found in some of Paul's Epistles; nor does it mean that he depended on Paul when he wrote his Epistle. The Holy Spirit who guided Paul's pen guided also the hand of Peter; all is the direct work of the Holy Spirit.

If Peter uses some of the great truths found in the Epistles of Paul it was because the Spirit of God desired to have them restated. If we examine these parallels closely we discover that they cover the most essential truths of Christianity and are used for practical exhortations. Those whom Peter addressed needed these truths and the practical application. On the other hand there are many internal evidences which prove that none but Peter wrote this Epistle. It has been pointed out that there is a similarity between Peter's statements in the book of Acts and in this first Epistle. Compare Acts 4:11; 2:32, 3:15 with 1 Peter 2:7; 1:3, 4, 8 and 5:1. He also uses a peculiar word for the cross. It is the word "tree" (the Greek word xulon). See Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Peter 2:24. Furthermore, the writer speaks of having been an eyewitness of the Lord's sufferings (5:1). He describes these sufferings, how He was reviled and reviled not, how He suffered and threatened not. And Peter was an eyewitness of all this. Nor is it without significance that in this Epistle alone the Lord Jesus Christ is called "the chief Shepherd." On the shores of Lake Tiberias the risen Lord restored Simon Peter to service and told him "shepherd My sheep," hence Peter speaks of the Lord as the chief Shepherd, and also exhorts the elders to be faithful in feeding the flock of God. As it is with all other critical objections to the traditional belief as to the inspired authorship of the different Bible books, the objections against the Petrine authorship of this Epistle are wholly worthless. Peter wrote this Epistle. The date

cannot be definitely settled, but must be placed between 62 and 65 A.D.

SIMON PETER

A brief review of the life and service of the Apostle Peter will be helpful in understanding his writings. He was born at Bethsaida in Galilee, from which Philip came also (John 1:44, 45). His name was Simon (or Simeon, Acts 15:14) and his father's name was Jonas. He had a brother by name of Andrew, and the three, the father, Simon and Andrew were fishermen at Capernaum. There Simon Peter had his home, as he was a married man (Matthew 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5). His brother Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and when he pointed out the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, Andrew followed Him. Andrew brought Peter to the Lord (John 1:35-43).

When the Lord beheld him He revealed His omniscience, for He said: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas," which is the Aramaic word for stone. When later Peter, in answer to the question "Whom say ye that I am?" said: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," the Lord Jesus said to him, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:17-18). The Greek word *petros* means a small rock, or piece of a rock; the Greek for rock is *petra*, the word our Lord used when He designated the foundation of the Church. It is not Peter, but Christ Himself, who is the rock. In his Epistle Peter contradicts by the Spirit of God the miserable invention that he is the rock upon which the Church is built, as claimed by Rome and even by Protestant expositors. (See 1 Peter 2:4-8). The Gospel records, as well as the Epistle to the Galatians, give us a good description of his peculiar character. He was impulsive, forward and self confident, yet he was true, loving and faithful. Before he denied the Lord, the Lord Jesus announced Peter's great failure and assured His disciple of His prayer, when Satan would sift him as wheat. In connection with this our Lord gave him a commission. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." His denial, his bitter repentance, his restoration at the lake of Tiberias, the still greater commission to shepherd the sheep and the lambs of the flock of God, are so well known, that we need not to enlarge on them.

The Lord also committed to him the "keys of the kingdom of the heavens," not to Heaven, nor to the Church, but to the kingdom of the heavens, that is to that which is now on earth. The book of Acts gives us the history of the use of the keys. He used the keys in connection with the Jews on the day of Pentecost, when he preached to them and, in preaching, opened the door to those who heard him; then he used the keys once more in the household of Cornelius (Acts 10) and then by preaching he opened the door to the Gentiles. This is what our Lord meant.

Here is another significant fact, in writing his Epistles Peter never mentioned this commission of the keys. According to Rome and other ritualistic churches he should have stated in the beginning of his Epistle that he is the supreme holder of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But not Peter was to be the great apostle to the Gentiles; the Lord called Paul to this position. Peter is the prominent actor in the beginning of the book of Acts, when the gospel was preached "to the Jew first." After Jerusalem rejected that gospel and the apostle to the Gentiles had been called, Paul becomes the prominent figure in Acts. Peter is mentioned only once more in connection with the council held in Jerusalem (Acts 15). In Galatians chapter 2 his Jewish character in withdrawing from the Gentile believers after he fellowshipped with them is rebuked by Paul. In that chapter we also read that Peter with James and John were to minister to those of the circumcision, that is the Jews; while Paul and Barnabas were to go to the Gentiles.

After this incident we hear nothing more about Peter. The Spirit of God might have given us a complete account of what he did, where he went, but all is passed over in silence. The omniscient Spirit saw what would come in Christendom. He knew that ritualism would give to Peter a place of supremacy in the body of Christ which does not belong to him at all. Therefore Peter's life and service are passed over by the Holy Spirit and we hear nothing more about him in the inspired records. But we hear from him in the two Epistles which bear his name and which he wrote.

But while Scripture is silent, tradition is not. It is claimed by the historian Eusebius that he was Bishop of Antioch, the church which he founded. But the latter statement is contradicted by Acts 11:19-21 and the former is equally incorrect. Other ancient sources declare that he was very active in Asia Minor. That he must have ministered widely may be gained from 1 Corinthians 9:5: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" But the entire ministry he rendered is not revealed.

Another tradition claims that he settled in Rome to oppose the Samaritan sorcerer Simon Magus (Acts 8). Justin Martyr in his writings states that Simon Magus was worshipped in Rome as a god on account of his magical powers. On account of it they erected a statue on an island in the River Tiber inscribed "Simoni Deo Sancto." Actually there was found in the year 1574 in the Tiber a stone with the inscription "Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio Sacrum" i.e. "to the god Semo Sancus," the Sabine Hercules, which is definite proof that Justin Martyr was mistaken. Upon this rests the legend that Peter went to Rome to oppose Simon Magus. It is claimed that Peter was Bishop in Rome for 25 years and founded what is called "the Holy See," which later developed into the abominable papacy with its lies. Peter never saw Rome. As we shall show later in this introduction, there is sufficient Scriptural authority to contradict this legend. Another legend states that he was martyred in Rome, where the Lord appeared to him, when Peter had left the city to escape death. That he should die the martyr's death had been announced by our Lord, as well as the manner of his death by crucifixion. Nobody knows where that death took place. When he wrote his second Epistle it was a brief time before his death (2 Peter 1:14); but that Epistle was not written from Rome.

Did Peter Write from Babylon or from Rome ?

At the close of the Epistle we read the following salutation: "The church that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you, and so does Marcus my son." "The church that is" does not appear in the original text; it has, therefore, been explained that Peter meant his wife, though it appears more probable that he meant the other elect ones who were with him in Babylon. The fact is established that when he wrote this Epistle Peter was in Babylon. But does this mean the literal Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates or the mystical Babylon, which is Rome ? Roman Catholic writers claim that it means the city of Rome, and a large number of Protestant commentators side with this view. They claim that he was in Rome with Mark. They say that Babylon has the same meaning as the word has in the book of Revelation, that is, not the literal Babylon, but Rome.

There is no definite proof that Rome was universally called " Babylon " before John received it in his Patmos vision; it is claimed that the persecution under Nero led Christians to call Rome by the name of Babylon ; but it is more likely that the name Babylon was widely used for Rome after John had written the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse was written some 25 or 30 years after Peter had written his Epistle, how, then could he have used this mystical name for Rome ? Furthermore, a mystical name is out of keeping in an Epistle. It would be the only instance in the entire epistolar testimony where a place is camouflaged in this way. The use of a mystical name in an Epistle appears strained. It therefore must be the literal Babylon in Mesopotamia. And why should this not be? We read in the second chapter of Acts that among those who were in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came to earth were "Parthians, Medes, Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia." They heard Peter's testimony and some of them must have been converted. Many Jews dwelt there, and while in 41 A.D. Caligula instituted a persecution against the Jews in Babylon and many left, there was still a large company of them in the fast decaying city.

But the most conclusive evidence against Babylon, meaning Rome, is the complete silence of the Apostle Paul about Peter being in Rome. Paul sent his Epistle to the Roman Church in the year 58 A.D. In that Epistle he greets many believers who were in Rome. If Peter had been there, why did he not mention him also? He went to Rome as a prisoner in the year 61, but there is not a word about meeting Peter in Rome. Finally, when Paul penned his very last Epistle from Rome he makes the significant statement: "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4:11). This silence about Peter in the Pauline Epistle can only be explained by the fact that Peter was not in Rome at all.

Addressed to Believers in the Dispersion

The Epistle is addressed to the sojourners in the dispersion, that is, to Jewish believers who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, provinces in the northeastern part of Asia Minor. Many assemblies had been founded there and there were many believing Jews. They probably had their own gatherings, keeping aloof from the assemblies formed by believing Gentiles. They were the remnant and yet in having believed they were members of the body of Christ.

THE PURPOSE AND MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE

When Peter wrote this Epistle he fulfilled the request of the Lord, when he told them "when thou art converted strengthen

thy brethren." They needed strengthening and comfort for they were passing through all kinds of persecutions; their faith was being severely tested. As believers they were pilgrims and strangers on earth, their portion and calling was different from the unbelieving Jews about them, among whom they suffered. The Lord Jesus Christ who suffered in their behalf is repeatedly presented as a pattern for them in their persecutions, and blessed exhortations are linked with the Person and holy character of our Lord. The Epistle is not doctrinal, though the great doctrines of Christianity are in view throughout the Epistle. It is, like the Epistle of James, a practical Epistle, abounding in exhortations and references to Old Testament history suited to believing Jews in their trials. The keynote is "Suffering and Glory. The words suffering and suffer occur fifteen times and the word glory ten times.

The same error has been taught by some extremists in Biblical interpretation which we have pointed out already in the introduction to the Epistle of James, namely, that it has a Jewish character and does not belong to the Epistles in which the Church and the heavenly calling are revealed, and therefore the Church should not consider it. This is a most vital mistake. The first Epistle of Peter has an important message also for all believers at all times; to pass it over and not to heed its blessed message, its comfort and exhortations would mean a very serious loss. A one-sided Bible reading produces a one-sided Christian character and a one-sided Christian service. And there are only too many of such in the Church today.

The Division of First Peter

As stated in the introduction the keynote of the Epistle is "Suffering and Glory." The end of their pilgrimage, when all suffering ends, will be salvation and the possession of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. This salvation was the object of inquiry and searching by their own prophets. The Spirit of Christ who was in them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. So they as being His and identified with Him would also have suffering which in due time will be followed by glory. The glory comes with His revelation, His appearing, when He comes again.

We divide the Epistle into five sections, but somewhat different from the five chapters into which the Epistle is divided in our Bibles.

I. THE SUFFERING OF BELIEVERS AND EXHORTATION TO HOLY LIVING (1:1-21)

II. THE BLESSINGS AND PRIVILEGES OF ALL BELIEVERS (1:22-2:10)

III. CHRIST THE PATTERN FOR HIS SAINTS (2:11-3:9)

IV. THE COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS AND SUFFERING (3:10-4)

V. EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING SERVICE AND CONFLICT (5)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE SUFFERING OF BELIEVERS AND EXHORTATIONS TO HOLY LIVING

CHAPTER 1:1-21

1. The introduction and doxology (1:1-5)
2. Suffering and the coming glory (1:6-9)
3. As revealed in the prophets (1:10-12)
4. Exhortations to holy living (1:13-21)

Verses 1-5

As stated in the introduction, Peter writes to believing Jews in the dispersion throughout the provinces mentioned in the first verse. There is at once pointed out a contrast between them as true believers and their former condition. The nation to which they belonged was an elect nation, but they were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." It is something infinitely higher than a national election. Here is an individual election; they were foreknown of God the Father. In the Old Testament the Lord called Israel nationally "my first-born son," but no individual Israelite knew God as his Father, nor did an Israelite know himself individually as a son of God and a member of the family of God. They had received something better.

The nation had been set aside while those who believed were brought individually into the family of God, knowing God as their Father, while they became His children. Israel as a nation was set apart externally and by ordinances; but their setting apart, or sanctification, was through the Spirit. Their sanctification was unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Their setting apart was vastly different from that separation which God had accorded to the nation as such. The Holy Spirit had set them apart unto the obedience of Christ, called them to obey as He obeyed, not to an obedience of the law. Connected with this obedience is the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, that precious blood typified by their former sacrifices which were unable to cleanse from sin, but the blood of Christ assures perfect forgiveness and justification, and that gives confidence and boldness before God, and liberty and power to practice the obedience of Christ, for which the believer is set apart.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead." This is the doxology. It declares the new relationship into which they had been brought; for these Jewish believers it is no longer the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." They were begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. It is a joyful song of the better hope. We may think of what it meant to Peter, as well as to the other disciples. They had believed on Jesus as their promised, national Messiah. Their hope was in Him. As the two said on the way to Emmaus, "we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." They hoped He would be King and take the throne of His father David. Then He who was their hope died on the shameful cross, and hope died. But the third day came and Christ arose from among the dead. Hope revived, yea, they were begotten again unto a living hope. His resurrection was a begetting again to a living hope, no longer the hope of the earthly kingdom but a living hope "unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away." And this living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, the hope which centers in Him as the living, risen and glorified One, is the hope of all His people.

Israel as a nation possessed an earthly inheritance, the promised land and with it corresponding earthly blessings. But now as the elect, according to the foreknowledge of the Father, they have a better inheritance. Earthly things are corruptible; the heavenly inheritance is incorruptible. Earthly things are defiled, pollution clings to the fairest and choicest; the coming inheritance is undefiled, nor can it ever be polluted by sin and its curse, it is eternally pure. Here on earth everything is fading, every beautiful flower has its roots in a grave, all is passing and fading away; but that inheritance which we shall receive is never-fading, it is always fresh and beautiful. And this inheritance is "preserved in heaven for you"; it is more than reserved, as we have it in our Bibles. It is with Him in the glory and He preserves it for His saints, so that the cruel hand of Satan cannot touch it nor take it away from man. And while that inheritance is preserved by the never-failing Lord in glory, saints are kept for the inheritance by the power of God through faith. Here is the real perseverance of the saints; the power to persevere and to keep is not in us but in God. That inheritance is ready to be revealed in the last times, that is when the Lord comes for His saints.

Verses 6-9

The way to the promised land for the literal Israel led through the desert sands with trials and testings. The way of the elect in Christ also leads through the desert with its wilderness experiences; faith too must be honored and glorified by testings. Faith is not only a precious thing for us, it is precious to God as well. It is His gold, that in which He rejoices. To bring out its value various trials are permitted by Him: "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The goal of the hope, when the inheritance will be bestowed, is the appearing of Jesus Christ. This is His visible appearing. Peter writes as the apostle of circumcision and he does not write about the church as the body of Christ, the heavenly calling and destiny of the church, and therefore he does not say anything about the rapture preceding the revelation. Peter

always speaks of His appearing or revelation; salvation as used in this chapter means the manifestation in glory, when He appears in visible glory and when we shall be manifested with Him in glory. Having mentioned His appearing, the Spirit of God directs the attention at once to the Person of Christ. He must ever be the object of faith and occupation for the true believer. This brings into view the true character of Christianity.

"Whom having not seen ye love." It is a strange sound and fact at first, but in the end it is precious. Who ever loved a person that he never saw? We know that in human relations it is not so. In divine things it is precisely what shows the power and special character of a Christian's faith. "Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." This at once gives us a true and vivid picture of what Christianity is, of signal importance for the Jews to weigh, because they always looked forward for a visible Messiah as an object, the Son of David. But here it is altogether another order of ideas. It is a rejected Messiah who is the proper object of the Christian's love, though he never beheld Him; and who while unseen becomes so much the more simply and unmixedly the object of his faith, and the spring of "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (Wm. Kelly).

Verses 10-12. He directs their attention to the Prophets. The Spirit of Christ was in them and they testified before of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. This is the great message of these holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. When our Lord said to the Jews "Search the Scriptures... they are they which testify of Me" He called attention to the same fact. They prophesied of the grace which was to come and though they did not understand their own prophecies, they sought diligently, they studied what they had written, searching and always searching, to find out what time, near or far, these things should come to pass. But they knew one thing, "To whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us did they minister the things which are reported to you by those who have preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, into which things the angels desire to look." They knew that it was not for themselves, nor for their own times, that which the Spirit had announced, but for another time. The passage is illustrated by comparing Isaiah 64:4 with 1 Corinthians 2:9-10. The Spirit having come down from heaven after Christ had died and was raised from among the dead, has made known the fullness of redemption. And the angels desire to look into these things; they seek to explore and to fathom the wonders of that redemption and the coming glories which are connected with it.

Verses 13-21

The first exhortation is to gird up the loins of the mind. The man who girds the loins of the body is getting ready for service; the girding of the loins of the mind means to set the mind on these things, the things spiritual and unseen. To be sober means to be watchful and temperate, thus walking soberly, and "set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (the correct translation). As they were now "obedient children" in the family of God, their responsibility and calling is to live and act as such. A holy God demands a holy people; this was God's call to His people Israel in the Old Testament, it is His call to the elect in the New Testament (Leviticus 11:44). This necessitates a walk in the Spirit as it is so fully revealed in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

Next we find two great reasons for walking in holiness; the first reason is the relationship which believers have as children, God being their Father; the second, the redemption price which was paid.

"And if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourn in fear, knowing that ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from among the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God."

He has called us by His grace and we call Him Father. As Father, the head of His family, to which we belong, He must govern His house. As Father He exercises judgment in government regarding His children; He must chasten His children if they do not walk as it becometh those who are in possession of the divine nature. And though that government is one of love and grace, the Father's dealing with a beloved child, we must pass the time of our sojourn with fear. But this is not a slavish fear, nor a fear which has in it the elements of uncertainty as to salvation, a fear which trembles before a holy God,

fearing His wrath. It is a godly, a holy fear, a fear that we might not please Him. This holy fear should be a passion to measure up to our calling as children and not to displease Him who is our Father, so that He does not need to exercise a Father's judgment upon us.

While the first reason to walk in holiness has to do with our conscience, the second concerns the affections. That blessed redemption by the blood of Christ, the Lamb without spot and blemish, foreknown before the foundation of the world, is the other great incentive to please God. It is not by silver or gold that He has redeemed us from all the vain things, whether vain religious traditions, or vain manner of life and all that goes with it, but by that which is the dearest, the most blessed and the most precious thing in the eyes of God and to the heart of God--the blood of Christ. No finite mind can understand the price God paid for our redemption. By Him we believe in God, who raised Him from among the dead and gave Him glory. And that acquired glory He received He has given to His own (John 17:22).

II. THE BLESSINGS AND PRIVILEGES OF ALL BELIEVERS

CHAPTER 1:22-2:10

1. The new birth (1:22-25)
2. Spiritual growth (2:1-3)
3. The privileges of believers as the holy and royal priesthood (2:4-10)

Verses 22-25

The relationship of those who are thus redeemed, whose faith and hope is in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, whose souls are purified by obedience to the truth, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, is stated first: "Love one another with a pure heart fervently." All the elect through the foreknowledge of God the Father are covered by the same love, are redeemed by the same Lamb, washed in the same precious blood, have the same Father. They are one; they are brethren and as such love must characterize them. But this love, loving one another out of a pure heart fervently, is the fruit of the new nature which all possess who have believed and are redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The Word of God, living and abiding, under the operation of the Spirit (the Word is "the water" of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus) is the agent of the new birth. It is not corruptible seed, but incorruptible, hence the nature is an incorruptible, a holy nature. There are three incorruptible things mentioned in this chapter. An incorruptible inheritance, an incorruptible redemption price, and an incorruptible seed giving an incorruptible nature. And that new nature must love that which is of God, therefore the exhortation of loving one another, which is more fully developed in the great "family Epistle," the first Epistle of John.

But the new birth carries with it another blessing. "For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of it as the flower of the grass. The grass hath withered and the flower fallen, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The old creation is left behind, the world with all its glory and boastings, is judged. All is as grass and the glory of man as the flower of the grass. Those born again do no longer belong to this world, as He prayed: "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." The words concerning the grass and the flower of the grass are a quotation from Isaiah (Isa. 40:6, 8). But the quotation is changed a little. In Isaiah we read: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth," and here it is, "The grass hath withered and the flower fallen," that is how faith must look upon the world and all its glory, as withered and fallen, with no more attraction for the heart which knows God. But those who are born again are linked with that which abideth for ever, the Word of the Lord, preached in that ever blessed Gospel.

Verses 1-3

"Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil-speakings as new born babes

desire earnestly the pure milk of the Word that ye may grow by it unto salvation, if ye have tasted that the Lord is good."

Those who are born again of incorruptible seed, in possession of a new nature, are still in the world, though they are no longer of it. Evil is on all sides and there is still the old nature, the flesh, in every child of God though believers are reckoned as being no longer in the flesh (Rom. 8:9). The old things of the flesh must be put off, completely laid aside. This is the necessary thing for spiritual growth; if there is no putting off of these there can be no progress. Peter speaks of believers as "new-born babes."

The sense in which this expression is used here differs from the use of it in 1 Corinthians 3:1: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." The spiritual growth of the Corinthians had been arrested and dwarfed; they never developed, but remained babes, a spiritual monstrosity. But the meaning here is entirely different. Believers should be at all times like new-born babes hungering for that which the Lord has provided for spiritual growth, the milk in all its purity as found in His Word. The mother by which we are begotten again, that is the living and abiding Word of God, has also the nourishment for the life we have received. In this sense the child of God must always be like a healthy babe, always craving, hungering and thirsting for the pure milk as provided in His Word. All that we need, yea, every need is provided there, and as we go to that fountain which never runs dry, which never fails nor disappoints, we shall grow thereby.

One of the most subtle delusions is found among some Pentecostal sects, who imagine that they are so filled with the Spirit that they can dispense with the reading of and feeding on the Word. In the authorized version two words are missing which belong in the text; they are the words "unto salvation"... "that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." They were omitted in some manuscripts, but belong here. Salvation here has the same meaning as in the first chapter, it looks forward to the end in glory.

And if we have felt that the Lord is gracious, have tasted of His loving kindness, we shall desire more and more of it, crave for still more. Peter surely had tasted that the Lord is gracious. We think of his denial, and when the Lord turned and looked upon him, Peter went out and wept bitterly. He had tasted that the Lord is gracious, and more so, when the Lord dealt so graciously with him at the meal His blessed hands had prepared for His disciples on the lakeshore (John 21), and His loving voice asked: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" The sentence, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," is a quotation from the Psalms (Psalm 34:8). David, like Peter, had shamefully failed and like Peter he had tasted that the Lord is gracious. All His saints have had the same experience of the graciousness of the Lord.

Verses 4-10

The testimony of Peter which follows is of great importance. The fisherman of Galilee knew nothing of what would happen centuries later. He did not know that ritualism would exalt him to a position of supremacy, claiming that he was and is the rock upon which the Church is built, that he was a bishop who communicated in Rome his apostolic authority to another, as it is claimed to one by name of Linus, and Linus handed over the same authority to Cletus and Cletus to Clemens, Clemens to Anacletus, Anacletus to Sixtus and so on from one generation to the other, each adding a little more till the harlot system of the mystical Babylon, the papacy became what it is today. But while Peter did not know the future, the Holy Spirit knew and He inspired his pen to write that which is the complete refutation of popery and a man-made priesthood.

Not Peter is the living stone upon which everything rests, but the Lord Jesus Christ is the rock foundation, the Stone upon whom all is built. Not Peter was rejected by men, then chosen of God and precious, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures had announced this fact beforehand. Isaiah 28:16 is quoted in Verse 6. This is followed by a quotation from Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14. The Lord Jesus while on earth had made use of these prophecies given by His Spirit (Matthew 21:42). The Holy Spirit after Pentecost reminded the rulers, elders and scribes of the people once more of this great prophecy concerning the rejection of the Messiah by the nation (Acts 4:9-12). And when the Lord Jesus quoted this prophecy from Psalm 118 He added, what is cited here in verse 8, whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken," that is what happened to the nation Israel.

The second half of this statement of our Lord in Matthew 21:44 is still unaccomplished-"but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." This will happen at the close of the times of the Gentiles, when the stone strikes the feet of the

prophetic image (Dan. 2). Israel had rejected the Stone and therefore was unfit as a nation to build the spiritual house, as the Lord had likewise announced: "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof." They had as a nation a house called "The House of the Lord," where He delighted to dwell, but it was not a spiritual house, but a house made with hands, a shadow of the better things to come.

When Israel rejected the Messiah and the kingdom He had offered, when they had delivered Him up and He died, after His resurrection from among the dead and His exaltation to the right hand of God, the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, came to earth for the purpose of building amongst men the habitation of God, a spiritual house, and that house is the church. Thus Peter bears witness to Christ as the Living Stone, the rock upon which the Church "the spiritual house" is being built. He with all other believers, including ourselves, are the living stones. As mentioned in the introduction, Christ is the Petra, the Rock, Peter and every other child of God is a petros, a little rock, a living stone with Himself (Matt. 16:17-18). And His Son whom man dishonored and rejected is precious to God; He is His delight; He is precious to those who have believed; He is our delight. While God says that His delight is in Him, we too confess that all our delight is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, all believers constitute a holy priesthood. Peter does not claim an exclusive priesthood vested in him, but his inspired testimony is that all members of the body of Christ, the living stones, are a priesthood. In the Old Testament the priesthood of Christ was foreshadowed in Aaron and the priesthood of believers by the sons of Aaron. (See annotations in Leviticus.) No longer are needed sacrifices of animals, for He has brought the one sacrifice, by which he has made the new and living way by His blood into the Holiest, so that every believer can draw nigh with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22). This completely disposes of the ritualistic priesthood, vested in "ordained" men, that system which has been and still is and always will be, the corruption of Christianity. It also answers the blasphemous mass, which is an act of idolatry.

The function of the holy priesthood of believers consists in bringing spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name" (Hebrews 13:15). It is worship in the spirit and truth; it is praise and adoration as well as the ministry of intercession.

Once more Peter mentions the fact of the Christian priesthood. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the excellencies of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (Hosea 2:23). Israel was chosen, Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, they were called "to show forth His praises." They never attained it, because they were not a holy nation, though constituted a separated nation by God's calling. But these believing Jews through grace in Christ had become a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. As a remnant of the nation they possessed now what the nation never possessed. Of course that remnant was embodied in the church, and is a part of the body of Christ. Yet the application to them as a remnant must not be lost sight of.

Nor must we forget that there will be a future remnant of the nation, the nation which is now dispersed, which will become a holy nation, a royal priesthood in connection with the other nations. The promises, the gifts and callings of God, will all be accomplished, and those who had not obtained mercy will yet obtain mercy; that will be when He whom they pierced comes again and when they shall look upon Him in that day. Apart from this application to them as believing Jews, to whom the Epistle was addressed, all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, have a royal priesthood. Christ is a holy Priest and a royal Priest; both aspects of His priesthood believers share in Him. We are holy priests to go in to God to represent man before God; we are royal priests to represent God before man, to show forth His excellencies. The royal priesthood of Christ, is the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. He was the King-Priest who came to Abraham and made known God and His glory to Abraham. Thus in Christ we behold the glory of God and as identified with Christ, indwelt by Him, our royal priesthood is to make Him and His excellencies known among men.

III. CHRIST THE PATTERN FOR HIS SAINTS

CHAPTER 2:11-3:9

1. Abstinence and submission (2:11-17)
2. Christ the pattern for those who suffer (2:18-25)
3. Glorifying Christ in the marriage relation (3:1-7)
4. True Christian character (3:8-9)

Verses 11-17

The first exhortation is addressed to them as strangers and pilgrims. Such all true believers are. Because we belong to a heavenly home we cannot be at home in a world which lieth in the wicked one, which has cast out the Lord of glory, and which continues to reject Him. And it is only as a stranger here that we can do what we are exhorted to do, "to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." If our heart is where He is, if our affections are set upon the things on high, if we lose sight of the "vain things" which charm the natural man, and we realize in faith the heavenly calling and the heavenly home, then we shall not fight the lusts of the flesh, but willingly and joyfully abstain from them, fleeing them, as Paul exhorted Timothy.

A general exhortation follows. Their conversation is to be honest among the Gentiles who often spoke of them as evil-doers, accusing Christians of their own shameful conduct, as unsaved Gentiles, so that it might bring reproach upon "that worthy Name." By their godly lives the Gentiles should see their good works and when the day of visitation came, they would then glorify God. Does this mean a visitation in judgment, or the visitation in grace? It means the latter, though a visitation by the chastening hand of God is not excluded. When sorrows come, when earthly hopes are blasted, when sickness makes the enjoyment of the material things impossible, then the unbelievers often turn to the people of God for help and comfort, the grace of God will then be manifested in the day of visitation; this glorifies God.

Exhortation to submission is linked with this. "Submit yourselves therefore to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether unto the king as supreme; or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." We must remember that the kings and rulers mentioned here, under whom these believing Jews lived, were heathen and idolators. Yet they were to obey and to manifest patient submission. The exhortation has a special meaning for them as Jews, for naturally they were a rebellious people. The exhortation given to them before their captivity in Babylon, "to seek the peace of the city" where they would dwell has generally been disobeyed. These believing Jews probably were tempted to resist the powers which ruled. (It is a significant fact that many of the radicals, anarchists, or as they used to be called in Russia, nihilists, are apostate Jews. Many of the persecutions of the Jews, in which the innocent have to suffer with the guilty, are produced by Jews meddling with the politics of the nations among whom they are strangers and trying to overthrow these governments.) Therefore the exhortation to submit for the Lord's sake, though there are limitations to such submission. Such submission is "the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Brief, but weighty, exhortations follow.

Verses 18-25

The exhortation after that is addressed to the servants, that is, to those Jewish believers who were slaves. To such the choicest words are addressed, God knowing that His own beloved Son had been on earth as a servant, that He was here not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give His life as a ransom for many. They were in the blessed position to "follow His steps." But the exhortation does not mean servants or slaves exclusively, it is written for all believers. "For this is acceptable, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." To suffer wrongfully and take it patiently, without murmuring and without strife, is whereunto believers are called. It is then that they can show forth His excellencies and follow after Him. "Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow His steps." And what an example has He left for us? He was the holy, spotless Son of God. Suffering for His own sins was an impossibility, for He was spotless. He knew no sin, neither could He sin. Yet He suffered. "Who did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth; who when reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously."

Such is the pattern. But there is more than that. He knew no sin, did not sin and all His suffering, the shame and the suffering connected with the cross, was on account of our sins. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The rendering, or, rather, paraphrase, some have adopted that Christ bore our sins "up to the tree" is erroneous and misleading. Our Lord did not bear our sins in His holy life before the cross, but He bore them on the cross, in His own body. And He bore them that "we, being dead to sins, not as revealed in Romans to sin, but to sins, that is, the practical giving up of our own wills, should live unto righteousness.

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is used by Peter in this paragraph. There it is written: "By His stripes we are healed," and the confession, "all we like sheep have gone astray." Of late the so-called "divine healers," men and women who claim gifts of healings, if not gifts to work miracles, speak of the sentence, "By His stripes we are healed," as meaning the healing of diseases. They claim that Christ died also for our bodily ills and that the stripes laid upon Him were specifically for the healing of our bodies, which Scripture so clearly states are "dead on account of sin." This is a most dangerous perversion of the truth. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, but nowhere is it written that He died for our bodily diseases.

These believing Jews were in possession of the truth as revealed in Isaiah 53. They foreshadow that other Jewish remnant of the future which will some day use the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah as their great confession of Him whom they despised and rejected, and by whose stripes they also will be healed. Then Peter speaks of our Lord as Shepherd, the Shepherd who died for the sheep, the great Shepherd brought again from among the dead. He loves His sheep and shepherds them. Bishop means overseer. He is the only Bishop, who watches over all and guards all His blood-bought sheep.

Verses 1-7

The practical exhortations are now extended to the marriage relation, how wives and husbands should be royal priests, showing forth His excellencies in their divinely sanctioned union, as man and wife. The wife is mentioned first, for her place is the highest, the place of submission, which in God's eyes is the place of honor. The case of a wife is stated who has an unbelieving husband. Is she to submit to him, who is an unbeliever? Must she be obedient to such a one? How often wives placed in this position have listened to the evil councils of others, and, instead of submitting to the demands of an unbelieving husband, have resisted him, and as a result misery came upon them. Let it be noticed that the Holy Spirit insists on obedience; the fact of the disobedient husband is given as a reason for submission. Then there is a promise. The unbelieving husband is to be won without the Word, that is, without preaching in a public service, by the godly life of meekness and submission of the believing wife. This is the advice of the Holy Spirit, and many times the promise given to the believing wife has been made good.

Furthermore, there is a word concerning dress. The adorning is not to be outwardly in braiding of hair, wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel, but inwardly, "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." The positive side is emphasized more than the negative. The greatest ornament a woman can wear is "a meek and quiet spirit," for it shows that in manifesting meekness and quietness, they learned and received from Him, who on earth was "meek and lowly of heart." This applies to every believer likewise. Wherever a meek and quiet spirit is manifested God is well pleased with it. What a contrast with the conditions in the world today. Women claim equality with men; in every walk of life they clamor to be heard; the female sex is breaking down the barriers set by the Creator and the Redeemer, demanding leadership in every sphere. The result will be disaster. But it must not be overlooked that here is also exhortation for the Christian woman to dress outwardly as becomes a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. There should be a difference between the daughters of the world and those who are Christ's. On the other hand, shabbiness of dress, an unclean appearance, is no more an honor to the Gospel, than a dress which is after the latest fashion of the world.

And the husband is exhorted next. He is not told to claim submission, or to insist upon it as his peculiar right. He is exhorted to give the wife honor as the weaker vessel, hence he must show to her, as the weaker one, kindness, tenderness, consideration and loving sympathy, as we read in Ephesians: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." The believing husband and the wife are "heirs together of the grace of life." Where this is practised there will be sweet companionship and fellowship in the Lord, nothing hindering them from bowing the knees together in His presence,

expressing together their praise, their mutual needs and those of others.

Verses 8-9

General exhortations follow. What is found in these two verses constitutes a true Christian character.

IV. THE COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS AND SUFFERING

CHAPTER 3:10-4

1. The comfort in suffering (3:10-17)
2. Few saved as illustrated by Noah's preaching (3:18-22)
3. The new life in its transforming power (4:1-11)
4. Suffering and glory (4:12-19)

Verses 10-17

The words which stand in the beginning of this section are quoted from Psalm 34:12-16. It is interesting to note that the Spirit of God quotes from the three main divisions of the Hebrew Bible in the first three chapters of this Epistle. The Hebrew Bible is composed, according to Jewish division, of the law, the prophets and the writings. In the first chapter the law is quoted; in the second the prophets; and in the third we have a quotation from the Psalms. If we practice righteousness, the result of the new nature, produced by the new life, the promises of the Lord will not fail. To Israel in the Old Testament the Lord promised earthly blessings, and while to His heavenly people heavenly, spiritual blessings are vouchsafed, the earthly blessings are not excluded. It was true in olden times that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." It is so today, for He changes not. He looks for practical righteousness. Equally true is it that in His righteous government the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And there is the comfort if we do right that none can harm us, for the Lord is on our side.

Suffering for righteousness' sake must be, but there is a "blessedness" connected with it. The Lord pronounced this in one of the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:10). How fitting it is that in this Epistle, in addressing these Jewish believers as a remnant of the nation, this should be mentioned. It is the comfort in persecution, "be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." The quotation in verse 15 is from Isaiah 8:12, 13. There it is a prophecy concerning the future remnant of Israel during their coming great tribulation, foreshadowed in Isaiah by the Assyrian invasion.

Verses 18-22. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in flesh but quickened by the Spirit: in which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who before time were disobedient when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing; in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; which figure does also now save you, even baptism (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the request as before God of a good conscience), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being subjected unto Him."

This difficult and much misunderstood passage demands a closer attention. It is the passage upon which Rome has built her obnoxious and unscriptural doctrine of a purgatory. Protestant expositors have also misinterpreted this passage; in some quarters of Protestantism a kind of a "Protestant purgatory" is now being taught. Many errors, like a second probation, another chance for the lost, the restitution of the wicked, are linked with the wrong exposition of the above words.

Even sound believers have adopted that which Peter does not mean at all, and which is unknown in the rest of the Word of God. Their teaching founded upon these statements by Peter is as follows: The Lord descended into Hades, the place of the departed spirits and preached there. The visit took place after His death and before His physical resurrection, that is, He

made the visit in His unclothed state, while His body still rested in the tomb. As to the preaching, the opinions of these exegetes are divided. Some believe that He went to Hades to announce the certain doom of the lost. Others, and they are not a few, state that He preached, offering to the lost salvation, while still others claim that the spirits in prison are the righteous dead to whom Christ announced that their redemption had been wrought out for them, and that He announced His victory.

As to the result of the preaching, the teaching is that it was successful; this is by inference, as they say, otherwise it could not be mentioned among the blessed results of Christ's suffering. They also claim that inasmuch as early Christian literature has much to say about that fictitious "descent into Hades" (or, as generally stated, hell), it must be the true meaning of the passage. In giving these views on the meaning of the passage before us we give a very few; there are many others, like the late Bullinger's view, that the spirits were the fallen angels, and that He went to herald His triumph to them. Pages could be filled with the fanciful and unscriptural interpretations of this passage.

The chief question is: Did our Lord go to Hades in a disembodied state? In fact, all depends on the question of what is the true meaning of the sentence, "quickened by the Spirit." Now, according to the interpretations of the men who teach that the Lord visited Hades, the spirits in prison, during the interval between His death and the morning of the third day, He descended into these regions while His dead body was still in the grave. Therefore, these teachers claim that His human spirit was quickened, which necessitates that the spirit which the dying Christ commended into the Father's hands had also died. This is not only incorrect doctrine, but it is an unsound and evil doctrine. Was the holy humanity of our Lord, body, soul and spirit dead? A thousands times No! Only His body died; that is the only part of Him which could die. The text makes this clear: "He was put to death in flesh," that is, His body. There could be no quickening of His spirit, for His spirit was alive. Furthermore, the word quickening, as we learn from Ephesians 1:20 and 2:5-6, by comparing the two passages, applies to His physical resurrection, it is the quickening of His body. To teach that the Lord Jesus was made alive before His resurrection is unscriptural. The "quickened by the Spirit" means the raising up of His body. His human spirit needed no quickening; it was His body and only His body. And the Spirit who did the quickening is not His own spirit, that is, His human spirit, but the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:11 speaks of the Spirit as raising Jesus from among the dead.

We have shown that it was an impossibility that Christ was in any way quickened while His body was not yet raised, hence a visit to Hades is positively excluded between His death and resurrection. There is only another alternative. If it is true that He descended into these regions, then it must have been after His resurrection. But that is equally untenable. The so-called "Apostle's Creed" puts the descent between His death and resurrection and all the other theorists follow this view. We have shown what the passage does not mean. It cannot mean a visit of the disembodied Christ to Hades, for it speaks of the quickening by the Spirit, and that means His physical resurrection.

What, then, does the passage mean? It is very simple after all. He preached by the Spirit, or in the Spirit, that is, the same Spirit who raised Him from among the dead, the Holy Spirit of life and power, to the spirits who are now in prison. But when the preaching occurred they were not in prison. And who were they? All the wicked dead for 4,000 years? The text makes it clear that they are a special class of people. They were living in the days of Noah. It is incomprehensible how some of these teachers, misinterpreting this passage, can teach that it includes all the lost, or angels which fell, or the righteous dead. The Spirit of God preached to them, that is, the Spirit who quickened the body of Christ, the same Spirit preached to the generation of unbelievers in the days of Noah. The time of the preaching, then, did not occur between the death and resurrection of Christ, but it took place in Noah's day. Christ was not personally, or corporeally present, just as He is not present in person in this age when the gospel is preached; His Spirit is here.

So was He present by His Spirit in the days of Noah. It is written: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). His Spirit was then on the earth. In long-suffering God was waiting for one hundred and twenty years while the ark was preparing. His Spirit preached then. But He needed an instrument. The instrument was Noah; in him was the Spirit of Christ and as the preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5) he delivered the warning message of an impending judgment to those about him, who did not heed the message, passed on in disobedience, were swept away by the deluge and are now the spirits in prison. As the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets (chapter 1:11) testifying beforehand of the suffering of Christ and the glory that should follow, so the Spirit of Christ preached through Noah. This is the meaning of this passage, and any other is faulty and unscriptural.

This interpretation is in full keeping with Peter's testimony. It is to "strengthen his brethren," to encourage and comfort

those who were suffering persecution and passed through many fiery trials. They thought it strange that they had to suffer, that they were few in number who were saved, while they lived in the midst of the vast multitudes which rejected the gospel and live on in sin and disobedience. For this reason the Spirit of God reminds them that such was also the case in the days of Noah, as it will be again at the close of the age, as the Lord Himself had announced. The multitudes in the days of Noah despised the warning; only eight souls were saved out of the judgment.

It must also be remembered that Peter's Epistle is not a doctrinal Epistle. He does not teach, but exhort. It is true many of the exhortations have for a foundation doctrines stated elsewhere in the Pauline Epistles. If it were Christian doctrine that Christ went to the prison of the wicked dead, such a doctrine should then be more fully stated somewhere else in the New Testament. But such is not the case. The passage in Ephesians 4, concerning Christ leading captivity captive has nothing to do with Peter's statement. (See annotations on Ephesians 4).

The concluding words, linked with this statement, are a typical comparison of the deluge and the ark with baptism. It has also been misunderstood, and some teach on account of it that baptism is a saving ordinance, which is another error. We quote a paragraph from the Synopsis of the Bible which clears this up in a way which cannot be improved upon.

"To this the apostle adds, the comparison of baptism to the ark of Noah in the deluge. Noah was saved through the water; we also; for the water of baptism typifies death, as the deluge, so to speak, was the death of the world. Now Christ has passed through death and is risen. We enter into death in baptism; but it is like the ark, because Christ suffered in death for us, and has come out of it in resurrection, as Noah came out of the deluge, to begin, as it were, a new life in a resurrection world. Now Christ, having passed through death, has atoned for sins; and we, by passing through it in spirit, leave all our sins in it, as Christ did in reality for us; for He was raised up without the sins which He expiated on the cross. And they were our sins; and thus, through the resurrection, we have a good conscience. We pass through death in spirit and in figure by baptism. The peace-giving force of the thing is the resurrection of Christ, after He had accomplished expiation; by which resurrection therefore we have a good conscience."

In other words our good conscience is not in having obeyed an ordinance, but it is by what Christ has done, who has gone into heaven and who is exalted at the right hand of God. Verses 1-11. The opening sentence of the fourth chapter connects with chapter 3:18. The sufferings of Christ are thus brought to their attention once more. The reason is obvious. They were Jews and had been taught that earthly, temporal blessings, were the marks exclusively of divine favor; trials, sufferings and persecutions, on the other hand, according to Jewish conceptions, were evidences of disfavor. They were therefore disheartened and greatly perplexed when persecutions arose and they had to suffer. But these sufferings were the evidence that they followed Him who also suffered in the flesh. He suffered for us, that is, for our sins, and therefore believers must arm themselves with the same mind. They must expect suffering, not for sins, but from the side of an evil world. "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." The death of Christ for sin (not sins) demands from the believer that he also cease from sin, from living after the old nature.

If the Christian gratifies the old nature and yields to it, it will not entail any suffering, but if the believer lives as "dead unto sin," walks in separation from this evil age, the result will be that he has to suffer in some way. The life he lives is no longer "in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Such a walk brings with it the contradiction of sinners, the hatred of the world, such sufferings through which Christ also passed. Once they did as the heathen, the Gentiles, about them, walking in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries. But now their lives had been transformed; no longer did they run with them and do what the Gentiles did. Their former associates in sin and in the lusts of the flesh thought it strange that such should be the case, and they spoke evil of them. What evil they spoke about them is not stated. But for this they will have to give account to Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead, even Christ.

The next verse has perplexed many, and has been misused by teachers of error and unsound doctrines, like the passage about the spirits in prison. "For to this end was the gospel preached also to the dead, that they might be judged as regards men after the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit." It is strange that expositors should detach a verse like this from the context and then, without considering its connection, build upon one verse a new and vital doctrine. So it is claimed that the dead mentioned are those who died before the gospel was preached, or who never had a chance to hear the Gospel, but who hear it now in the abode of death, to obtain eternal life. But this is only one of a number of other interpretations.

The Apostle had spoken in the preceding verse of the judgment of the living and of the dead. He now mentions the dead to whom the gospel had been preached. It is a thing of the past and means that those who are dead now while they lived had heard the preaching of the gospel. He means only the righteous dead and the other dead are not in view at all. Those who are now dead passed through the same experience, as the living pass through it, judged according to men in the flesh, but living according to God in the Spirit. Thus the preaching to the dead as dead is not taught at all in this verse. If there were such a thing as preaching to the physical dead we should find it in the Epistle to the Romans, in that great document of the gospel, or somewhere else in the Pauline Epistles; but there is nothing mentioned about this anywhere.

The new life which is dead to sin and suffers with Christ must be manifested. Of this we read in the exhortations which follow (verses 7-11). The end of all things is at hand, the fact that this age will end must always be kept before the heart and mind. And if it was true then that the promised end is at hand how much more true is it now. As a result of waiting for His coming, expecting Him at any time, we are to be sober and watchful unto prayer, and manifest fervent love among and towards fellow-believers. There is to be hospitality without murmuring, ministering one to another, according as each has received. Public ministry in preaching or teaching is to be as the oracles of God, in dependence upon Him, as of the ability which God supplieth, that is, as enabled by His Spirit.

Verses 12-19. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which cometh upon you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." With what love and tenderness, dear Peter, by the Spirit of God, touches again on their sufferings and trials! How perplexed they must have been when they read their own Scriptures and remembered the promises made to Israel as to earthly blessings; and here they were suffering want and privation, were persecuted and slandered by those about them. He writes to them not to think it strange, as if a strange thing happened unto them, when passing through fiery trials. It is the path the Shepherd went and the sheep must follow Him. He suffered, it is the believer's privilege to suffer with Him. When sufferings and trials come, then is the time for rejoicing and not for being disheartened. Sufferings become sweet and precious when we remember they constitute us partakers of Christ's sufferings. And there is coming a revelation of His glory. In anticipation of that we can rejoice, for that revelation will bring the end of all suffering, and glory as well.

"if ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." Instead of trying to escape sufferings with Christ, a little reproach, a little contempt for Christ's sake, we should welcome all most gladly. There is a blessing in it, even when people call us narrow or by any other name of contempt, because we exalt Christ and are true to Him. The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us whenever we are reproached for the name of Christ. And if we were but more faithful, more separated, more loyal and devoted, we also would have more reproach, and as a result know more of the blessed experience that we are the resting and dwelling place of the Spirit of glory.

But there are sufferings which are inconsistent with Christ's sufferings and with the character of a Christian. "But if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." It means to count reproach and suffering for Christ an honor and a glory. Peter had made this experience when with his fellow-apostles he had been beaten, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" The sufferings of believers are permitted by the Lord for their own good likewise; they are His loving chastenings. Thus He deals as a loving Father with His house, whose house are we (Hebrews 3:6), permitting and using afflictions, sorrows, losses, that we may be partakers of His holiness. But if such is the case with His house, with those who belong to Him and whom He loves, what shall be the end of those that disobey the gospel of God? if the righteous, the sinner saved by grace, in his walk through the wilderness can scarcely be saved, if it needs the very power of God to keep him, what shall be the fate of the ungodly and the sinner? Therefore, when the believer suffers he commits his soul to Him who is able to sustain and carry him through.

V. EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING SERVICE AND CONFLICT

CHAPTER 5

1. As to Christian service (5:1-7)
2. Conflict and victory (5:8-11)
3. The conclusion (5:12-14)

Verses 1-7

Peter now speaks in great tenderness exhorting to service. The exhortation is addressed to the elders and he speaks of himself as a "fellow-elder." Does he mean by this an official title or does he mean simply his age and experience? He is not writing in any official capacity, but the word elder has the meaning of old in years. He assumes no ecclesiastical authority to dictate, but speaks out of a ripe experience and a heart of love. How different from what ritualism has made him to be. He takes his place among the other elders and calls himself a fellow-elder, not claiming any authority or superiority whatever. He was a witness of the sufferings of Christ; he knew he would be a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed. The Lord had given him this assurance (Matt. 19:28, 29).

He gives some important exhortations. We give it in a better rendering. "Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but readily; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but being ensamples to the flock." Believers here are called "the flock of God." In John 10:16 the Lord had given the announcement that there should be one flock (not one fold, as the Authorized Version). The flock of God is the Church, the body of Christ. The language so frequently heard in Christendom when preachers and pastors speak of those to whom they preach as "my flock" or "my people," is unscriptural and should be avoided. God's children do not belong to anybody but the Lord. As the Lord had commissioned Peter: "Feed My sheep," and "Feed My lambs," so Peter writes to the elders to tend the flock of God. It is the same Greek word used here which we find in John 21:16 and is really "shepherd"--shepherd the flock of God. It is not to be done for filthy lucre's sake, on account of gain, for money considerations.

All is prophetic, for exactly that which was not to be done is being done in Christendom today, hence many of those who claim to be shepherds of the flock are in reality nothing but hirelings; and often it happens that the hireling for the sake of better financial conditions will exchange "his flock" for another. Furthermore, there is to be no lording over the allotted charge (or over your allotments). The elder who has the oversight of the flock, called to shepherd the flock, minister to the flock as a servant, is not to take a place of superiority or spiritual dignity, claiming authority. This also is done in Christendom with its "Lord Bishops" and other titles of ecclesiastical authority. The word translated in the Authorized Version with "heritage" is in the Greek "kleros," and means an allotment. From this word comes our English "clergy." There is no such thing in the body of Christ as a "clergy" and a "laity."

Instead of lording over their allotted charge, the elders are to be ensamples to the flock, in a godly life. Then comes the promise, "when the chief shepherd is manifested, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." The sheep of Christ for which He laid down His life are very precious to Him, and those who serve His sheep, who minister to their need, will be honored by Him and rewarded with the crown of glory in the day of His manifestation. There is to be submission by the younger to the elder, that is, the younger in years are to be subject to those older in years. The same rule of loving submission extends to all the flock of God, "be subject one to another."

Humility is to be the right clothing for the saints of God. "They are to gird themselves with humility in this way, humility being that which will keep everything rightly adjusted, as the girdle the robe, and which would thus enable for such activity as all are called to; for humility is a grand help against discouragement by the difficulties of the way, and necessarily against all that would search out any remnant of pride in us" (F.W. Grant). Self-exaltation is the very essence of sin. God cannot tolerate it in His people. The example of Christ, who made of Himself no reputation, forbids it. God resisteth therefore always and in every way the proud, while He giveth grace to the humble. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." How little these great exhortations are considered in our times! Even among those who have the truth and believe in the revelation of God, while there is much increase in knowledge, there is little evidence of true humility. Humility will never leave us ashamed. We do not need to exalt

ourselves; the Lord will do it for us.

Then there is the sweet comfort: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." All means all--all cares, whatever they are; all burdens, all anxieties we can roll upon Him, with the perfect assurance that He does care. Alas! our anxieties, our heavy feelings, our worry and our hurry, all speak the same language of unbelief. "Lord, dost Thou not care?" Well, it is if we look upon all burdens He permits to be laid upon us, as tokens of His love, by which we may learn His faithfulness afresh. Instead of murmuring then, we should sing and rejoice, being anxious for nothing, knowing He carries us and our burdens and cares as we can never do.

Verses 8-11

Once more we hear His exhortation: "Be sober, be watchful!" Why? Because there is an adversary and a conflict. In those days of persecution he was the roaring lion; in our days he sneaks about as an angel of light. No longer is it the persecution of the church; it is the corruption of the truth which is the work of the adversary today. But in Peter's day the enemy was engaged in active persecution, seeking to devour God's people. Once more he will assume this character during the coming great tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble. Then the faithful Jewish remnant, like this remnant to whom Peter wrote, will have to face the roaring lion, as we read so frequently in the book of Revelation.

Then follows Peter's benediction, quite a different thing from the fraudulent benedictions, which come from the counterfeit successors of Peter. "But the God of all grace, who hath called you unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered a little while, Himself shall perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Verses 12-14

The Epistle was sent to them by Silvanus. It is the same Silvanus whose back had been lacerated in the prison of Philippi, whose feet had been in stocks, and who sang the praises of the Lord with beloved Paul in that night of pain and suffering. He knew what suffering with Christ meant and could equally sympathize with his brethren.

There is greeting from the other elect ones in Babylon, as we have shown in our introduction, in literal Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates. Salutation from Marcus is also given. This is John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, whose failure in the book of Acts is recorded, and on account of whom the Apostle Paul had a falling out with Barnabas; it is the same Mark who wrote the Gospel which bears his name. The kiss of love is mentioned (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). It was universally observed for centuries. "Peace be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

Introduction

The authenticity of this Second Epistle of Peter has occasioned a great deal of controversy and many are questioning it, as it has been done in the past. It is true the most ancient sources of post-apostolic writings do not mention this Epistle. What we have pointed out in the introductions of most of the other New Testament books, that their authenticity is confirmed by references in the fragments of the writings of the church fathers, such as Polycarp, Papias, Clement of Rome and others, cannot be done with this Epistle. Some scholars in their research claim that traces of this Epistle are discernable in the testimonies of Polycarp, Ignatius, in the letter of Barnabas and in the testimony of Clement of Rome, but they are so very faint and fanciful, that they are not reliable. But not finding a direct allusion in these sources does not mean anything at all. The greater portion of the writings of the men who were in touch with the Apostles and the direct disciples of the men who knew Peter and Paul, have been lost. If we had all they have written we would probably find in them references to this Epistle.

The Epistle is not found in the Peshito version. According to Bishop Westcott in his Canon of the New Testament there are in existence two classes of manuscripts of this version. Both omit the Second and Third Epistles of John, the Second Epistle of Peter, the Epistle of Jude and the Book of Revelation, but include all the other books. This Canon seems to have been generally maintained in the Syrian churches. It is reproduced in the Arabic version of Erpenius, which was taken from the Peshito. Cosmas, an Egyptian traveller of the sixth century, states that only three of the so-called "Catholic" Epistles were received by the Syrians. Later sources charge the Syrian churches with mutilating the New Testament by not having these books in their Bibles.

The Epistle is also omitted in the Latin version, that is, in the oldest editions. That the Vulgate is unreliable is well known. Westcott makes the following argument about the missing Second Epistle of Peter in the Latin version: "If we suppose that it was once received into the canon like the First Epistle, it would in all probability have been translated by the same person, as seems to have been the case with the Gospel of Luke and the Acts (both written by Luke), though their connection is less Obvious; and while every allowance is made for the difference in style in the original Epistles, we must look for the same rendering of the same phrases. But when on the contrary, it appears that the Latin text of the Epistle not only exhibits constant and remarkable difference from the text of other parts of the Vulgate, but also differs from the First Epistle in the rendering of words common to both, when it further appears that it differs not less clearly from the Epistle of Jude in those parts which are almost identical in the Greek; then the supposition that it was admitted into the Canon at the same time with them becomes at once unnatural. It is indeed possible that the two Epistles may have been received at the same time and yet have found different translators." But this argument does not mean at all that this Epistle is spurious and should be excluded from the New Testament.

But while the Epistle is not mentioned in the Muratorian fragment, in the writings of Polycarp, Papias, Irenaeus and others, and while it is missing in the Peshito and the earlier editions of the Vulgate, Hippolytus (living in the first half of the third century) was evidently acquainted with the Epistle, for in writing on the Antichrist he makes use of 2 Peter 1:21. Eusebius, the church historian, gives incontrovertible testimony that the Epistle was positively known at the close of the second century as the second Epistle of Peter. He shows that Clement of Alexandria (about 190 A.D.) knew the Epistle as the work of Peter and used it. The successor of Clement, Origen, according to Eusebius wrote: "Peter has left one acknowledged Epistle, and possibly also a second, for it is disputed." It was through Jerome's (Eusebius Hieronymus, born 390 A.D.) efforts that the Epistle was added to the Vulgate. He wrote: "Peter wrote two Epistles, which are termed Catholic, the second of which is denied by most to be his, because of the disagreement of its style with that of the former Epistle." On account of these historical facts opinions among scholars have been very much divided. Many reject the

Petrine authorship of this Epistle, but other scholars accept it without any question. Among those who defend the Epistle against those who deny it are scholars of the highest reputation like Alford, Olshausen, Keil and others.

The Sufficiency of Internal Evidence

The fact is that external evidences to confirm the authenticity of Second Peter are not needed, for the internal evidences are beyond controversy of such a nature as to establish the Petrine authorship. The Epistle starts with the name of Peter. In the Greek the name Simon is spelled "Symeon" or "Simeon." If we turn to Acts 15:14 we read that James called Peter "Symeon," the Aramaic form for Simon. Then the writer refers to the fact that he would have soon to put off this tabernacle "even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." He was now an old man, and the Lord had spoken to him at the lakeside. "When thou art old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands" (John 21). Still stronger is the reference of the writer to the transfiguration, where Peter was present, and he speaks of it as being an eyewitness of His coming and of His majesty. And, finally, the writer says: "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you" (3:1).

Critical Claims and Evasions

This internal evidence destructive critics try to evade and offset. They claim that the writer was not Simon Peter, but that some unknown author, using Peter's name, wrote this document. It is the same foolish invention advanced by Old Testament critics as to the authorship of the book of Daniel.

To establish this theory they point to the fact that there was a tendency in the early church to use Peter's name in different pseudo documents, such spurious writings as "The Gospel of Peter; The Revelation of Peter; the Acts of Peter, and the travels of Peter." But the fact of these forgeries, some of which cover some of the text of the Second Epistle of Peter, is an evidence that a genuine writing exists. According to the opinions of the men who reject the authorship of Peter, the writer of this Epistle to give standing to his production thought best to impersonate the Apostle Peter and so he started right in the beginning by saying he is Peter. And he is careful to select the Aramaic form of Peter's name, the name Symeon. Would a forger not rather have avoided that uncommon use of Peter's name? But, furthermore, he also tells us that the Lord had told him about His death; and yet this man was not Peter, nor had the Lord ever told him what He had spoken to Peter about the time and manner of His death. Then the writer of the Epistle claims to have been on the Mount of Transfiguration, that he beheld His glory there and heard the voice of the Father speaking. He is positive that he was present and was an eyewitness, the strongest possible claim.

Yet if it was not Peter who wrote this Epistle, then it must have been either John or James, because there were only three eyewitnesses of the transfiguration. But would John or James write thus, hiding his identity under the name of Peter? Then the writer, assuming the name of Peter, declares that he had written the first Epistle, which Peter beyond doubt wrote, yet he had not written that Epistle. Here are three (in plain English) lies. A man writes an Epistle claiming to be Peter, but he is not Peter at all; hence he is a fraud. The same man claims that he was at the lake of Tiberias, that the Lord told him about His death; yet he was not there, for he was not Peter; therefore this impersonator is a fraud. This is an especially strong point. The fact that the Lord had announced Peter's death was known to but a few at that time, when the Epistle was written, which we take was about the year 65 A.D.

The Gospel of John, where the Lord's prophecy as to Peter's future is recorded, had not yet been written. Furthermore, he says that he saw the transfiguration, which he did not see; hence he lied. The fourth lie is his claim that he wrote the first Epistle, which he did not write. It is astonishing what inventions the enemies of the Bible can bring forth simply to discredit the Word of God and to deny its authenticity. If Peter is not the writer of this Epistle the whole Epistle is a miserable fraud, a dishonest piece of work, a forgery of the worst kind, which every honest man must despise. The foolish babblings of critics: "it is a useful document and should be read by all Christians, though Peter did not write it himself," is ridiculous. Either Peter wrote it and then it must be accepted; or Peter did not write it and in such a case the whole business is a forgery and a fraud. But would a fraud ever have written such a wonderful message as the one with which this second Epistle begins? Would a conscious fraud have warned against apostasy as found in the second chapter? Would he, could he, have exhorted fellow-believers in the way as it is done in this Epistle? It is a moral impossibility.

The Character of the Second Epistle

One of the critics makes the following statement in denying the Petrine authorship: "The fact that the only allusions to the incidents in the Lord's life found in the Epistle are such as would support the character as one writing as Peter does become, in view of the silence of the Epistle as to the passion, the resurrection, the ascension, and of the absence from it of allusions to the Lord's teaching as recorded in the gospel, are a serious ground for questioning the Petrine authorship of the Epistle" (Chase). Like most critics this one lacks in spiritual discernment. In fact, if critics had some spiritual insight in the majestic scope of God's holy Word, they would not be critics, but worshipers. All second Epistles, except Second Corinthians, have a peculiar character. Second Thessalonians, Second Timothy, Second and Third John, and the little Epistle of Jude are in reality prophetic. They all speak of the future, the coming evils in professing Christendom, the apostasy, and all warn against these things. The Second Epistle of Peter shares the same character with the other second Epistles and Jude's Epistle. There was no need for Peter to refer again to the passion being outside of the scope of this second letter, he had given his witness and testimony as to these facts so abundantly in his first Epistle. The two Epistles harmonize in many ways.

Another Supposed Difficulty

Another supposed difficulty is the similarity that exists between the second chapter of this Epistle and the Epistle of Jude. This difficulty will be taken up more fully in connection with the annotations of the chapter and in the introduction to Jude's Epistle. The learned scholars have spent much time on the question whether Jude copied from Peter or Peter copied from Jude. Some claim that Peter had Jude's Epistle and used it; others claim that Jude imitated Peter. Even so good a scholar as the late Dean Alford says: "It is well known that, besides various scattered resemblances, a long passage occurs, included in the limits Jude 3-19; 2 Peter 2:1-19, describing in both cases the heretical enemies of the gospel, couched in terms so similar as to preclude all idea of entire independence. If considerations of human probability are here as everywhere else to be introduced into our estimate of sacred writings, then either one saw and used the text of the other, or both drew from a common document or a common source of oral apostolic teaching." This in reality affects the truth of inspiration, and leans towards criticism. If Peter sat down and copied Jude, what Peter wrote was not inspired, but copied. And if Jude sat down and wrote after the pattern of Peter, copied him, and worked over his testimony, then Jude is not inspired. But both, Peter and Jude were inspired, and therefore they wrote independent of each other, the Holy Spirit guiding their respective pens, in giving the same testimony of warning.

The Division of Second Peter

This Second Epistle of Peter may be looked upon as an appendix or complement of the First Epistle. It introduces a testimony as to the future, connected with the coming of the Lord, which the First Epistle so frequently mentions. While the First Epistle is silent as to the coming evils preceding the coming of the Lord, this Second Epistle sounds the warning and gives, as already stated in the preceding introduction, a prophetic picture of the conditions of Christendom when the age closes. Here, too, we find the exhortations of Peter, similar to those in the first letter. Peter himself states the purpose when he wrote: "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." While the language may differ in some respects from the language of the First Epistle, the style and development of the Epistle is just like the first, which is even noticeable in our English version. He writes first of the gracious provisions, which are made for those of like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, which includes present provisions in precious promises, and the gift of all things that pertain unto life and godliness, as well as the gift of the Word of Prophecy.

The second chapter unfolds the coming dangers of the last days of this age. The false teachers and their pernicious doctrines are revealed with the corresponding warnings to beware of them. The concluding chapter is prophetic; it reveals the future, including the coming great transformation when the physical earth will pass through a judgment by fire, to come forth in an eternal resurrection glory as a new earth, surrounded by new heavens. We follow, therefore, in our annotations the division of the Epistle in three chapters as we have it in our Bibles.

I. THE GRACIOUS PROVISIONS OF GOD (chapter 1)

II. THE EVILS TO COME THROUGH FALSE TEACHERS (chapter 2)

III. THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH AND THE CONCLUSION (chapter 3)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE GRACIOUS PROVISIONS OF GOD

CHAPTER 1

1. God's gracious provisions in Christ (1:1-4)
2. The development of the divine nature (1:5-11)
3. The promises of prophecy (1:12-21)

Verses 1-4

We are not left in doubt who the writer is, not a pseudo Peter, but Simon Peter, the fisherman of Galilee . With this second Epistle he finishes the task given him by the Lord "to strengthen his brethren." The opening verse of the third chapter shows that the Epistle is addressed to the same persons to whom he wrote the first Epistle. He gives his old name, Simon (or as in the Greek, Symeon), followed by the new name given him by the Lord, Peter. He calls himself a servant first before he mentions his apostleship. The word servant is the same as the word by which Paul designated himself, that is, a slave. Evidently Peter estimated his servanthood higher than his apostleship.

He addresses his brethren no longer as he did in his first Epistle as strangers and elect by the foreknowledge of God. His purpose is a different one. No longer does he mention their trials, sufferings and persecutions; this was done abundantly in the preceding document. He addresses them instead as those "that have obtained like precious faith," that is, the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Saviour and Lord. This faith is obtained "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." In Romans the righteousness of God is the great theme as the ground of the believer's justification. (See annotations on Romans 3.) Here it has a somewhat different meaning. It is not the question of justification, but the question of God having been righteous, that is, faithful to His promises by Him who is Jehovah, their own promised Messiah. It was the faithfulness of the God of Israel which had bestowed upon them as a believing remnant this faith, which was now so precious to them, the faith in Jehovah-Jesus as Saviour.

Then follows the greeting: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ." This form of greeting using the word "multiplied" is confined to the two Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude. It is not without significance. When believers suffer, as seen in the First Epistle of Peter, they can count on God, to multiply grace and peace. But Second Peter and the Epistle of Jude look forward to the last days, the end of the age, with its predicted apostasy, and for those days God promises to multiply to His own grace, peace and mercy. But it must be noticed that this multiplication is "through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is not independent of a real heart knowledge of God and His Son, our Lord. There may be a head knowledge of God and of Christ, a barren knowledge which brings no fruit unto God. Of this we read in chapter 2:20-22 of our Epistle.

The knowledge of God is in Jesus Christ; through Him we know God in all His gracious fullness. (See 1 John 5:20.) The real heart knowledge of Him produces fruit because it carries with it divine power, which has given to the believer "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us by glory and virtue." Life and glory are the gifts of grace; life is bestowed in the new birth which fits for glory, but godliness and virtue are the practical results of that grace in the life of the believer. The divine power for godliness and virtue which are to be manifested in the believer's life, that power which is able to act in us and give us the victory, must be laid hold on by faith. "How precious it is to know that faith can use this divine power, realized in the life of the soul, directing it toward glory in the end! What a safeguard from the efforts of the enemy, if we are really established in the consciousness of this divine power acting on our behalf in grace! The heart is led to make glory its object; and virtue, the strength of spiritual life, is developed on the way to it. Divine power has given all that is needed" (Synopsis of the Bible.)

Having called us by glory and virtue, He has in connection with it given us exceeding great and precious promises. These

promises relate to both, glory and virtue. Through these promises we are made partakers of the divine nature, by the divine power acting in us, with the glory as the blessed goal. But by the same power promised unto us, we escape and are delivered from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Here is the real victorious life of a believer. It is not in some kind of a fixed "holiness experience" by which the old nature is eradicated, a teaching which is altogether against Scripture. The heart must be occupied with Christ and the glory by which we are called, as a result the divine power, the Holy Spirit in us, acts and victory over sin results.

Verses 5-11

While God promises to His people to add, that is, to multiply, daily grace and peace, they themselves in the faith which realizes the divine power and the glory to come, must add to that faith virtue, and that is to be done "by giving all diligence." The divine nature which the believer has received loves the will of God; it is a holy nature, and therefore abhors the corruption which is in the world by lust. But that divine nature is subject to growth and development in the life of the child of God, and that requires all care and diligence. If Christians say that they possess a new nature, are born again, saved by grace, and continue to live according to the old nature, enjoying the world and its sinful pleasures, without manifesting godliness and virtue, they are not only in a very unscriptural attitude, but on dangerous ground. It would prove that they belong to the class of professors described in chapter 2:20-22.

Seven things are to be added to faith. "Add to your faith virtue." This word means something different from its general meaning in English. It means moral courage, a courage which refuses the gratification of the old nature. It is the soldier's courage, who stands manfully against all opposition. It is an energy by which the heart is master of itself, and is able to choose the good, and to cast aside the evil, as a thing conquered and unworthy of one's self. Such courage to stand and withstand, this energy to deny one's self, makes full communion with God possible. If such virtue is added to faith it leads to knowledge, the next thing. The truth of God and the things of God are known and learned by obedience, by walking in them. Knowledge gained, without virtue practised, only puffs up and leads to hypocrisy.

A true knowledge of God is heart acquaintance with Him. This knowledge leads to temperance, which means self-restraint. And self-restraint, the government of the will, must be followed by patience, which means endurance. How easy it is to endure reproach, wrongs inflicted by others, sufferings--to endure it all in patience when faith looks to Him Who endured more than we are ever called upon to do. If such is the case, godliness will not be lacking. It is a walk with God, communion with Him, child-like trust and obedience and reverence. Out of such a heart of faith, which has moral courage, practises self restraint, knowing God, endures and is godly--affections towards fellow-believers flow forth and brotherly love is added. This is what the knowledge of God teaches, "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

But there is something still higher than brotherly kindness and affection, and that is "love." It means divine love, which is the very nature of God Himself. "If divine love governs me, I love all my brethren; I love them because they belong to Christ; there is no partiality. I shall have greater enjoyment in a spiritual brother; but I shall occupy myself about my weaker brother with a love that rises above his weakness and has a tender consideration for it. I shall concern myself with my brother's sins, from love of God, in order to restore my brother, rebuking him, if needful; nor, if divine love be in exercise, can brotherly love be associated with disobedience. In a word, God will have His place in all my relationships" (John N. Darby).

Here, then, is food for self-examination and self-judgment. Does my faith in Christ, in whom all things are freely supplied pertaining to life and godliness, produce moral courage--does it produce heart knowledge of God, self-restraint, endurance in meekness, godliness and brotherly love and is all governed in me according to love, the very essence of God Himself. These things should be not only in us, but abound. It will not leave us barren or unfruitful. "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off (short-sighted) and hath forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins." There is not only the blindness of the natural man, but there may be a blindness and short-sightedness of a believer. It means that a believer whose new nature does not develop and manifest itself in these things, is short-sighted in respect to the heavenly things, the seen things which surround him are the objects which absorb his mind. Such a one forgets that he was cleansed from his former sins. The joy and peace in the Holy Spirit are no longer a present possession; his own heart condemns him and he lacks the reality of His salvation; the joy of it is gone, he has forgotten his cleansing from his former sins. When a believer remembers what God has done for Him in redemption, he will also long for a practical manifestation of that

salvation in a godly life and walk.

He speaks next of making our calling and election sure. But is this not sure already? As far as God, who has called and elected us, is concerned, it is sure. To have a consciousness of our calling and election, the sureness of it, requires diligence to walk in the path which the Holy Spirit through the pen of Peter has so beautifully described. Those who walk thus will not stumble, and, finally, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Verses 12-21

Having mentioned the coming kingdom of Christ, the Holy Spirit now enlarges upon this. We pointed out in the first Epistle that salvation to be revealed, as repeatedly stated, means the visible and glorious appearing of our Lord to establish His kingdom on earth. Peter does not teach the coming of the Lord for His saints at all. He knew it, of course, for the Lord had revealed it through Paul. Inasmuch as Peter writes to this remnant of believing Jews, and that remnant is also representative of another remnant, which will, during the great tribulation, suffer and wait for the coming of the King, the second half of this chapter is therefore taken up with the kingdom in manifestation, as revealed in prophecy and foreshadowed by the transfiguration.

He speaks first of His coming departure; the Lord had told him about that long ago. But there was no doubt a special intimation from the Lord that this event would now soon be and he would have "to put off this tabernacle. So before his departure he was anxious to give them instructions by the Spirit of God, so that they might have these things always in remembrance. This makes it clear once more that Peter did not look for a chain of successors to become guardians and instructors of the faith.

He and the other apostles had not followed cunningly devised fables when they made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had been eye witnesses of His majesty. But where and how? He speaks of the scene on the holy mount, when the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured before them, when they heard the voice of the Father from the excellent glory. He stood upon that mount clothed with the glory of the Father; with Him Moses and Elijah, the one who had died, the other who went to heaven without dying. It was a foregleam of His coming glory and a fulfillment of the promise given in the last verse of Matthew 16. As He stood upon that mountain, so He will appear in His glory on earth again, bringing His saints with Him. It is His visible and glorious appearing to which Peter refers, and which was foreshadowed in the transfiguration, and not that coming promised to His own in John 14:1-3, to take them into the Father's house. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy" should be rendered, "We have the word of prophecy made more sure." The Word of prophecy is, of course, in the Old Testament. But is not this sure enough? Why should it be made more sure? It must be understood in the sense of attesting, or confirming the word of prophecy. The transfiguration confirmed the prophecies in the Old Testament. The prophets describe such a scene like the transfiguration, when the Son of Man comes from heaven in power and glory; hence the word of prophecy has been confirmed, made more sure, by the scene on the holy mount. Let it be stated again that the Old Testament prophetic Word does not reveal that coming for His saints, which is for the Church "that blessed Hope." When Paul speaks of it in 1 Corinthians 15 he speaks of it as a mystery; it was hidden in former ages (1 Cor. 15:51). Yet in the verse before us Peter alludes to it when he speaks of the morning star.

There is a difficulty connected with this verse, and some have read it as if it meant that the morning star must arise in the heart of the individual, as it has been stated in the following comment: "The day star arising in our hearts will be the inner premonitions which announce the coming, as the day star heralds the dawn; such premonitions might be occasioned by observing the various signs of the coming." But it does not mean this at all, nor does it mean that prophecy is only to be used for encouragement till we possess the proper Christian hope. The suggested rendering in the Numerical Bible removes the difficulty. "We have also the prophetic Word confirmed, to which ye do well in taking heed (as to a lamp that shineth in an obscure place, until the day dawn and the morning star ariseth) in your hearts." It does not mean that the morning star is to arise in the heart of the believer; it means that we should take heed to prophecy in our hearts. And how the entire prophetic Word, that blessed lamp, is needed in these darkening days!

The day dawn is preceded by the rising of the morning star, or day star, and the morning star is the blessed emblem of the coming of the Lord for His saints. He is both the morning star and the sun of righteousness. He appears as the morning star

for His saints and afterward in full glory as the sun of righteousness.

The closing statements of this chapter are also of much importance. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Prophecy never could be produced by the will of man; only God knows the future and He has spoken concerning the future.

The fact of prophecy is one of the great evidences of the supernaturalness of the Bible. The men who were used to communicate prophecy spoke from God; they were moved by the Holy Spirit. For this reason the pernicious school of destructive criticism has always aimed at the prophetic Word, for if they concede that there is prophecy, they acknowledge their defeat. What denials and theories they have used in order to get rid of prophecy we cannot follow here. The next chapter shows what results have been brought about through the rejection of the truth stated by Peter, that God hath spoken. Of equal importance is the divine statement, "that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation."

Rome has used the word "private" to uphold its awful lie, that Scripture should never be interpreted by a private individual. As a result Rome discourages in every way the reading of the Word of God. In the past that system burned the Bibles, often chaining the Bible to the martyr at the stake, burning the hated Book with the hated witness. Give Rome her old time power and she will do it again. The prophetic Word only is here in view. Prophecy shows a divine unity that is wonderful. Some have said that history must interpret prophecy, but that is not so. History is predicted in advance by prophecy. In interpreting prophecy, prophetic Scripture must be compared with prophetic Scripture. Prophecy must be taken as a whole. We have no business to say, as it is often done, "I think it means this or that." Prophecy starts in Genesis 3:15. The consummation of all prophecy is the kingdom of Christ, the victory of God in His Son, the complete defeat of Satan. Every prophecy is a part of prophecy, having one and the same object and can, therefore, not be interpreted by itself, independent of the rest of prophecy. All the confusion which is in the professing church today as to the prophetic forecasts of the Word of God is the result of having ignored this important injunction.

II. THE EVIL TO COME THROUGH FALSE TEACHERS

CHAPTER 2

1. The source of the evil (2:1-3)
2. The lessons from the past. (2:4-10)
3. The description of the apostates (2:11-22)

Verses 1-3

The Apostle Peter is now being used by the Spirit of God to prophesy. He predicts the coming evil for the professing church, that apostate teachers would do their vicious work. As pointed out in the introduction every other writer of the Epistles bears the same witness and that witness is mostly found in the second Epistles and in the Epistle of Jude. (See 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:1-4; 2 Thess. 2; 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6; 2 John, verses 7-11; Jude.) He reminds them that among their own nation Israel there were false prophets. The false prophets appeared mostly, if not Altogether, when judgment was impending for the nation, as we learn from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These false prophets opposed the true prophets of God, who preached the God-given message, while the false prophets rejected the Word of the Lord and belittled it. They spoke out of their own hearts and spoke vanities and lies (Ezek. 13:2, 8). Their message was "peace" when there was no peace. As a result the people of Israel did not believe the Lord and His Word; they rejected Him.

The same, it is predicted, would be repeated in this Christian age, only with this difference, that not false prophets should appear, but "false teachers." And as this dispensation draws to its close apostasy would set in. (Consult annotations on 2 Thess. 2.) These false teachers, like the false prophets, reject first of all the Word of God; they, too, speak out of their own hearts, that is, vanities and lies. As a result they bring in "privily destructive heresies." All heresies have but one goal, and that is the denial of Christ and the gospel. Therefore Peter predicts "denying even the Master, who bought them."

This is the way of destructive criticism. One looks in vain among the many preachers and teachers who deny the virgin birth and with it the deity of Christ, for one who believes that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. All those who deny the Master who bought them began with criticism of the Bible, rejecting first the writings of Moses, casting doubt upon other books, and finally abandoning any kind of faith in the Bible as the Word of God. Well is it called "the destructive criticism," for it is in the end destructive of everything. It is this which is poisoning everything in Christendom today and there is no denomination in which this leaven is not at work. Thus Peter's prediction is increasingly fulfilled in our days and will be much more as this age draws rapidly to its close.

We must also notice that it does not say that they deny "the Lord who redeemed them"; but "the Master who bought" or purchased "them." The difference between "purchase" and "redemption" is, that purchase is general, while redemption is limited to those who believe on Him and are thus redeemed by His precious blood. These false teachers never believed on Him as Lord, and, therefore, they are not redeemed by Him, though He paid the purchase price in their behalf. By denying Him they disowned the purchase. And for such there is in store swift destruction. This pronounces the sentence of eternal doom upon all false teachers, upon destructive criticism as well as upon the cults which teach damnable heresies and, by doing it, deny the Master who bought them.

Here is also a prediction of the wide-spread success of these false teachers. "Many shall follow their pernicious (dissolute or lascivious) ways, through whom the way of truth shall be blasphemed." They speak of making the world better, they pose as teachers of morality and righteousness, but their ways are branded as pernicious. How can they be righteous when they deny that which alone can give righteousness to man? How often it has been brought to light that those who deny the truth and yet claim to be teachers of morality, were miserable hypocrites. Unbelief produces worldliness and immorality. Then the way of truth is being blasphemed and "that worthy Name" is being dishonored.

"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you; whose judgment now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." The people of God are their prey. They are covetous, seeking their own gratification in money, social standing, fame and everything else that the natural heart loves and desires. All is abundantly verified in the conditions about us. But retribution will surely come upon them.

Verses 4-10

Here we reach the section of second Peter, which is so much like the greater part of Jude's Epistle, that critics have claimed that one must have copied from the other. We have shown in the introduction that Peter and Jude wrote independently of each other as the direct instruments of the Holy Spirit. The correspondence of Peter's testimony with Jude's Epistle is more fully examined in the introduction to Jude.

The Spirit of God calls attention through Peter to that which happened in past history, showing that God deals with apostates who defy Him and are disobedient, while the godly He delivers. In Jude we shall find out, that while there is much similarity, the purpose of the testimony is quite different from that of Peter. First, mention is made of the angels who sinned and who are cast down to hell, the word being Tartarus (the very lowest pit), where they are kept in chains of darkness for the coming judgment. It is evident that this passage does not mean Satan and the angels who joined in his rebellion before ever man was created. Satan and the fallen angels are not now in the lowest pit awaiting there in a helpless condition the judgment; they are not in chains, but loose, and Satan, as the prince of this world, uses his angels in the pursuit of his work. Who, then, are these angels? They are the beings described in Genesis 6:1-4 as the "sons of God" (a term which in the Old Testament means angels) who came down and mingled with the daughters of men. These angels, as Jude tells us, did not keep their first estate, left their assigned place, and by their disobedience became the means of corrupting the race in such a manner that the judgment of God had to act in the deluge.

God has not been pleased to give a complete revelation of this sinister event. That it means this episode is learned that Peter at once speaks of the old world, which was not spared by God, "but saved Noah, the eighth person (with seven others), a preacher of righteousness, having brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." This testimony is closely linked with what Peter had written in the first Epistle (1 Peter 3:19-20). And here we are told that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He and his house had found grace in the sight of the Lord, while the mass of the ungodly world who rejected His truth and His Spirit, who strove with them, were not spared but dealt with in judgment. It is so now. Another day is coming in which the Lord will judge the ungodly and unbelieving, while His people will be saved.

Sodom and Gomorrah are cited also as examples of God's holy judgment. These cities were turned into ashes, as an example of all those who live ungodly. The awful fruit of sin in the most terrible, unutterable corruption was manifested in these cities; the same corruption is found still in the world, and that mostly in the great centers of Christendom. (Romans 1:27 mentions the same corruption so often referred to by classic writers of Rome and Greece .) Lot, who was in Sodom, though not of Sodom, is called, nevertheless, righteous, was vexed from day to day with their lawless deeds. The Lord delivered him. It is another warning to the false teachers with their denials and heresies, for the rejection of God's Word brings in the flood of immorality, licentiousness, and lawlessness.

The God who turned Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, by raining upon them fire and brimstone, will also deal with the apostasy at the close of this age, and with the teachers who deny the Master who bought them, in spite of their self flattery that they are moral. That judgment comes "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). These false teachers sneer at these words of Paul and call them quotations taken from the apocalyptic literature of the Jews, or something else; but the day will surely come when the Lord will vindicate His truth. In the meantime He knows the righteous, watches over them and knows how to deliver them.

Verses 11-22. This is one of the most solemn portions of the Word of God. It is prophetic, for here we have a description of the false teachers of the last days. Here is a startling picture of the baptized infidels of Christendom. It corresponds in a measure with 2 Timothy 3:1-5. They are bold (daring), self-willed, and tremble not to rail at dignities. They are unbridled in their talk and in their conduct. They are daring enough to assail every part of the truth of God, they call His revelation a myth, the virgin birth a legend, and despise the atoning work of the Son of God; they do what angels would never do, railing at dignities. (Jude has more to say about this; it is a well-known fact that some of the liberal theology leaders have joined hands with socialism in its worst form, that is, the anarchistic side of it. They speak of helping the masses and they rail against existing law and order, and advocate their overthrow. The ringleader of an attempt in Western Canada against the government was an apostate preacher of an honored denomination. The so-called "parlor-bolshevists" belong to this class.)

As we read on let us remember that not Peter, but the Holy Spirit speaks. They are compared to beasts, just born to be caught and to be destroyed; they speak evil of the things of which they know nothing whatever. The meaning is that they were never born again, and therefore follow the flesh, though it may be under the guise of culture and learning. They shall perish in their own corruption. They count it pleasure to revel in the day-time, they delight in luxurious and sinful pleasures. More than that, they claim a Christian profession and fellowship, by attending the love feasts of believers, which they dishonor by their presence as spots and blemishes, while at the same time they glory in their deceivings, their false teachings and denials of the Master. The right (or straight) way which they professed to have taken, when they took the name of Christ upon themselves, they have now left, having gone astray. Therefore they have eyes full of adultery and cannot cease from sin; they entice unstable souls, leading them astray as they have gone astray themselves.

They are also following in the way of Balaam, who was rebuked for his iniquity by the speaking of the dumb ass. The love of money controls them, as it controlled the heathen prophet. Verses 17 and 18 give additional descriptions of the character of these false teachers. They are springs without water, men look to them for the refreshing water of life, because they profess to be teachers; "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed." They know nothing of the water of life. They are nothing but obscuring mists driven by the tempest of their natural hearts. The great swelling words are the divine estimate of empty, human rhetoric by which thousands are swayed, but they are words of vanity, instead of bringing souls to Christ and the knowledge of redemption, they allure them through the lusts of the flesh, while they promise liberty to others, they are themselves slaves of corruption. Such is the character of the false teachers, who deny the Master that bought them.

"For if, after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the first. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Does this mean that these persons were at one time really begotten again, having received life and the Holy Spirit by trusting on Christ? These false teachers certainly were never born again; the description which we have of them is the proof of it. The last verse of this chapter gives the conclusive evidence. Believers, true Christians, are never

compared to dogs or swine; they are the sheep of His flock. A sheep cannot be transformed into a dog or a swine, nor will a sheep do what a dog or a swine does. They were therefore never the true children of God. They had escaped the outward pollutions of the world, which is a different thing from the escape of the corruption which is in the world by lust; the latter stands for the inward deliverance by the new birth, the former for an outward reformation which had taken place when they professed the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when for a time forsaking their evil ways so that they escaped the pollutions. But not having a new nature they became entangled therein and overcome, so that it was worse with them than in the beginning, before they had made a profession. They had known the way of righteousness as made known in the gospel of Christ, but the life which is offered in that way of righteousness, with the fruits of righteousness which follow, they had never accepted by a living faith. And this seems to be the case with the vast majority of the false teachers of today, the destructive critics, and those who deny the deity of our Lord. They were never born again; they never had a true experience of real salvation, hence they are but natural men, not having the Spirit.

III. THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH AND THE CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 3

1. Mocking at the Lord's coming (3:1-7)
2. The future of the earth (3:8-10)
3. Exhortation and conclusion (3:11-18)

Verses 1-7

The opening statement shows conclusively that Peter is the author and that this second Epistle was sent to the same believers to whom the first Epistle was addressed. The critics claim that this chapter marks a separate Epistle in itself and that it was combined by mistake with the preceding two chapters. Like so much else the critics put forth this is a foolish speculation wholly unwarranted. Peter states the reason for this second Epistle "to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance." He had already used a similar statement in the first chapter (1:12), but now exhorts them to be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through the apostles. The evil had been prophetically pictured by Peter and now he charges them to use the Word of God in the coming days of peril and apostasy, and remember especially its prophetic forecast. The apostle Paul did the same after he had given the warning of the coming of grievous wolves and false teachers (Acts 20:30).

Such is the resource of the true Church today, and in the degree, as we remember the words spoken by the prophets and by the apostles, give heed to them, we shall be kept in the perilous times. Both the prophets and the apostles warned of the evil to come as each age closes with apostasy and judgment; so did the Lord Himself when He predicted the future of the age and the conditions which precede His physical and glorious return. All have given the warning. Enoch was a prophet, as we learn from Jude; he prophesied about the coming of the Lord to execute judgment. There were apostates in his day who ridiculed his testimony and who spoke against him (Jude, verse 15).

Noah was a preacher of righteousness; he built the ark and sounded the warning, but no one paid any attention to him, and "as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh," said our Lord. The prophets warned of the judgment in store for Jerusalem; the warning was not heeded, and such a great one as Jeremiah was not believed, and cast into the dungeon. The prophet Amos speaks of those who "put far off the evil day." There were mockers and unbelievers each time an age ended. As already shown, the combined testimony of the apostles is on the same lines. Peter then writes: "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

While before Peter had shown the quality of the false teachers, he now points out by the revelation given unto him, that there would be unbelief and outright mockery touching the visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In both Epistles this great coming event, the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven, has a prominent place. The false teachers, whose doom will be sealed when Christ comes again, also ridicule and scoff at the idea that He will ever show Himself again.

And why do they mock and sneer? It has its source in unbelief. These men are infidels. Every destructive critic is an infidel. The records of the past embodied in the Holy Scriptures are denied to be authentic and reliable. The prophets of God were Jewish patriots who dreamt of a great Jewish future. The magnificent prophecies as to the coming kingdom and the rule of the King of Kings are classed with the apocalyptic ramblings of the "Sibylline writings." The Lord Jesus Christ is even impeached as to His knowledge and is regarded as being under the ignorant prejudice of the times in which He lived. It all emanates from the rejection of the Bible as the inerrant revelation of God.

Never before has this prophecy been so literally fulfilled as now. The Holy Spirit has revived the study of prophecy. The midnight cry has gone forth. The blessed hope has been restored to the Church, and the forgotten prayer, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus," is being prayed by the members of the body of Christ as never before. There is more preaching and teaching going on today on prophecy than ever before in the history of the church. It is one of the signs that the end of the age is very near. But the revival of prophecy has resulted in the activity of Satan. He both perverts and ridicules the coming of the Lord, and as that blessed event draws near, there will be increasing ridicule and mockery from the side of the apostates. (Of late certain presses of "evangelical denominations" have turned out tons of literature warning against the premillennial teachings. The Methodist church of Canada circulated a series of 5 pamphlets which attacked the blessed hope. They were the production of an infidel. The Chicago University and similar institutions also fight prophecy. Sneers and ridicule about His coming, the end of the age, the increase of evil and the coming are constantly multiplying. It is all a fulfillment of what Peter has written.)

The apostates dream of human progress, for they are "evolutionists." Their pet law, "the survival of the fittest," must work on till the last vestige of the beastly in man has worked itself out by a natural process, for they deny the need as well as the power of redemption. They call a belief in the coming of the Lord "pessimism," and have even attempted to brand those who believe in a catastrophic ending of this present evil age "enemies of civilization and human progress." What God hath spoken, what the mouth of all His holy prophets have declared, that the hope of the world is the coming and the enthronement of the Lord Jesus Christ, is extremely distasteful to them, for it conflicts with the program they have invented, a program which has no scriptural support whatever. They take the ground of an assumed unchangeableness of the world, that a sort of cycle governs nature, and thus they deny the positive statements of the Word of God and exclude God from His own creation. Science, meant to be a helpmeet to faith, is used by them to uphold their infidelity. They constantly speak of science contradicting revelation, which is not true.

The deluge which Peter mentions as an evidence of a past catastrophe, when the world was overflowed with water, they wilfully forget or, as it is now generally done, class it with myths of other nations, though science has abundantly proven that there happened such a judgment. But they do not want to believe that there can be a supernatural interference with the world. They believe in things continuing as they are and steadily improving. Up to the very time when the predicted sudden destruction shall come upon them, they say "Peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5). It was so, no doubt, when the deluge swept the unbelieving and secure generation of that time to eternal doom.

(Some apply the words relating to a past judgment to the judgment which passed over the original earth on account of Satan's fall. That there was such a judgment the second verse of the Bible teaches and geological facts confirm that the earth passed through a prehistoric destruction. But the reference is to the deluge. Almost every nation on earth has traditions of the deluge, though often in a perverted form. While the apostates and sneerers make everything of historical evidence and tradition, they ignore the universality of traditions concerning the flood.)

Verses 8-10

A great revelation follows. The heavens that are now, and the earth by the same word have been stored up, reserved for fire against a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Then in verse 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." As the earth was once judged by water so shall it be judged by fire in the future, and not the earth only but also the heavens, that is the heavens surrounding the earth. Years ago infidels used to ridicule the statement of Peter that the earth and the surrounding heavens would be consumed by fire. They spoke of it as an impossibility that the earth with its rivers, lakes and oceans could ever pass through such a conflagration, so that all is consumed. Well informed infidels no longer ridicule this statement, for astronomy with the help of the spectroscope has revealed the fact that other bodies in the heavens have passed through great conflagrations, that other globes have been

burned up, and not a few astronomers have advanced the theory that this will be the fate of the earth on which we live. Peter had no telescope, nor did he know anything about astronomy. How did he find out that the earth would be destroyed by fire? It was the Spirit of God who revealed it to him.

The question arises what event is it of which Peter speaks here? He speaks of "the day of the Lord." What phase of that coming day is it? It certainly is not the coming of the Lord for His saints as revealed in 1 Thess. 4. Nor is it the day of the Lord in its beginning, when the Lord appears in power and great glory. Now it is still "man's day," and when He appears the Day of the Lord begins. One day, Peter tells us, with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. From Revelation we learn that Christ will reign over the earth with His saints for a thousand years and that is "the Day of the Lord." The beginning of it will be as a thief, and it will bring fiery judgments, for He will be revealed "in flaming fire." But what Peter speaks of is not so much the beginning of that day of the Lord as it is the end, when the thousand years have expired.

When the thousand-year reign of Christ as King is over there follows a little season during which Satan is loosed from his prison; the revolt of which Revelation 20:8 speaks is followed by fire falling down from God out of heaven, and after that we see the great white throne, the judgment of the wicked dead. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20:11). It is this of which Peter writes, when the day of the Lord is ended, the earth and the surrounding heaven will pass away; it will be through a mighty conflagration from beneath and from above.* When Peter writes in verse 13 of new heavens and a new earth, he states what John beheld in his vision of chapter 21:1. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea."

*"It will be observed, that the Spirit does not speak here of the coming of Christ, except to say that it will be scoffed at in the last days. He speaks of the day of God, in contrast with the trust of unbelievers in the stability of the material things of creation, which depends, as the apostle shows, on the word of God. And in that day everything on which unbelievers rested and will rest shall be dissolved and pass away. This will not be at the commencement of the day, but at its close; and here we are free to reckon this day, according to the apostle's word as a thousand years, or whatever length of period the Lord shall see fit." (Synopsis of the Bible).

Some of these Jewish believers were evidently thinking that the Lord was slack about the fulfillment of the promise concerning that day. The apostle tells them that the Lord's slackness is His long-suffering, "He is not willing that any should perish but all should come unto repentance."

Verses 11-18

In view of such a future the apostle exhorts once more to holy living and godliness, "waiting for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God." The thought which is often expressed in the words "hastening the coming of the day of God," that we might act and serve, sending the gospel to the heathen, and do other things, thus hastening the coming of the Lord, is not warranted by the text, nor is it true. God cannot be hastened by the creature, nor can He be delayed in the execution of His eternal purposes.

As stated in the preceding annotations, the fiery ending of the Day of the Lord, and with it the Day of God, the eternal Age, when God is all in all, is what Peter teaches. "But we, according to His promise, wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The promise is found in Isaiah 65:17, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind." This is not the millennium, which in this chapter of Isaiah is described in verses 18-25, but that which comes into existence after the earth and the surrounding heavens have passed through the great conflagration. Once more Isaiah speaks of the earth and heavens which will remain forever. (See Isaiah 66:22.) This new earth and the new heavens will be the glorious and eternal dwelling-place of the redeemed, for the new Jerusalem comes finally out of the highest heaven to find its eternal resting place there (Rev. 21). "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye wait for these things, be diligent to be found in Him in peace without spot and blameless."

in conclusion, Peter refers to Paul as "our beloved brother Paul." The Epistle to the Galatians was then in circulation and everybody could read there of Peter's failure in Antioch (Gal. 2:12-16). The loving remark by Peter shows that he had readily seen his mistake and that there was no clash between the two servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Epistle which

Paul had written to the same Jewish Christians to whom Peter wrote is without question the Epistle to the Hebrews. (See Introduction to Hebrews.)

The Second Epistle of Peter ends with another warning, so well suited for our times, "Beware, lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked (destructive critics and deniers of Christ), ye fall from your own steadfastness." And the safeguard is "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"To Him be Glory both now and forever, Amen."

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelien

Introduction

This Epistle is not addressed to any one church nor does it mention, like the other New Testament Epistles, the author of the document; it is anonymous. We are not left in doubt who penned this Epistle in spite of its anonymous character. There can be no question that the author of the fourth Gospel is also the author of this Epistle. Its opening statement is linked with the opening of the Gospel and throughout it is written in the thought and language of the fourth Gospel. Inasmuch, then, as that Gospel is indisputably the work of John the Apostle, this Epistle is also the work of his inspired pen. "The internal testimony furnished by this Epistle to its author being the same with the author of the fourth Gospel is, it may well be thought, incontrovertible. To maintain a diversity of authorship would betray the very perverseness and exaggeration of that school of criticism which refuses to believe, be evidence never so strong" (Alford).

Historical Evidence

While the internal testimony confirms conclusively the Johannine authorship of the Epistle there is also a mass of historical evidence which attributes the Epistle to the beloved disciple. The oldest testimony is that of Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with the Apostle John. We refer to the introduction of the Gospel of John where we give fuller information on Polycarp and his testimony to the fourth Gospel. He makes, in one of his writings, a direct reference to 1 John 4:3, in fact, he quotes this verse almost verbatim. It is, therefore, a testimony to the genuineness and the authorship of this Epistle. Irenaeus, the disciple of Polycarp, frequently quotes the Epistle of John and states that it is John's. Notable is the reference in his work against heresies as quoted by Eusebius. He cites John 20:31 and connects it with 1 John 2:18 and 4:1-3 and 1 John 5:1. After these two witnesses, Polycarp, who knew John, and Irenaeus, the disciple of Polycarp, every authority among the church fathers mentions this Epistle as being the work of John the Apostle.

It is not necessary to quote all these references--by Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, Jerome, and many others. We mention but one more of the ancient testimonies, that which is found in the Muratorian fragment. This old and very reliable source of the second century has in it the following paragraph: "What wonder is it, then, that John brings forward each detail with so much emphasis, even in this Epistle, saying of himself, 'What we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things have we written to you. For so he professes that he was not only an eye-witness, but a hearer, and, moreover, a historian of all the wonderful works of the Lord in order.

In harmony with this evidence is the testimony of the oldest fourth century Greek manuscripts, which give the title of the Epistle as "Joannou-A"--that is--"John 1." Its rejection by the gnostic Marcion is of no importance, for he excluded from the Scriptures all the writings of the Apostle because they deal a death-blow to his anti-Christian inventions. Lucke, one of the great scholars of bygone days, states that the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John are the genuine works of the apostle, and he adds, "Incontestably, then, our Epistle must be numbered among those canonical books which are most strongly upheld by ecclesiastical tradition."

It is, therefore, not necessary in face of such internal and external evidences to state the objections of destructive critics like Scaliger, S.G. Lange, Bretschneider and the Tubingen school. As it is with other portions of Scripture they have no case at all in attacking the authorship of this Epistle.

When And Where It Was Written

The Epistle itself gives no definite answer to these questions. Some have attempted to fix the date as being before the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. They base their assumption on chapter 2:18 and claim that "the last time" means the closing days for Jerusalem, which is incorrect. The term, "the last time," has in this Epistle the same meaning as in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 3:1, and therefore does not mean the last days before the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. But it is clear that John wrote the fourth Gospel record first and his Epistle was written after the Gospel, so that the Epistle was written possibly about the year 90, preceding the Revelation, which was written about the year 96.

Irenaeus states that the Gospel was written by John in Ephesus; an ancient tradition states that the Epistle was written from the same place.

To Whom Was It Written

The fact that this Epistle starts, unlike the other Epistles, without any address, introductory greeting or closing salutation, has led some to call it a treatise and not an Epistle. But the personal address and appeal, the style throughout fully sustains the epistolary character. Others, again, have termed the Epistle a second part of the Gospel (Michaelis), while others speak of it as an introduction to the Gospel. That the Epistle is closely related to the Gospel is very true, but that does not necessitate a closer external relationship.

Dr. Bullinger, in the Companion Bible, suggests that this Epistle also was originally addressed to believing Hebrews in the dispersion. This view was held by others before him (Benson and others); but there is nothing whatever in the Epistle to warrant such a conclusion. On account of a remark by Augustinus on 1 John 3:2 that John wrote "to the Parthians many commentators have adopted this view, which is, however, without any foundation whatever. The Epistle was evidently not addressed to any one church but to believers in a number of assemblies. John was acquainted with these believers, who seemed to have been mostly Gentile converts. (See Chapter 5:21). If the tradition is true that the Epistle was written in Ephesus, it is not improbable that it was sent to the seven churches in the province of Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, the churches to whom the Lord sent the messages a few years later when John was in Patmos.

The Purpose of the Epistle

The purpose of the Epistle is stated by the writer in two places; "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full" (1:4). "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (5:13). According to the Gospel of John (chapter 20:31), this also is the purpose of the Gospel. He writes to those who believe on the Son of God and who have that eternal life which was manifested in the Lord Jesus, and which is imparted to all who believe on the Son of God and which establishes fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Epistle has been rightly called a family letter, that is, believers are viewed as the family of God, hence the repeated use of the word *teknia*, children. The Gospel of John was written on account of the false teachings concerning the Person of Christ, which began in the second half of the first century. (See Introduction to John's Gospel.)

The Epistle of John is very outspoken against those errors touching the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrificial work. They flourished later under the name of Gnosticism, Docetism, Montanism and others. Marcion, a Gnostic leader, when Polycarp, the disciple of John met him, was addressed by Polycarp with these words, "I know thee, thou firstborn of Satan." While these evil doctrines and denials were not yet fully developed in John's day, they existed and increased, hence the warnings in chapter 2:18-25 and 4:1-6. What antichristianity is will be learned from these passages. All the evil systems of today, which are sweeping with increasing force through Christendom towards their divinely appointed and revealed doom are exposed in this Epistle in their true character. Christian Science, falsely so called; the liberal theology, which denies that Christ is the virgin-born Son of God, the modern religion, the destructive criticism and other systems and cults are all branded by John as antichrists. These many antichrists are finally to be merged into a personal antichrist, the man of sin. Our annotations will enlarge upon all this.

The Message of the Epistle

The Epistle has a deep spiritual message for the children of God. As already stated, the Epistle, like the Gospel of John,

witnesses to Christ as the Son of God and the eternal life which He is Himself and which He imparts to the believer. Thus the Epistle opens, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (And the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The great truth which is developed by the Holy Spirit is not so much the life which the believer has in Christ, that is, the eternal life imparted unto him, but it is that life which is in the believer, and the manifestation of that life, a manifestation of the same characteristics as manifested by the Lord Jesus Christ in His blessed life. As born of God, believers have God as their Father, they are children of God. God is light and God is love and, therefore, those who are born of God, in whom there is eternal life, must also manifest light and love, walk in righteousness and in love. This is the message of the First Epistle of John. All the blessed things which cluster around it we shall discover in our analysis and annotations.

The Division of The First Epistle of John

The divisions of the First Epistle of John have always been considered a difficulty, so that leading expositors of the past have expressed the belief that there is no contextual connection at all in the Epistle. Calvin shares this belief as well as others. Bengel in his great work "The Gnomen" maintained that there is a logical and contextual arrangement. He divided the Epistle in three parts, naming them in Latin as follows:

I. Exordium--Introduction 1:1-4.

II. Tractatio--Treatment and discussion 1:5-5:12

III. Conclusio--Conclusion 5:13-21.

The Numerical Bible gives also a three-fold division.

I. God as Light and in the light and the light in us: 1-2:11.

II. Growth by the truth, which is nothing else but the light manifested: 2:12-27.

III. The manifestation of the children of God by the fruit found: 2:28-5.

This is a helpful arrangement. The Scofield Bible gives two main divisions. I. The Family with the Father: 1-3:24. II. The Family and the world: 4-5.

We divide the Epistle into six sections as follows:

I. THE LIFE MANIFESTED (1:1-4)

II. LIGHT AND DARKNESS AND THE TESTS (1:5-2:17)

III. ERROR AND TRUTH (2:18-27)

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE AS MANIFESTED BY THE CHILDREN OF GOD (2:28-3:18)

V. HEREBY WE KNOW (3:19-5:13)

VI. THE CONCLUSION (5:14-21)

I. THE LIFE MANIFESTED

CHAPTER 1:1-4

The opening verses of this Epistle are very precious and are the key to the whole Epistle. Three Scriptures speak of what was in the beginning. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). This is the beginning of all things which God called into existence out of nothing. "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This takes us beyond the first verse of the Bible. It reveals Him, by whom and for whom God created all things, in His eternal existence with God and as God.

The third Scripture is the first verse of John's Epistle. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, the Word of life." This is a different beginning from the beginning in Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1; it means the manifestation of the Son of God in incarnation among men. He, who is the true God and the eternal life, the life and light, was manifested as man here below. This truth is stated by John in his Gospel in the fourteenth verse of the first chapter: "And the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." To this John refers in the first statement of his Epistle. John and his fellow-disciples had walked with Him and talked with Him.

It must be noted that the apostle speaks of Him as "the Word of Life"; he does not say therefore "who was from the beginning" but, which was from the beginning. First he mentions what they had heard; but one may hear a person and not be near to that person. But they were closer to the Word of Life, he writes, "which we have seen with our eyes"; yet one may have seen a person without being close to that person; but they had more than a passing vision "which we have contemplated" which is more than a mere seeing, it denotes gazing with a purpose, with a desire and with admiration. A statement of still greater nearness follows, "our hands have handled"--John and the other disciples had known Him, the Word of Life, intimately.

"And the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and hath been manifested unto us." He whom they heard, with whom they were in touch, whom they knew and gazed upon is the eternal Life which was with the Father. It is more than that He spoke of eternal Life and promised eternal Life; He Himself is eternal Life. He was with the Father and came into the world, to manifest what that life is. While He manifested the Father, as He witnessed "whosoever seeth Me seeth the Father," He also displayed as man what eternal life is in His blessed and perfect life He lived on earth. And this eternal life is communicated to all who believe on the Son of God. This life which was with the Father, manifested in the Lord Jesus on earth, is the life which is in us. ("The life has been manifested. Therefore we have no longer to seek for it, to grope after it in the darkness, to explore at random the indefinite, or the obscurity of our own hearts, in order to find it, to labor fruitlessly under the law, in order to obtain it. We behold it: it is revealed, it is here, in Jesus Christ. He who possesses Christ possesses that life.") To know then what life we possess as believers, we must not look in ourselves, or to other believers, but to Christ and the life He manifested on earth. As another has said, "When I turn my eyes to Jesus, when I contemplate all His obedience, His purity, His grace, His tenderness, His patience, His devotedness, His holiness, His love, His entire freedom from all self seeking, I can say, that is my life. It may be that it is obscured in me; but it is none the less true, that it is my life."

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

What they had seen and heard they have declared unto others, to those who also believe on Him, so that they too might share in the same fellowship, the fellowship of the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The life which believers possess, the eternal life given through grace, the life He manifested on earth and which is in us, fits us for fellowship with both the Father and the Son. What such a fellowship demands and the tests of it are developed subsequently. To have such fellowship, bestowed through grace, is the blessed calling of all the saints of God. Such fellowship is eternal life and there is nothing beyond that in heaven itself, while we enjoy it here the fullness of it will be enjoyed in glory. But what is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? It is but little understood in its real meaning. Fellowship means

having things in common. The Father's delight is in Him who pleased Him so perfectly. For the Father, His blessed Son is the One altogether lovely.

Believers knowing the Son also find their delight in Him; He is for our hearts the One altogether lovely. As we then delight ourselves in Him, in His obedience, in what He is in love and devotion to the Father, we share the same feelings and thoughts with the Father, which is fellowship with the Father. Whenever the believer praises and thanks the Father for His Son, tells the Father of his deep appreciation of Him, how he loves Him, longs to be more like Him, walk even as He walked, then he is in fellowship with the Father. And the Son has given to us the knowledge of the Father. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27). It is the Gospel of John where the blessed words of the Son concerning the Father are recorded. He manifested unto His own the name of the Father.

In the five chapters in the Gospel of John, beginning with the feet-washing and ending with the great intercessory prayer of our Lord (13-17) the word "Father" occurs fifty times. It is in this part of the Gospel the Son makes known the Father. Through the Son we have the knowledge of the Father and the knowledge of the Father's love. His delight was to glorify the Father in a life of devotion and obedience. And as the believer delights Himself in the Father, honors Him and yields obedience to Him, he has fellowship with the Son, has the same thing in common with the Son. Fellowship with the Father and with the Son is therefore not a feeling or some extraordinary experience.

"All this flows, whether in the one or the other point of view, from the Person of the Son. Herein our joy is full. What can we have more than the Father and the Son? What more perfect happiness than community of thoughts, feelings, joys and communion with the Father and the Son, deriving all our joy from themselves? And if it seem difficult to believe, let us remember that, in truth, it cannot be otherwise; for, in the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost is the source of my thoughts, feelings, communion, and He cannot give thoughts different from those of the Father and the Son. They must be in their nature the same. To say that they are adoring thoughts is in the very nature of things, and only makes them more precious. To say that they are feeble and often hindered, while the Father and the Son are divine and perfect, is, if true, to say the Father and the Son are God, are divine, and we feeble creatures. That surely none will deny. But if the blessed Spirit be the source, they must be the same as to nature and fact.

This is our Christian position then, here below in time, through the knowledge of the Son of God; as the apostle says, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (John N. Darby).

II. LIGHT AND DARKNESS AND THE TESTS

CHAPTERS 1:5-2:17

1. God is light; walking in darkness and in light (1:5-7)
2. What the light manifests (1:8-10)
3. The advocacy of Christ to maintain the fellowship (2:1-2)
4. The tests of fellowship (2:3-17)

Chapter 1:5-7 The message they had heard of Him and which they declared to others is, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Light, perfect, pure light is God's nature; He is absolutely holy, with no darkness in Him at all. That God is light was manifested in the life of the Lord Jesus, for He was and is holy. Fellowship with the Father and the Son means, therefore, to have fellowship with light, and that excludes a walk in darkness. "if we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth." If one professes to have fellowship with God and walks in darkness, he lies, for darkness can have no fellowship with light. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

But what is this walk in the light? It is not the same thing as walking according to the light. It does not mean to live a

perfect and sinless life. Walking in the light is not the question of how we wait but where we walk, and the place where the believer walks is the light. It means to walk daily in His presence, with our will and conscience in the light and presence of God, judging everything that does not answer to that light. Whatever is not right is brought at once in His presence, exposed to the light, confessed, judged and put away. Such is the walk in the light which fellowship with God demands. The result of such a walk in the light is mutual fellowship among believers, because each has the same nature of God and the same Spirit, the same Christ as the object before the heart and the same Father. It cannot be otherwise. Then there is another thing stated, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Walking in the light shows us what we are and we cannot say that we have no sin. But we have no consciousness of sin resting upon us before a holy God, though we know that sin is in us, but we have the assurance of being cleansed from it by His precious blood. Such is the blessed position of a true Christian. Fellowship with the Father and with His Son, walking in the light as He is in the light, fellowship one with another and the cleansing power of the blood.

Verses 8-10. The light makes known that sin is in us. If the believer, the child of God, says that he has no sin, the light contradicts him. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. The denial of sin within is a delusion. This evil teaching that the old Adamic nature is eradicated in the believer is widespread in our day among Holiness, Pentecostal and other sects. True spirituality is to confess daily, walking in the light, that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. And if sin is committed it needs confession. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The light also manifests another evil, the claim of a sinless perfection. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us. Some have applied this verse to the unsaved; it has nothing to do with the sinner, but relates to a true believer, who in presumption makes the claim that he lives without sinning. And the reason why children of God make such unscriptural claims is inattention to His Word, for the Word makes manifest what sin is, and the Apostle says "If we say that we have not sinned ... His word is not in us."

Chapter 2:1-2. For the first time John uses the endearing term "my little children", meaning the born ones of God, who are born into the family of God by having believed on the Son of God. One might conclude, inasmuch as belief in the eradication of the old nature and sinless perfection is a delusion, that the child of God must sin. But, while sin is within, and a sinless perfection is beyond our reach, it does not mean that the believer should continue in sin. He had written these things that they might not sin. But if any man sin a gracious provision has been made. Let it be noticed that the application, as it is often done, to the sinner who is outside, who knows not Christ at all, is totally wrong. It means the little children, the members of the family of God. If any true child of God sins we have an advocate with the Father (not God, it is the matter of the family), Jesus Christ the righteous. The advocacy of Christ restores the sinning believer to the communion with the Father and the Son which sin interrupted. He does not wait till we come repenting and confessing, but in the very moment we have sinned He exercises His blessed office as our Advocate with the Father and His intercession produces in us repentance, confession, and self-judgment. Thus we are maintained by Himself in the fellowship into which the grace of God has called and brought us.

When the believer sins it does not mean that he has lost his salvation. Many a child of God has been harassed through ignorance, and imagined that he committed the unpardonable sin. The sin of a believer does not make him unsaved or lost, but it makes fellowship with the Father and the Son impossible till the sin is judged and confessed. This is accomplished by His advocacy.

"The Lord Jesus as much lives to take up the failure of His own, as He died to put away their sins by His blood. This, too, is founded on propitiation; but there is besides the blessed fact that He is the righteousness of the believer in the presence of God. His one expiatory sacrifice avails in abiding value; His place is before God as our righteousness; and there for the failing He carries on His living active advocacy with the Father."

Verses 3-17. John now writes of the characteristics of the life which the believer has received, the eternal life and applies certain tests. The profession of a Christian is that He knows God. But how do we know that we know Him? The answer is, "If we keep His commandments." This is not legality in the least which puts the believer back under the law. John knows nothing of that. Obedience is the leading trait of the imparted life. It is set on doing the will of God. Christ walked on earth in obedience; His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him. Inasmuch as His life is in us as believers, it must manifest itself in obedience to the will of God. It is the same which we find in 1 Peter 1:2, sanctified, or set apart,

unto the obedience of Jesus Christ. It is not a sinless obedience as it was in Him; while the believer has his heart set on obeying the Lord and doing His will, he often fails and stumbles, but he continues to aim at doing the will of God, for that is the nature of the new life. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him."

One who professes to know God and does not manifest obedience is no Christian at all, but he is a liar, and the truth in the knowledge of the Lord is lacking in such a one. He is a mere professing Christian, one who has the outward form of godliness but does not know the power of it, because he has not the life in him, which is His life and in which he delights to obey. The first great test of the reality of the divine life in the believer is obedience.

Then follows a second test: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." In His prayer our Lord told the Father, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world"; and again, "As Thou has sent me into the world so have I sent them into the world" (John 17:16, 18). Believers are not of the world as He is not of the world, because they are born again and have His life in them. They are in Him, abiding in Him, and therefore they must walk as He walked, which does not mean to be what He was, for He was without sin, but it is a walk after His own pattern, the reproduction of His character and life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the next two verses we read of the old commandment and of the new commandment (verses 7 and 8). The old commandment is explained, as the word which they had heard from the beginning, that is, the same beginning as mentioned in chapter 1:1, the manifestation of Christ on earth. But what is the commandment of which he speaks next? It is something new now, for the life which was in Him on earth is in believers now. Therefore, it is true in Him and in us because the darkness is passing away and the true light already shineth. Christ is life and light and as His life is in us we share it in Him; this is that which is new. It was true of Him first, and now it is true of us, too.

This is followed by another test. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now." The life must manifest itself in love. Light and love go together; both are manifested in Christ, He was light and love. If He is, therefore, in the believer, and he possesses that life, and professes to be in the light, and with such a profession hateth his brother, he shows thereby that he is in the darkness until now. Love cannot be separated from that life and light which was in Him and which is in us as believers. He that abideth in the light loveth his brother and because he does there is no occasion of stumbling in him. In him who loves there is neither darkness nor occasion of stumbling; in him who does not love there is both darkness and stumbling. He who hates his brother is a stumbling block to himself and stumbles against everything. Not loving the brethren and manifesting hatred against them is the sure sign of being in darkness and walking in darkness. Such are the tests of Christian profession; light and love, obedience and loving the brethren; where there is no life from God there is absence of love for the brethren and a walk in darkness and not in the light. It seems that many in John's day were in that deplorable condition, while today such is almost universally the case.

Verses 12-17 contain a message to those who are in the light, who possess that life and in whom it is manifested in obedience and in love. He addresses the fathers and the young men. Before he does this he mentions that which all believers, even the most feeble, possess. "I write unto you little children (the term of endearment which means the whole family of God) because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." This is blessedly true of every child of God, Each has "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." It is the thing which is settled for time and eternity for all those who are in Christ.

Then different grades are mentioned: fathers, young men and little children. The meaning is in the spiritual sense, fathers in Christ, young men in Christ and babes in Christ. The word "children" used in verses 13 and 18 is a different word from the one used in verse 12. In this chapter in verses 1, 12 and 28 the little children are all the family of God, but in verses 13 and 15 it means young converts.

The maturity of the fathers consists in knowing Him that was from the beginning, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual progress and maturity is a deep knowledge and appreciation of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrates what real Christian maturity is. He had but one desire to know Him; not I but Christ; Christ is all. The Fathers have Christ for their fullest portion and walking in Him have learned the depths of His grace and the glory of His person. They are occupied not with their experience but with Himself. It has been well said, "All true experience ends with forgetting self and thinking of Christ." To know Him, to know Him still better, to be entirely dependent on Him, to have none other but Him, never

losing sight of Him-- that is the highest attainment of a Christian.

He speaks next of the young men, who have advanced in their Christian life. They had gone forward in undaunted faith and courage and overcame the difficulties; they overcame by faith the wicked one. The strength of the new life, that is, Christ, was manifested in them in conflict. The "babes," comes next, the young converts, who have not much experience in conflict. To them he writes, "Ye have known the Father." Every newborn babe in Christ cries, enabled by the Spirit of adoption, "Abba, Father." To know God as Father is the blessed birthright of every newborn soul.

Once more he writes the same to the fathers. He can add nothing to it for the highest attainment is to know Him, as the fathers know Him. But he has more to say to the young men. He tells them that they are strong, because the Word of God was abiding in them, which is the source of power and strength of every believer and because the Word of God abided in them they overcame the wicked one. Then follows the exhortation and warning not to love the world, the world of which John speaks later, which lieth in the wicked one."

This world-system in every aspect, whether we call it the social world, the political world, the commercial world, the scientific world, the religious world--all is not of the Father. All its glory is not of the Father. The love of the world is, therefore, inconsistent with the love of the Father. The controlling principles in it are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. May we remember once more that our Lord speaks concerning His own, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Grace has taken us out of this old world, with its corruption which is there by lust and has put us into another world, so to speak, in which Christ is the center and the attraction. That new sphere is our place. The only way to escape this world with its beguiling influences is by separation from it. And that separation becomes real when we know Him, as the fathers know him, and find our joy and our satisfaction in Christ. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." But if this exhortation was needed in John's day, how much more is it needed in our days, when, as never before, the god of this age blinds the eyes of them that believe not, when this world system, in its godless and seductive character, develops a power and attraction unknown before, and when on all sides professing Christians are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

III. TRUTH AND ERROR

CHAPTER 2:18-27

This section contains a warning which is addressed to the babes, the little children, young believers. Truth and error, are contrasted. Seducers were trying to lead them astray, for we read in verse 26: "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." He reminds them that it is "the last time," a striking expression, for since it was written centuries have come and gone, and what was true then is true now, that it is the last time; only the Lord is still patiently waiting, not willing that any should perish. Christ was manifested, the truth revealed in Him and the world rejected Him and His truth. Satan became the god of this age, with the mystery of iniquity working in it from the very beginning. Antichristianity is not a new thing of our times; it was here from the very beginning. John writes, "Even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know it is the last time." And the last time has its "last days" which are now upon us.

Antichristianity is increasing on all sides till the Antichrist, the man of sin, will be revealed (2 Thess. 2). An antichrist is not a vicious lawbreaker, an out and out immoral man. An antichrist is one who rejects Christ, who does not allow His claims; who denies that Jesus is the Son of God. It is of great significance that John speaks of the antichrists in his day as having gone out from among the professing body of Christians (verse 19). They were not true believers but only professed belief, they had left the flock and gone into apostasy, "that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

In verses 22 and 23 we have a picture of the antichrists of John's day and a prophecy of antichristianity down to the end of the age when the great opposer will appear in a person, the personal antichrist. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father. He who confesseth the Son hath the Father also." Antichristianity is the denial that Jesus is the Christ. It includes every denial of the person of the Lord Jesus, the denial that He is the Son of God come into the flesh, His virgin birth and that He was sent by the Father. Such denials were prominent in John's lifetime. Gnosticism was troubling the Church. They denied the Messiahship, and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other systems were present in embryo, known later by the name of Arianism, etc. Denying the Son they denied the Father also.

These are important statements for our own days, the last days of the present age. What began in the days when the Holy Spirit penned this Epistle is now full-grown in the world. It is all about us in various forms throughout the professing church, only with this difference, the apostates in the beginning were more honest than the apostates in our times. They were in the professing church and when they began their denials they went out, separated themselves from the true Church.

The apostates of today remain in the professing church and maintain outwardly a Christian profession, so that it becomes the solemn duty of true believers to separate themselves from these enemies of the cross of Christ. They deny both the Jewish hope, which centers in the promises of the Messiah, and the Christian hope, which is the Father and the Son. They reject the truths of the Old and the New Testament. They speak of the God of Abraham, who promised the seed to come from Abraham, as a tribal god. They make common cause with the Jewish apostates in denying that there are predictions concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament.

We give but one illustration of this fact. Jews deny that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a Messianic prophecy; the servant of Jehovah is explained to mean the nation Israel and not the Christ of God. This infidel view is held today by many preachers and teachers in various evangelical denominations, in spite of the fact that the New Testament tells us that it is Christ of whom Isaiah spoke. Rejecting Isaiah 7:14, the prophecy concerning the virgin birth, they reject the virgin birth itself, and brazenly utter the greatest blasphemy which human lips can utter, that Christ was born like any other man. They speak of Him as a great leader and teacher, as having divinity in Himself, in a degree higher than found in the rest of the race. His absolute deity is not believed; that He is the propitiation for sins is sneered at, that He will ever appear again in His glorified humanity in a second visible and glorious manifestation is ridiculed.

Thus antichristianity is present with us in the camp of Christendom in such a marked and universal way as unknown before. With denying Christ they deny the Father. All that we have seen in this Epistle concerning Him, the true God and the eternal life, fellowship with the Father and with His Son, walking in the light, the advocacy of Christ and loving the brethren, is denied by them. They speak of "love"; they speak of toleration and the "Christ- spirit." But those who are the brethren, who contend for the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints, who believe on the Son of God, in His sacrificial work on the cross, are denounced by them, belittled and branded as fanatics. And the end is not yet. Let them continue in their evil ways under the guidance of the lying spirit of darkness and they may yet stoop to actual persecution of those who constitute the body of Christ. The conditions in Christendom today are the most solemn the true Church of Jesus Christ has faced. The heading up in "the Antichrist" cannot be far distant. As John writes these Christ-deniers, these blasphemers, who make the Holy Son of God the offspring of--we dare not finish the sentence! --may speak of "the Father," but they have not the Father, because only those who confess the Son of God, Christ come in the flesh, have the Father.

John writes all this to the babes, young believers, warning them against the lie. He useth the word "liar," for such the apostates are. In using this word repeatedly, he reveals his character as "Boanerges"--the son of thunder. Then he tells these babes how they may be guarded and kept. He reminds them that they have the anointing of the Holy One, that is, the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts and with Him they have the capacity to know and judge all these things. If they follow His guidance in and through the Word they would be kept in the truth and guarded from accepting the lie.

Let us again remember it is not the fathers, or the young men John addresses, but the babes. Here is a strong argument against the teaching so widespread among true believers, that the Holy Spirit is not given to a believer in regeneration, but that the gift of the Spirit must be sought in a definite experience after conversion. This is a serious error which opens the door to the most subtle delusions as found in certain Holiness sects and Pentecostalism. Verse 24 gives another instruction and exhortation. It is the truth concerning Christ, which they had heard from the beginning, which abiding in them will keep them. And besides "the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." The teachers in this instance who tried to seduce them (verse 26) were not gifts of Christ to His body, but false teachers, who came with a lying message. They did not need these teachers; the Holy Spirit was their teacher and infallible guide, but never apart from the written Word. All false teaching they were to repulse and fall back upon Him who guides in all truth. They were safe against all error as they abided in that.

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE AS MANIFESTED BY THE CHILDREN OF GOD

CHAPTERS 2:28-3:18

1. The children of God and their coming manifestation (2:28-3:3)
2. Sin and the new nature (3:4-9)
3. Righteousness and love (3:10-18)

Chapters 2:28-3:3. The address to the babes in Christ ended with the 27th verse, and now once more he speaks of the teknia, the little children, by which all believers are meant. The exhortation has been much misunderstood. It does not mean that by abiding in Him the believer may have confidence at His appearing. John speaks of himself and other servants of Christ, who minister the gospel and the truth of God. He urges the little children to abide in Him, "that when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." He wants them to walk carefully, to be faithful in all things, so that John and the other servants may not be left ashamed in that coming day. It is the same truth which Paul mentions in 1 Thess. 2:19-20.

Verse 29 mentions the test of righteousness. It is an acid test. "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." But the purpose of it is not to question the reality of their salvation as born again, to make them doubt, but the test is given so that they might be enabled to reject a spurious profession. Before he proceeds with the truth expressed in this verse, he mentions the fact that as born of God they are the children of God and what they shall be.

In verses 1 and 2 the word "sons of God" must be changed to "children of God." John never speaks of "sons of God" in his message. It is in the writings of Paul the Holy Spirit speaks of believers as "sons and heirs." But John unfolds the truth that believers are in the family of God by the new birth, hence the use of the word "children" to denote the community of nature as born of God. As children of God we are partakers of the divine nature. It is the love of the Father which has bestowed this upon all who believe. And most emphatically the Spirit of God assures us through the pen of John, "Now we are the children of God." There can be no doubt about it, it is our present and known position, because having believed on Him we are born again and are in possession of eternal life.

That which we shall be has not yet been manifested, but while it is not yet manifested we, nevertheless, know what we shall be. But how do we know? We know it because the Holy Spirit has revealed it in the Word of God. "But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." This is our blessed assurance! To this God has called us; it is "the hope of His calling" (Ephesians 1:18). It is that to which we are predestined, to see Him as He is and then infinitely more than that "to be like Him." We see Him now by faith in His Word and are changed into the same image from glory to glory; when we shall see Him in that soon coming day, when He comes for His saints, we shall see Him bodily and then our bodies will be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Of all this the world knows nothing. It knew Him not, knew not His life, nor His glory; it does not know the life which is in the children of God and what glory awaits them. And this hope is a purifying hope. We see that John speaks of the blessed hope as Peter and James, addressing Jewish believers, do not.

Verses 4-9. He makes a contrast between sin and the new nature and shows the marks of one who abides in Christ and one who hath not seen Him neither knows Him. "Every one that practiseth sin, practiseth lawlessness; for sin is lawlessness, this is the correct rendering. The definition of sin as "transgression of the law" is misleading and incorrect. Before there ever was a law, sin was in the world (Romans 5:12, etc.); how then can sin be the transgression of the law? It is not sins of which John speaks, but sin, the evil nature of man. Here the apostle regards man as doing nothing else but his own, natural will; he lives as a natural man. He acts independently of God, and, as far as he is concerned, never does anything but his own will. John is, therefore, not speaking of positive overt acts, but of the natural man's habitual bent and character, his life and nature.

The sinner, then, sins, and in this merely shows in it his state and the moral root of his nature as a sinner, which is lawlessness. But the born one, the child of God, is in a different position. He knows that Christ was manifested to take away our sins and that in Him there was no sin. If one knows Him and abideth in Him, that one sinneth not. If the believer

sins it is because he has lost sight of Christ and does not act in the new life imparted unto him. Another object usurps the place of Christ, and then acting in self-will he is readily exposed to the wiles of the devil using his old nature and the world to lead him astray. If a man lives habitually in sin, according to his old nature, he hath not seen Him nor known Him. A child of God may sin but he is no longer living in sin; if a professing believer lives constantly in sin it is the evidence that he has not known Him at all. There were such who tried to deceive them. Their teaching was evidently a denial of holiness, that there was no need of righteousness. But the demand is for righteousness, while those who practise sin, live habitually in it, are of the devil. No true believer lives thus, for he knows the One whose life he possesses was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.

"Whosoever is begotten of God doth not practise sin, because his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." This verse has puzzled many Christians, but it is quite simple. Every creature lives according to its nature. The fish has the nature of a fish and lives its nature in the water; a bird has its own nature and lives it in the air, and not under the water as the fish. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man has a fallen nature, the nature of sin, and that nature can do nothing but sin. That is why He said, "Ye must be born again." In the new birth the divine nature is imparted. This nature is He Himself, Christ, the eternal life. Christ could not sin for He is God, and God cannot sin. The new nature believers possess cannot sin, for it is His nature. But why do new-born ones sin? Because the Christian has two natures, the old nature and the new nature. The old nature is not eradicated; a believer when he sins does so because he has given way to that old nature, has acted in the flesh. But the new nature followed will never lead to sin, for it is a holy nature, and for that nature it is impossible to sin. Some have suggested out of ignorance that the translation ought to be instead of cannot sin "ought not to sin," or "should not sin." The Greek text does not permit such a translation, anything different from "cannot sin" is an unscriptural paraphrase.

Verses 10-18. The test as to the children of God and the children of the devil follows in this section. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. The message from the beginning, that is the same beginning as in chapter 1:1--is that we should love one another. This was the commandment given by the Lord, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). There is natural affection in the world, even in the animal creation. The natural man also can make himself amiable and speak of love and toleration. In fact an amiable character, a loving disposition through self-improvement is urged and practised among the antichristian cults, such as New Thought, Christian Science and the Liberalists, the advocates of the new theology.

But the love of which John speaks is exclusively of God and unknown to the natural heart of man. Yet all these antichrists go to the Epistle of John and quote him to confirm their evil doctrine of "the brotherhood of man and the universal fatherhood of God." John does not speak of loving man as such, but loving the brethren, the other born ones in the family of God, and that is a divine love. It is the great test of the divine nature, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The world not only knows nothing of that divine love, but the world hates those who are born of God. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." This fact is illustrated by Cain. He was of the devil. He slew his brother because Cain's works were evil, he was an unbeliever, and his brother's were righteous, Abel believed and that was counted to him for righteousness. And so the world hates the brethren, the children of God on the same ground and for the same reason. Then again he tests profession: "He who loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." Hating the brother is the evidence that the professing Christian is in the state of death and linked with the murderer from the beginning.

The better rendering of verse 16 is, "Hereby we know love, because He laid down His life for us." Such love must be manifested in practical ways towards the brethren.

"But 'we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' Not because we love certain of the brethren, let us remember. We may love even the children of God for some other reason than as His children. We may love them, perhaps in gratitude to them for services that we may be receiving from them. Further than this, we may mistake for brotherly love that which is merely self-love in a subtler form. Men minister to our comfort, please us, and we think we love them; and in the true child of God there may be yet, after all, as to much that he counts love to the brethren, a similar mistake. A love to the children of God, as such, must find its objects wherever these children are, however little may be, so to speak, our gain from them; however, little they may fit to our tastes. The true love of the children of God must be far other than sociality, and cannot be sectarian. It is, as the Apostle says, 'without partiality, and without hypocrisy.' This does not, of course, deny that there may be differences that still obtain. He in whom God is most seen should naturally attract

the heart of one who knows God according to the apostle's reasoning here. It is God seen in men whom we recognize in the love borne to them; but, then, God is in all His own, as the apostle is everywhere arguing; and, therefore, there is nothing self contradictory in what has been just said." -- F.W. Grant.

V. HEREBY WE KNOW

CHAPTERS 3:19-5:13

1. Hereby we know that we are of the truth (3:19-24)
2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God (4:1-4)
3. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and of error (4:5-6)
4. The Love manifested toward us (4:7-19)
5. The final tests as to the possession of eternal life (4:20-5:13)

Verses 19-24. If the love of God dwells in the heart of the child of God it must be manifested in a practical way. Love must be expressed in deed and in truth, which is the fruit of true faith. If the believer does this he knows that he is of the truth. If it is lacking he is but an empty professing believer. But if we know that we are of the truth, by bearing such fruit of faith, we can assure our hearts before Him, and we can draw nigh with confidence. As our hearts do not condemn us, knowing that we are of the truth, we have confidence toward God and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. Where there is not a good conscience and the Holy Spirit is grieved real nearness to God and the effectual prayer which availeth much are impossible. It is the same blessed truth our Lord spoke in connection with the parable of the vine. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you (John 15:7).

But what is His commandment? Strange that some expositors have read into it the Ten Commandments. The context answers the question: "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And He that keepeth His commandment dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit He hath given to us."

Chapter 4:1-4. The last sentence of the preceding chapter gives the assurance that the believer has the Holy Spirit. There is no such thing as a true child of God without the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is the proof that He Himself dwells in us. But how do we know that it is the Spirit of God? How can a test be made? The sphere of the Spirit is the territory in which the spirit of error and darkness operates and where the liar from the beginning counterfeits. Many false prophets inspired by the spirit of darkness had gone out into the world and the apostle gives a warning not to believe every spirit but to try the spirits. The true test is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

But this means more than a mere confession with the lips, it means to own the person and lordship of Jesus Christ our Saviour. The demons know how to confess Him and yet they are demons (Matthew 8:29). The spirit of antichrist denies Him, does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This spirit which is not the Spirit of God manifests itself in the most subtle forms. It is called "true Christian charity" in our days to make common cause in what is called "social service" with those who do not confess Christ, who do not own Him as Saviour and Lord. These many antichrists speak of Him as man, they go so far as to call Christ a manifestation of God in human form, but they deny that He is very God come in the flesh.

As stated before the most prominent form of it is today the denial of His virgin birth. Anything which denies the full glory of the Lord Jesus Christ which in any way detracts from His glory, is the spirit of antichrist. About a hundred years ago a movement was in existence which claimed to be another Pentecost, just as there are movements today which claim the same unscriptural thing. The leader of that movement, Edward Irving, put great stress upon the incarnation, that Jesus

came in the flesh. But after a while the demons which stood behind the movement brought forth the horrible doctrine of the peccability of Christ, that He had a corrupt nature like any other man. Such is the subtlety of Satan, the old serpent. He always strikes at Christ and His glory.

"The false prophets are certainly no fewer in number at the present time than when the apostle spoke; yet, in general, we may say they assume less divine authority. We have sunk down so far into the wisdom of the world that man is credited with a place which God has lost. Inspiration is the inspiration of genius, rather than of God. We are more and more getting to lose the reality of the last, just as we are coming more and more to believe in the former. We believe in brilliancy, in eloquence, in intellect, in whatever you please in this way, but the assumption of speaking in any direct way by the Spirit of God no more exists, for the mass, except as one may say that the Spirit of God is as liberal as men are, and speaks in very diverse fashion--in poets, philosophers, and all the acknowledged leaders among men" (Numerical Bible).

Verses 5-6. The fifth verse has a good description of these antichrists and their following. These men, with their boasted learning and scholarship, their great swelling words, called eloquence, their natural amiability and cultured, courteous manners are of the world. They were never born again. If they had ever seen themselves lost and undone, and found in Christ their peace with God, they would yield complete obedience to Him and not deny His glory. When they speak they speak of the world. They speak of world conditions, and how they may be improved, of a better human society. Quite true they are even religious, but what they speak is not that which is of the Spirit, but what concerns the world system. The crowds want to hear that for it pleases the flesh, and thus the devil brings his audience to hear them. Such antichrists in cap and gown have multiplied by the thousands; they are found in the leading pulpits of all denominations.

The test as to the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error is stated in these words: "We are of God; He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and of error." The test is the apostle's doctrine. The Epistles are the full revelation of the doctrine of Christ, they contain the "many things" which the Lord spoke of when on earth, and which should be revealed when the Holy Spirit came. He has come and has made known the blessed things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, but which are now revealed by His Spirit, the Spirit of truth (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). The spirit of error denies these doctrines. In our day the enemy has invested a most subtle slogan, "Back to Christ." It sounds well but behind it stands the father of lies. These men who speak of going back to Christ charge our beloved brother Paul with having a theological system of his own, which they claim Christ, on earth, never taught. They reject the great redemption truths made known by the Lord through the apostle to the Gentiles. Their cry "Back to Christ" is the spirit of antichrist.

Verses 7-19. These blessed words are addressed to the beloved, true believers. The great center of this passage is "God is Love." Love is of God. But how do we know that God is Love? Such an antichristian system as "Christian Science" babbles about the love of God, but that which alone expresses the love of God, and by which it is known that God is love, they reject completely. The question, how do we know that God is love? is answered in verses 9 and 10. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Apart from this there is no knowledge of the love of God. He who is born again knows that love, for in believing it (John 3:16) he receives eternal life, and that love was perfect in Him when we had no love for Him--not that we loved God, but that He loved us. In His great love He has met every need.

This love, the nature of God, is in those who are born again, Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." Love therefore is the very essence of the new nature and must be manifested towards all who are the objects of the love of God and are in the family of God by having believed that love.

"His presence, Himself, dwelling in us rises in the excellency of His nature above all the barriers of circumstances, and attaches us to those who are His. It is God in the power of His nature which is the source of thought and feeling and diffuses itself among them in whom it is. One can understand this. How is it that I love strangers from another land, persons of different habits, whom I have never known, more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us, What

happiness! What a bond! Does He not communicate Himself to the soul? Does He not render it conscious of His presence in love? Assuredly, yes. And if He is thus in us, the blessed source of our thoughts, can there be fear, or distance, or uncertainty, with regarding to what He is? None at all. His love is perfect in us" (John N. Darby).

His love is perfected in us by loving one another. Once more he uses the phrase "Hereby we know." "Hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." "The Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the indwelling Spirit." He proceeds: "We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God, God dwelleth in Him and he in God." What wonderful words these are! Can there be anything greater and more wonderful than dwelling in God and God dwelling in us! And this is true of every believer. If we confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, if we rest in His finished work as well, knowing the Father sent Him to be the Saviour, and our Saviour therefore, then the Holy Spirit dwells in us and as a result God dwelleth in us and we in God. There can be no question about it for God says so.

The enjoyment of it is a different matter. If it is not real to us and if we do not enjoy it there is something which hinders it in ourselves. If a great king should pay us a visit in our home and dwell there and we do not recognize the fact of the honor and privilege bestowed upon us, and if we do not trouble about it and show our appreciation of it, we would have no enjoyment in such a visit. To have the reality of it and enjoy the wonderful truth that God dwells in us and we in Him we must practise what our Lord said in John 14:23, "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode in Him." We must dwell in love, the very nature of God, and that love is manifested towards Him and towards the brethren. Verses 12 and 16 make this clear. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

Another important fact is stated in the verses which follow: "Herein hath love been perfected with us, that we have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear has torment; and he that feareth is not perfected in love." It has nothing to do with our love, as some take it nor with seeking an experience of being "perfect in love." It is His love which casteth out fear, believing that love and dwelling in it. If we believe and know what God has made us in His infinite grace what Christ is, that as He is so are we, how can we fear anything! The coming day of judgment we await not only without any fear, but with boldness, for the day will only bring the full display of what Christ is and what we are in Him and with Him. The knowledge of His perfect love, the love which has reached down to us and lifted us so high, casteth out all fear.

("It is a blessed love that Christ came into the world for such sinners as we are. But then there is the day of judgment. When I think of the love, I am all happy; but when I think of the day of judgment, my conscience is not quite easy. Though the heart may have tasted the love, the conscience not being quite clear, when I think of judgment I am not quite happy. This is what is provided for here. 'As He is so are we in this world.' The love was shown in visiting us when we were sinners; it is enjoyed in communion: but it is completed in this, that I am in Christ, and that Christ must condemn Himself in the day of judgment, if He condemns me, because He is, so am I in the world, I am glorified before I get there. He changes this vile body and makes it like to His glorious body. When I am before the judgment seat, I am in this changed and glorified body; I am like my judge" Synopsis of the Bible.)

Verses 4:20-5:13. Once more brotherly love is applied as the test. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." God is in the believer, he is the object of God's love, if therefore the brother is not loved, but hated, it is an evidence that God does not dwell in such a heart and again the beloved disciple brands such an one as a liar.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." This is very logical. Then he gives a counter test to show that it is genuine. "By this we know, that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." If we love God and keep His commandments, we can rest assured that we love the children of God also. If the soul goes out to Him in love, and it is shown by unreserved fidelity to His will, then love for those begotten of Him, the other members of the family of God, will be the result. "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." It is a different thing from the law which is called elsewhere a yoke which no one was able to bear (Acts 15:10). Keeping His commandments means to be obedient to His Word, being subject unto Him in all things, for love to God is the spirit of obedience. But the children of God are in the world, though no longer of it. There are hindrances all about in the world which knew Him not and which know not the children of God. All in this world is opposition to God and hinders true

obedience. But that which is born of God overcometh the world. Our faith is the victory which overcometh the world. What faith is it? It is the faith which is occupied with the Son of God, which yields obedience to Him, does His will. Such a faith is the victory that overcomes the world and its attractions. This is stated in verse 5.

"And He, the Son of God, even Jesus Christ, came by water and blood-not by water only, but by water and blood." "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (verse 6). How beautiful is this passage and what divine perfection it reveals! Only John in his Gospel gives the account of the opened side of our adorable Saviour and that water and blood came forth out of the pierced side. "And he that saw it (John) bare record and his record is true and he knoweth that he saith true that ye might believe" (John 19:35). What the sinner needs is cleansing, a cleansing morally and a cleansing from guilt. The water is for cleansing, the blood telling of expiation cleanses from guilt. To make here of the water, baptism, and of the blood, the Lord's Supper, is as false as it is ridiculous. It is purification and propitiation as accomplished and provided for in the death of Christ for the believer. As a result the Holy Spirit is here on earth. Note the Apostle John does not put forward his own testimony here as given in the above passage, but the Holy Spirit Himself beareth witness to it. He is on earth for this purpose to bear witness to Christ and the work of Christ. How awful the rejection of that witness appears in the light of these words--that rejection which is so widespread and pronounced in antichristian modernism!

The seventh verse has no business in our Bibles. It must be stricken out. It is an interpolation and all the historical evidences are against it. The oldest manuscripts do not contain these words which we read in verse 7. Leaving out this inserted verse we notice the connection which exists between verse 6 and 8. "And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three are one." The Spirit is the abiding witness of accomplished redemption, and He dwells in the believer.

Verses 9-13 need no further detailed annotations. They are so plain and simple that only one wilfully blind can misunderstand them. God's witness is concerning His Son. The believer who believes on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, that is, by the indwelling Spirit, and by the salvation he possesses, the new nature, the eternal life. Any man who does not believe God's witness concerning His Son hath made Him a liar. Think of it, dear reader, the creature of the dust makes God, who cannot lie, a liar! This is the heinous sin of the great religious world. The record we have is, that God hath given to us eternal life, that this life is in His Son, that if we have the Son we have life, if we have not the Son we have not life. Verse 13 concludes the argument and teaching of the Epistle concerning eternal life.

VI. CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 5:14-21

The conclusion of this great Epistle mentions first the practical confidence which a believer may have, the outcome of that relationship and fellowship with the Father and His Son, which the doctrinal part so blessedly unfolds. We can come in prayer to Him with boldness and whatever we ask "according to His will He heareth us; and if we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him." As a loving Father He listens to the cry of His children and He answers if it is according to His will, and the child of God would not have it differently, and desire anything to be granted him which is contrary to the will of God. Our unanswered prayers we joyfully recognize as being not according to His will. It is not true faith when fanatics, like faith curists, say that God must do certain things. That is not faith but presumption.

But what is the sin unto death (verse 16)? God chastises the sinning believer often through sickness. And the chastisement may lead to the physical death of the child of God. Such was the case in Corinth (1 Corinth. 11:31). It is the same case as James 5:14, 15. If the sin is not unto physical death as a chastisement, we can pray for the brother and he will be restored. But there is a sin unto death. Ananias and Sapphira committed such a sin. No prayer in such a case does avail anything. God in His governmental dealings takes the offender away as to his life on earth. It does not affect the salvation of the soul, as those teach who think that one who has believed, has eternal life, and is a member of the family of God, can be lost again.

The conclusion of the Epistle consists in three statements that "we know": "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but He that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not." Sin is the touch of the

wicked one. If the believer guards himself, by living in the fellowship with the Father and the Son, walking in the Light, the wicked one cannot reach him; he lives according to his new nature and sinneth not. "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Hence God's children should be separated from the world. If a believer is not he moves on the very territory of the wicked one and the author of sin finds occasion to touch him and lead him to sin. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

The final exhortation is "Little children (teknia--all God's children), keep yourselves from idols. Amen." What is an idol? Anything and everything that draws the affection and devotion of heart and soul from the Lord Jesus Christ. May He, through the power of His Spirit, keep us all from idols. And we shall be kept if we give in our hearts and lives the preeminence to our Lord and walk in the light as He is in the light.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelin

Introduction

We treat these small documents [2nd and 3rd Epistles of John] together. No intelligent person can doubt that both Epistles were written by the same person. We do not need to investigate the objections and inventions of rationalists like Bretschneider, those of the so-called Tuebingen school and the modern critics, who deny the Johannine authorship and teach that the fictitious "John the Presbyter of Ephesus " wrote these two letters.

But all these modern conceptions are answered by the ancient authorities which ascribe both Epistles to the writer of the First Epistle, that is, the Apostle John. Irenaeus, who as a boy had listened to Polycarp, who knew John personally, bears witness to the genuineness of the Second Epistle, so does Clement of Alexandria , the Muratorian fragment, Dionysius of Alexandria , and others. Both Epistles seem to have been accepted from the very beginning as the inspired testimony of John.

The internal evidence is conclusive. Both Epistles are in tone, style and vocabulary like the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John. The great characteristic words of the other writings of John (the Gospel and John 1) "Love," "truth," "world," etc., are found in these two Epistles. They are, indeed, complementary to the First Epistle and give some of the truths contained in the First Epistle in a practical way. The warning contained in the Second Epistle concerning receiving one who does not bring the doctrine of Christ, that is, an antichrist, connects closely with the instructions of 1 John 4. There is no question but both Epistles are appendices to the First Epistle.

THE SECOND EPISTLE

The Second Epistle is addressed by the elder unto the elect lady and her children. The word elder has the same meaning as it has in 1 Peter 5. Some take it that the elect lady means an assembly, and her children the members of the assembly. But this is a very strained application.

The word "Kyria" (lady) excludes this meaning, besides other reasons which we do not follow here. She was a Christian woman of note generally known and beloved, having children, whom the apostle had found walking in the truth. She had also a sister with children, who seems to have been in the same place where the apostle was, probably in Ephesus . This is indicated by the last verse of the Epistle, "The children of thy elect sister greet thee." The keynote of this message to the elect lady, unknown by name, is the word "truth." The apostle lets them know that he loves them, as well as all other believers in the truth. That is the ground of real love; every child of God--man, woman or child--is best beloved for the sake of the truth, the blessed truth so abundantly poured forth in the First Epistle, the truth which is Christ Himself And that truth "dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever." Thus the truth Known binds together in closest fellowship all who know Him.

Then follows a blessed greeting, "Grace, mercy and peace shall be with you, from the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." The statement, "the Son of the Father" is unique; it is not found elsewhere in the New Testament and is in full keeping with the object of this little Epistle, for the denial of Christ coming in the flesh, and the warning against these deceivers, is the chief message of the Epistle. The great joy of the Apostle was that he found them walking in the truth, that the children of the elect lady walked according to the commandment received from the Father (1 John 3:24). Having the truth necessitates walking in the truth. One who claims to have the truth and does not walk in it, shows that he does not know the truth in his heart. But walking in the truth is the result of having and knowing the truth.

What we have stated before, that these two Epistles are appendices of the First Epistle, is seen by the fifth verse (1 John 3:23-24). It is the old and new commandment. It was old because it was manifested in Christ Himself; new because it is just as true in us as in Him. Divine love flows from love, and reproduces itself in all who know the truth, that is, who know Christ. And this is love that we walk after His commandments. It means obedience to Him, and what else is obedience but love in exercise?

But why does he write all this? With the seventh verse he gives the reason and it is a very solemn one, indeed. Well may we look to these words in our own days for they have a great meaning for the children of God living in these closing days, as they had a meaning in the beginning of the dispensation. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." This was true in the beginning of the age, and all through the present age the old serpent has made its many attempts to attack Christ and foster the lies concerning His person and glory, but never before has this been so evident as in our own days. The reason is that the age is about to end. Denying that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh was mentioned by John in his First Epistle (chapter 4). It includes all phases of evil doctrines concerning Christ, the Son of the Father. It is a denial of His essential deity, His true humanity, His Virgin birth, His infallibility, His holy character, His physical resurrection, and His bodily presence in glory.

We need not mention again how many such antichrists are about in these days. And John brands them in plain words as deceivers. No matter what names they have, what scholarship and honors they claim, what beautiful characters they have assumed as natural men, if they deny anything about Christ, they are deceivers. He calls, therefore, to look diligently whether some of this awful leaven is not affecting them. If in any way they were contaminated with it they, John and the fellow teachers, might lose the full reward. (See 1 John 2:28). Then follow the instructions in verses 9-11.

"Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." Even the smallest error about the person of Christ is a transgression of the doctrine of Christ and if followed will lead to a complete rejection of the truth, as it has been so often seen in cases of apostates. Such deniers have not God, while he who abideth in the doctrine of Christ hath both the Father and the Son. After this declaration comes a divine command which is just as binding as any other command in the Word of God. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not in your house, neither bid him Godspeak; for he that biddeth him Godspeak is partaker of his evil deeds."

This is strong language and yet not too strong when we remember what is at stake. Any one who brings not the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine as unfolded in the previous Epistle, concerning Christ the Son of God come in the flesh, dying for sinners and all that clusters around it, is an antichrist. Furthermore he makes God a liar and in denying the doctrine of Christ robs God of His glory and man of his salvation. And every man who denies the virgin birth, or teaches the peccability of Christ, or denies His physical resurrection is such a one. He must be shunned. Fellowship with him is an impossibility. He is not to be welcomed to any Christian home, nor is he to be given the common greeting. If met anywhere there is to be no acknowledgement whatever, not even a "Good Morning" or "Good Night." This is the meaning of the expression "Godspeak."

But is not this intolerant? Yes, the intolerance of divine love. If such deceivers are welcomed and fellowship is had with them even in the slightest degree, the believer puts his sanction on a denier of Christ. God will hold all responsible who fellowship any man, any set of men, any institution or anything else, which deny His Son and His glory. This is unpalatable to many. Nowadays it is called "Christian charity and broadmindedness" to mingle with Unitarians, critics, and baptized infidels of various descriptions. His honor and glory is in the background. Happy are we if we stand firm and refuse such fellowship practicing this divinely given injunction by the Apostle of love. God will be our rewarder.

"Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink, but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of the elect sister greet thee. Amen." Thus ends the Second Epistle.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelein

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Commentary on the Second Epistle

THE THIRD EPISTLE

The Third Epistle is addressed by the elder, the aged Apostle John, to a brother by name of Gaius. A Gaius is mentioned in Acts 19:29, 20:4, Romans 16:23 and 1 Corinthians 1:14. It is impossible to say whether this is the same. John calls him well-beloved, whom he loved in the truth. Thus he emphasizes the truth once more as he had done before. He wishes that he might prosper in his body, in health, as even his soul prospered. He had heard from the brethren who testified of the truth in him and that he walked in the truth. He rejoiced in this and declares "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." And this is not only the aged apostle's joy, but it is the joy of the Lord. How He must rejoice when His beloved children in whom He dwells walk in truth! Gaius had been very gracious and hospitable. Perhaps the brethren who gave such a good report to John were the recipients of Gaius's kindness. They had witnessed before the assembly how faithful he was in entertaining them, helping them on their journey in every way possible. He had done this not only with the brethren in his locality, but with brethren who were strangers, ministering servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, who went forth for His Name's sake, taking nothing of the Gentiles. In going forth in ministering the Word they depended on the Lord.

The evil of today, even among those who preach the truth, of demanding so much money for so much service was unknown in the Church. Nowhere do we read in the New Testament of a salaried" ministry. The evils of going to the world for support of the Lord's work, or using the methods of the world are widespread and detrimental to true faith and a true testimony to the truth. The work of the Lord and the servants of Christ are to be supported only by the Lord's people and not by the unsaved. Such, then, who go forth for His Name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles (those who are outside) are to be received and those who receive them, help them on their journey as Gaius did, are fellow helpers to the truth. They are going to share in that coming day in the fruit of their labors. This is the true fellowship in the truth, as Paul

expressed it in Galatians, "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things" (Galatians 6:6). It is in contrast from what the Second Epistle demanded--withdrawal from those who bring not the doctrine of Christ, a complete separation from them; but here it is identification with those who know the truth and teach the truth.

This is a bright picture presented in Gaius. Alas! there is another side in this Third Epistle. There was one by name of Diotrephes. His name means "Nourished of God." Of him John writes as follows: "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, received us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and casteth them out of the church." We let another speak on this. "We have another evil designated very clearly here. Diotrephes is the scriptural example of the clerical tribe, as contra-distinguished from the ministry of Christ. There is no service, because there is no love. He is the representative of the spirit which opposes the free action of the Holy Spirit, setting itself even against apostolic authority in order to gain or maintain his own individual preeminence.

"Self-importance, jealousy of those over us, impatience of others equally called to serve, scorn of the assembly, yet sometimes humoring the least worthy for its own ends--such are the characteristics of clericalism. I do not mean in clergymen only; for there are men of God incomparably better than their position tends to make them; as on the other hand this evil thing is nowhere so offensive as where the truth that is owned, wholly condemns it" (William Kelly). Diotrephes wanted to be the leader of the assembly, a kind of a pope in embryo. He loved the preeminence and this self-love and seeking to maintain his position led him to act so outrageously that he excommunicated the brethren and dared to rise up against the apostle himself. What harm such jealousies, self-seeking, self-glorification and ecclesiastical bossism have worked and are working in the body of Christ! and nowhere so much as in circles where the full truth is known and confessed. But why did Diotrephes love to have the preeminence? Because, unlike the apostle and the beloved Gaius, he did not give the Lord Jesus Christ the preeminence in all things; he did not walk in the truth. When the Lord comes, before His judgment-seat, all these things will be brought to light and dealt with by Him.

John does not leave us with the sad picture of Diotrephes. "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." It is another one of the tests as we found them in the First Epistle. Doing good is the active service of love. God does not do evil, but He does good, hence if we do good as believers in truth, we are of God. Then he mentions Demetrius. Perhaps he was one of the servants who went about doing good, preaching the truth, and whom Diotrephes would not receive. How blessed that the Holy Spirit through John's letter endorses and recommends him. "Demetrius hath good report of all, and of the truth itself; yea, and we also bear record, and ye know that our record is true. " Such is the comfort of all true servants who walk in the truth, that the Lord knoweth. "I have many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee. But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name." Both Epistles end, with a coming face to face meeting. Let us remember there is to be some blessed day a "face to face" meeting, when the saints of God will meet together for eternal fellowship, but above all when we shall be face to face with Him. How soon it may be! But while we wait for that meeting may we walk in the light and in the fullest enjoyment of our fellowship with the Father and with His Son, our blessed Lord. To Him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

The Epistle of Jude is the last Epistle preceding the great final book with which the Holy Scriptures conclude, the book of Revelation. We believe the place given to this Epistle is the right one, for as we shall see, it reveals the conditions, religiously and morally, which prevail on earth before the great coming event takes place, of which Revelation has so much to say. Some have called it "the preface to the Revelation."

The Author

We are not left in doubt who the writer is, for he mentions himself in the beginning of it. It is Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James. But who is this Jude or Judas? Among the disciples were two by the name of Judas. There was Judas Iscariot, who ended his miserable career, after he had become the instrument of the devil, by hanging. In John 14:22 we read, "Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The Spirit of God makes it plain that Judas Iscariot did not address Jesus by the name Lord, which expresses faith in His deity, but that there was another Judas in the apostolate who speaks here.

When we turn to the names of the twelve in Matthew 10:2-4, we find the name of Judas but once; it is the name of him who betrayed the Lord. The Judas whose words are recorded in the above passage in the Gospel of John, is called in Matthew 10:3 ... Lebbeaus whose surname was Thaddaeus." In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13, his name is given as Judas of James; it must be noticed that the words in the authorized version "the brother" are in italics, which means that they are supplied by the translators. It is not so in the first verse of this epistle; here the writer calls himself "brother of James."

But there is still another Judas found in the Gospels. His name is recorded in Matthew 13:55. "is not this the carpenter's son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?" The James, the brother of the Lord mentioned in this passage, is the author of the Epistle of James. (See introduction to the Epistle of James). The question then arises, is the writer of the Epistle before us, the Apostle Judas of James, also called Lebbeaus, surnamed Thaddaeus, or is it Judas, the one who is called one of the Lord's brethren, and therefore the natural brother of James, the writer of the Epistle of James? Some maintain that Jude is the Apostle Judas, while others see in Jude the brother of James, as given in Matthew 13-55. We endorse the latter view. We give the reasons why the writer of this Epistle cannot be the Apostle Judas.

1. He does not speak of himself as an apostle. He designates himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Whenever an apostle calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ, he adds his apostleship, as we learn from Romans 1:1, Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1. The only exception is the epistle to the Philippians, in which Paul associates with himself in the address Timothy, and then speaks of himself and Timothy as servants of Jesus Christ.
2. If he were the Apostle Judas, the brother of the Apostle James, the sons of Alphaeus, we have to face great difficulties, as Dean Alford states, involving the wholly unjustifiable hypothesis, that those who are called in Scripture the brethren of our Lord were not His brethren, but His cousins, sons of Alphaeus (Cleopas).

But why does the writer of this Epistle not speak of himself as "the brother of the Lord?" It has been asked. James does not do so in his Epistle either. He is silent about his relationship and so is his brother Jude. "The question, Why does not Jude mention his earthly relationship to the Lord? shows great ignorance of the true spirit of the writers of the New Testament. It would be the last thing I should expect, to find one of the brethren of the Lord asserting this relationship as a ground of

reception for an Epistle. Almost all agree that the writer of the Epistle of James was the person known as the brother of the Lord. Yet there we have no designation. It would have been in fact altogether inconsistent with the true spirit of Christ (Luke 20:27, 28), and in harmony with those later superstitious feelings with which the next and following generations regarded His earthly relatives. Had such a designation as "Adelphos tou Kyriou" (brother of the Lord) been found in the address of an Epistle, it would have formed a strong a priori objection to its authenticity" (Prolegomena).

Jude is therefore the one mentioned in Matthew 13:55. Apart from this Epistle we know nothing more of him. The date of the Epistle is about the year 65.

Its Authenticity

It is authenticated by different ancient sources. The Muratorian fragment mentions it as Jude's Epistle. Clement of Alexandria cites it as Scripture, as well as Tertullian and others. The theories of some objecting critics need not to be considered.

To whom the Epistle was originally addressed is not stated. Some have surmised that like James and the Petrine Epistles Jude addressed originally Jewish believers. This may be true, for Jude mentions, prominently, like Peter, Old Testament facts, besides some Jewish traditional matters, which thereby are confirmed as facts. Concerning the apocryphal writings, which especially the book of Enoch, which Jude is charged with having used in the composition of his Epistle, we shall have more to say in the annotations.

Jude and 2 Peter 2

As stated in the introduction to the Second Epistle of Peter, Jude's testimony is very much like the testimony of the Apostle Peter in the second chapter of his second Epistle. Hence there has been a long controversy whether Jude copied from Peter or Peter copied from Jude. We have stated before that if Jude had copied from Peter, his epistle could not be an inspired Epistle, and so if Peter copied from Jude. Jude may have known Peter's Epistle, but that does not mean that he used Peter's Epistle, but the Holy Spirit gives a similar testimony through Jude, which is, after a closer examination, somewhat different from Peter's epistle. This is pointed out in the annotations.

The Message of Jude

It seems about the time when Jude wrote his letter a departure from the faith set in among believers. This is confirmed by the fact that other epistles written about the same time give warnings of the same nature as those given by Jude. The message of Jude may be called a prophetic history of the apostasy of Christendom from its beginning in apostolic days down to the end of the age, when the complete apostasy will be dealt with and completely destroyed by the coming of the Lord. It is the darkest forecast of the end of the age which the Spirit of God has given in the Epistles. While apostasy and antichristianity have held sway all through the history of Christendom, there is coming in the end of this age a consummation, the evils of which are pictured by the Holy Spirit through the pen of Jude. We know that we are living right in the midst of the fulfillment of Jude's message. The Epistle is, therefore, of great importance for our times.

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE INTRODUCTION

Verses 1-2

Jude in his brief introduction speaks of the Christian believers, whom he addresses, as called ones, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ. The latter statement may also be translated "kept for Jesus Christ." What was true of the believers in Jude's day is true of all believers. Especially comforting is the fact, that, no matter how dark the days may be, however strong the current of evil, those who are "the beloved of God called saints" will be preserved in Jesus Christ and kept for Him as the members of His body, till He comes. He keeps His own. It is the blessed assurance that the believer's keeping rests in His own hands. In the Revelation we see in the glory vision that Christ holds seven stars in His

right hand, which is the symbol of the hand of His power with which He keeps His own. Then there is the prayer that "mercy, and peace, and love may be multiplied."

II. THE PURPOSE AND OCCASION OF THE EPISTLE

Verses 3-4. "Beloved, giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

It had evidently been upon the heart of Jude to write an epistle to the Christians whom he knew. He gave all diligence to carry out his intention. This must mean that he prayed and thought over this matter. He then decided to write about the common salvation. This is the gospel.

It is the nearest and the dearest object to every believer, for it is the matchless story of God's love. It reveals the Son of God, our Lord, who died for our sins, who was buried and rose again the third day. There are blessed depths and heights in this gospel, the salvation which believers have in common, which have never yet been measured. Jude thought to make this the theme of his epistle. Then something happened. The power which was to guide his pen constrained him to write about something else. The Holy Spirit constrained him to exhort Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints. Here is a very fine illustration at the close of the New Testament of how the Word of God was given. Jude had a desire to write about the common salvation; but the Holy Spirit wanted him to write about something else and He constrained him to do so, not in his own words but in words given by God.

What faith is meant? Not a creed or confession of faith as formulated by a denomination, sect or party, but the faith, which has been delivered once for all unto the saints. It is the same faith concerning which our Lord asked the question, "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) It is the faith revealed in the Word of God. The heart of that faith is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles' doctrine made known by the Holy Spirit; it is therefore the whole body of revealed truth. This faith is given by revelation, a different thing from what is being taught today, as if this faith were the product of a process of evolution through the religious experiences of the race for thousands of years. The truths which man needs cannot be found by searching. This faith is "once for all delivered unto the saints." It is permanent, irrevocable and like Him who has revealed it, unchanging. Nor is this faith delivered to the world, but to the saints, that is to the body of Christ, the Church.

That faith was being corrupted when Jude received the commission to exhort Christians to contend earnestly for it. They were ungodly men, having taken on the Christian profession without possessing the reality of it. The evil they introduced was twofold. They turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and they denied the rights of Christ to be Lord and Master. They professed to believe in grace, but abused it so that they might indulge in their own lusts; they knew nothing of the power of godliness manifested in holy living and therefore they denied the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. EXAMPLES FROM THE PAST

Verses 5-10. The Spirit of God reminds them of certain apostasies in past history and how God in judgment dealt with it. If we compare this section of Jude's Epistle with 2 Peter 2:4-8 we shall see how both documents differ from each other. Peter speaks first of the angels that sinned; then of Noah and the flood and finally of Sodom and Gomorrha and the deliverance of Lot. Jude on the other hand does not mention Noah at all, nor Lot. He speaks first of the Israelites who had come out of Egypt and were destroyed in the wilderness because they believed not. This is followed by the angels who kept not their first estate; then comes Sodom and Gomorrha and the judgment which fell upon these cities, and finally Jude adds something which is not found elsewhere in the Word of God, the incident about Michael contending with the devil about the body of Moses. It is far fetched with this different testimony which Jude gives to charge him with having copied Peter, or Peter having used Jude.

When we examine these examples of the past, we discover that they are not chronologically arranged. If they were reported according to the time when they happened, Jude, like Peter, should have mentioned first the angels that sinned; after which Sodom and Gomorrha would be in order, followed by the Israelites who fell in the wilderness and after that Michael contending with the devil. Why this unchronological arrangement in this Epistle? There must be a purpose in it. We believe the arrangement is made in the manner as it is to teach us the starting point and the goal of apostasy. It starts

with unbelief The people had been saved out of Egypt , but they believed not and were destroyed in the wilderness, except those mentioned in the Word who believed.

Thus all apostasy starts with unbelief in what God has spoken. The angels which kept not their first estate, who left their own habitation, and who are now chained, are the same angels of whom Peter speaks, those who brought in the corruption described in the opening verses of Genesis 6. They gave up the place assigned to them. This is the next step in the progress of apostasy. Unbelief leads to rebellion against God. Sodom and Gomorrha come next. Here we find the grossest immoralities and going after strange flesh. These vicious things are still in the world, and why are they so prominent in our days? On account of unbelief. Then follows the statement, that these apostates are filthy dreamers who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. This is lawlessness. This is the goal of all apostasy. The predicted lawlessness with which this age ends is the fruitage of infidelity. Such is the development of apostasy. Unbelief, rebellion against God and his revealed truth, immorality and anarchy. These steps may be traced in our own times.

To show that Michael, the archangel, would not rail against the fallen angel-prince, now the devil, as these apostates despise dominions, the incident concerning Michael contending against the devil about the body of Moses is introduced. He durst not bring a railing accusation against the former Lucifer, the son of the morning, for Michael still recognized in him the once great and glorious creature. It is stated by some of the early church fathers that this episode was recorded in a Jewish apocryphal book "Assumption of Moses." This book is no longer in existence. Another Jewish tradition has it that Michael had been given the custody of the grave of Moses.

Jude does not quote from tradition, nor does he quote from a source now no longer available, or, as others surmise, used one of Zechariah's visions (chapter 3), but the Holy Spirit revealed unto him what actually took place when Moses had died. It seems that Michael the archangel was commissioned by the Lord to conduct the funeral of Moses (Deut. 34:5-6). Then the devil appeared upon the scene claiming the body of the servant of the Lord, for what purpose is not revealed. (See annotations on Deuteronomy 25.) And Michael durst not bring against him a railing accusation but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But it is different with these apostates. They are compared with irrational animals, following their natural inclinations.

IV. A FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF THE APOSTATES

Verses 11-13. The Spirit of God pronounces a woe upon them. The eleventh verse is of much importance. At the close of the New Testament we are reminded of Cain, the first murderer of the human race. Some expositors claim that his name is introduced here because he is a representative of all bad men; others think that he is mentioned because these apostates hated those who are of the truth, as Cain hated Abel. The way of Cain was the way of unbelief. He did not believe what God had spoken, while Abel believed. He had not faith like Abel, who offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. Cain was a religious man nevertheless, but his religion may be termed a "bloodless religion." He brought the labor of his hands, that which he had gathered from the land upon which the curse rested.

The apostates go in the same way of self-will and in that way they reject the record of God concerning His Son. They have no use for the blood of redemption; the salvation they preach is the salvation of "Do," by character. They rush also greedily after the error of Balaam. Money is the chief object with them. They teach error for reward, knowing all along that their teaching is contrary to the revelation of God. Money, honor and glory from men, self exaltation and self gratification are the leading motives of these men. The third characteristic is the sin of Core (Korah). The sin of Korah was open rebellion and opposition against the authority of God and the priesthood He had instituted. These apostates of the last days manifest the same spirit of rebellion and defiance. They have no use for the Lord Jesus Christ as the appointed mediator, priest and advocate. The perdition of Korah will overtake them likewise.

Not Jude, but the Holy Spirit, denounces them in the strongest language. (See annotations 2 Peter 2.) They are doubly dead, first in their own fallen nature, and in the second place by turning their ears from the truth and going into apostasy. They are like trees which give the promise of fruit in an imposing bloom, but which withers away; they do not yield any fruit whatever. They are plucked up by the roots without any hope of a revival. They are like the wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame (Isaiah 62:20-21); wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. The wandering stars in the universe belonged once to some great solar system. They detached themselves and began their

wanderings. As they left their center they wandered further and further away, deeper and deeper into the immense space of cold and darkness. So these apostates left the center and became eccentric rushing, like these wandering stars of the heavens, into the outer darkness.

V. THE TESTIMONY OF ENOCH

Verses 14-16

The Holy Spirit introduces quite abruptly Enoch, the seventh from Adam. There is a deep spiritual significance in this. Enoch lived as an age was about to close. Before the evil days of Noah, with universal violence, corruption and wickedness, had come, Enoch walked with God and bore a prophetic testimony of what was to come in the future. He suffered on account of the testimony he bore to that generation. The ungodly spoke against him, but he kept on in his walk with God and in his testimony, till the day came when he was suddenly removed from the earth. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5). Enoch represents prophetically the true Church living at the close of the age, bearing witness to the coming of the Lord, and waiting in faith for the promised translation. The Spirit of God mentions Enoch for this purpose and for our encouragement.

Much has been made by critics and rationalists about this reference to Enoch. What Jude writes about Enoch is found in a Jewish apocryphal book by the name of "The Book of Enoch." The book consists of supposed revelations which were given to Enoch and to Moses. Its object seems to be a vindication of the ways of providence and to set forth the coming and terrible retribution for sinners. The book was known to the early church fathers who refer to it often in their writings. For centuries it seems to have been lost. About the close of the 18th Century an Ethiopian translation was discovered in Abyssinia and translated into English and German. Critics claim that this book of Enoch was used by Jude, inasmuch as he inserted this reference to Enoch, which is almost verbatim found in that book. But according to these critics the book of Enoch was written in the second century and from this they reason that Jude did not write this Epistle in the year 65 A.D.

But there are other scholars who have ascertained that the book of Enoch was in existence before Christ. Even if the critics were correct that this book was written in the second century of our era, it is no evidence that Jude could not have written his Epistle in the year as stated above. The writers of the book of Enoch might have used Jude's statements about Enoch. The fact that Jude in giving by the Holy Spirit this paragraph concerning Enoch proves the record, whether it was handed down by tradition or written in the book of Enoch, to be true.

VI. THE EXHORTATIONS

Verses 17-23

These exhortations are for the people of God, whose lot is cast in these predicted evil days. The first exhortation is to remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. To hold fast these words and remember them is the great need in the days of apostasy. Peter bears the same witness (2 Peter 3:1-3). Building yourselves up on your most holy faith is the next exhortation. Nothing else is worth while building up for believers living in the last days. Prayer is needed. But it is not prayer for the Holy Spirit, for another Pentecost, which is nowhere promised, nor for another baptism with the Spirit, but it is prayer in the Spirit. The exhortation "Keep yourselves in the love of God" means to keep oneself in the consciousness in that fellowship with the Father and with the Son of which John speaks in his first epistle, that is enjoying the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, which means, looking for Himself, for His coming. The final exhortations give instructions as to the believer's attitude towards those who have been led away.

VII. THE CONCLUSION

Verses 24-25

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with

exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Beautiful doxology with which this Epistle ends! His own are being kept in the evil days with which the age closes. They are the preserved in Jesus Christ kept for Him. And while we wait for Him, He is able to keep us not only from falling, but from stumbling. And then comes that day in which He will present His own, His beloved people, whom He bought by His own precious blood. He will present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. And what a day of joy and gladness, as well as of glory, it will be, when He shall see the travail of His soul and will be Satisfied, the day in which He will present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blame! (Ephesians 5:27)

REVELATION

The Annotated Bible

Arno Clement Gaebelain

Introduction

This great final Book of the Word of God may well be called the capstone of the entire Bible. A pyramid becomes a pyramid by the great capstone, and the Bible becomes the full and complete revelation of God through this document "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." If this book were not in the Bible, the Bible would be an unfinished book; the issues raised in the preceding documents would be forever unsolved.

This disposes at once of the miserable attempts which have been made by critics and others to eliminate the book of Revelation from the canon of the New Testament. Revelation is a necessity. "A book which offers in some way or other to open up those secrets of God which yet lie hidden in the future, seems wholly in place in our sacred Scriptures. It is towards some such book that our thoughts have been moving as we travelled through the Gospels, the Acts and Epistles; for all alike point forward to a consummation of all things, to a time when the kingdom of God shall be finally and completely established, when all creation shall cease to groan and travail, when the inheritance of which we have received the first fruits shall be wholly ours. It is, moreover, towards some such book that our hearts seem to yearn as we travel through the earlier volumes of experience, discovering the contradictions between what should be and what is, accumulating impressions of the Protean forms and tremendous power of wickedness, and craving for the manifestation of triumphant righteousness. Thus both the Christian Bible and the Christian consciousness seem to demand a book of revelation for their completion or satisfaction" (C. Anderson Scott).

The Authorship

The title of the book as we find it in the King James Version is "The Revelation of St. John the Divine"; the better title would be to take the opening words of the book and call it "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." But the above title tells us that John is the author. This is confirmed by the book itself, for we read twice in the first chapter that the writer says "John to the seven churches," and again, "I, John, who also am your brother" (1:4, 9). Furthermore, at the close of the book he names himself again: "And I, John, saw these things" (22:8). The Church down to the middle of the third century has but one testimony as to the authorship of this book, and that is, the Johannine, that John, the beloved disciple, the son of Zebedee, wrote this book in the isle of Patmos when banished there. The only exceptions were the Alogians, a heretical sect which also rejected the Gospel of John, and a controversialist by name of Caius.

As it is of much interest to be acquainted with the testimony of the many early witnesses in refutation of the destructive critics, who attack this great book, we give a brief summary of these historical evidences.

The first witness is Justin Martyr, who wrote about the year 140 in the Dialogue, "that a certain man, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, prophesied in an apocalypse (revelation) which came to him that believers should reign a thousand years in Jerusalem. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, according to the historian Eusebius, wrote treatises on "the devil and on the Apocalypse of John." This was about the year 170. Then follow the testimonies of Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (180); and Apollonius.

A greater witness still is Irenaeus. We remind the reader of our introduction to the Gospel of John, and call to mind the fact that Irenaeus was in his youth acquainted with Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. A number of times Irenaeus speaks of "Ioannes Domini discipulus"--John the disciple of the Lord--and that he had written the Apocalypse. Tertullian (about 200 A.D.) refers in his writings four times to the Revelation as being the work of the Apostle John. The so-called Muratorian fragments quote from the Revelation, and it can be shown by the context of the passage that the

Apostle John was believed to be author.

Clement of Alexandria (about 200 A.D.) mentions also John, the beloved disciple as the writer of the book. A scholar of Clement was Origen (233 A.D.). He made careful research about the canonicity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. While he reported carefully any doubts or disputes about different books, he has nothing to say about the Revelation and its author. He quotes from the book frequently, and it proves that in his time no question was raised about John being the author. Hippolytus, Bishop of Ostia (240 A.D.) quotes John's words many times and does not leave us in doubt that he means the son of Zebedee.

Then follow a host of witnesses. The first commentator, as far as we know, of the Revelation was Bishop Victorinus. He states positively that the Apostle John wrote the Revelation (about 303 A.D.). Ephrem Syrus (about 378), the greatest scholar in the Syrian church, repeatedly in his numerous writings, cites the Revelation as canonical and ascribes it to the Apostle John. The Syrian translation of the Bible, the Peshito, probably made in the second century, does not contain the book of Revelation, yet Ephrem Syrus possessed the Syrian translation. Scholars who have examined this question say that the Peshito in its original version had the book of Revelation, and that it was later detached, while others advanced the theory that the Peshito translation may have been made in the first century when the Apocalypse was not yet generally known.

After citing many more witnesses, including Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine--and others, Dean Alford says: "The apostolic authorship rests on the firmest ground. We have it assured to us by one who had companied men who had known St. John himself; we have it held in continuous succession by Fathers in all parts of the Church. Nowhere, in primitive times, does there appear any counter-tradition on the subject."

The First Critic

This unquestionable historical evidence of the Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse was first attacked by Dionysius, the disciple of Origen and Bishop of Alexandria. In the second half of the third century this scholar raised his voice against the solid traditional view, declaring that not the same man could have written the fourth Gospel, the Epistles of John and Revelation. He also pointed out the contrast between the language, the grammar, and the diction of the Apocalypse and the other writings of the Apostle John. He suggested another man by name of John, a presbyter of Ephesus, as the author of the Revelation. He spoke of two tombs in Ephesus, one in which the body of the apostle was buried and in the other John the presbyter. But Dionysius spoke of this John the presbyter, yet he was entirely unknown to him. It was a new idea he invented to back up his contention, for such a person was wholly unknown to the ecclesiastical tradition in the church of Alexandria in the middle of the third century. Nor does it appear that his opinion on the authorship of the Revelation made any permanent impression on the Alexandrian church. That this "John the presbyter" is a fictitious person, who never existed, is fully demonstrated by the entire, the complete disappearance of John the presbyter from the memory of the Church of the second century.

But modern critics like Bleek, Duesterdieck, Ewald, and others have seized upon this man of straw and followed the invention of Dionysius about the two Johns. Other critics have gone a step further and reject wholly the tradition that the Apostle John lived and died in Ephesus, thus making the other John the sole outstanding bearer of the name in that community, ascribing to him not only the book of Revelation but also the fourth Gospel. Modern critics reject the Johannine authorship of the Revelation. They hold that a work of small compass, by somebody, nobody knows who wrote it, was worked over by somebody else, then expanded by somebody else, passing through three or four redactions till it took on the form of the book we call "The Revelation." They also claim that at best the Revelation is "a Christian redaction of a Jewish apocalypse."

The book also received a strange treatment from the different reformers. Luther for a time treated the Revelation with suspicion and questioned its inspiration; later he greatly modified this opinion. Zwingli followed the theory of Dionysius and attributed it to another John; he excluded it from the Bible. Calvin, however, believed in its canonicity and upheld the apostolic authorship. Melancthon did the same.

All the criticism has not affected in the least the truth that John, the Apostle, the author of the Gospel of John and The Epistles, is the author also of the book of Revelation. The fact is, the Holy Spirit seems to have taken special care to

preserve such historical evidences for the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which makes the true authorship and date unimpeachable.

"The apostolic authorship and canonicity of the Apocalypse were generally accepted, and went unchallenged, until toward the third century. Then contrary views began to make their appearance. But when the evidence, direct and indirect, on either side is weighed in respect of its date, its quantity, its quality, its freedom from bias, the external evidence in favor of the Johannine authorship, outweighs the other at every point."

The Date of the Book

It is interesting to find that the modern critics have done the opposite with the date of the book of Revelation from what they have done with the other Bible books. They generally fix the date of a book later than the traditional view holds; but they assign to the Apocalypse an earlier date than that which the Church has held in the past. Some have dated it during the reign of Nero. They do so on account of some particular interpretation of certain historical allusions. Of late some of the critics have adopted the later date, the year 96 A.D., that is the traditional view held from the beginning. Irenaeus, the friend of Polycarp, who knew John, stated about the year 180 that "the Revelation was seen at Patmos at the end of Domitian's reign." Domitian reigned from 81 to 96 A.D. Then Clement of Alexandria left the testimony behind that John returned from his exile to the island of Patmos on the death of the emperor, which was Emperor Domitian, in the year 96. This is the correct date.

The Message and Interpretation

Revelation is marked out in the beginning as a book of prophecy (1:3). Of this we have more to say in the Preface and Key to Revelation, which follows this introduction. Furthermore, the book is in greater part written in symbolical language, which is a very important fact to be remembered in the interpretation. The message is prophetic, and this message is clothed in symbols, which are not difficult to interpret. Our analysis will show that the accusation brought against this book, as being disjointed a veritable chaos, is wholly unfounded. Like all the other books of the Word of God it has a perfect arrangement.

There are three modes of interpreting this book, with its prophecies and symbols. The historical interpretation claims that the book covers the entire history of the Church and pictures the antagonism of the forces of evil in the world against the church. This method was in vogue during the Reformation period and for several centuries down to the nineteenth, especially during the Napoleonic upheavals, it was the acknowledged method of interpretation. It still has supporters. The Reformers saw in the Antichrist, the beast, the pope and the Romish church. Luther was very strong on that. On the other side, the Catholic exegetes, who also employed the same method, branded Protestantism as the Antichrist, and discovered that the mysterious 666 was contained in the name of Dr. Martin Luther. Then Napoleon was seen by believers living toward the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries as fulfilling the thirteenth chapter in Revelation. Many predictions were made and the different numbers, the three years and a half, etc., applied to the stirring history of that time, just the same as men today are trying to figure out the duration of the "times of the Gentiles," and when certain events must occur.

The Preterist School of interpretation teaches that the greater part of the prophecies of this book have been fulfilled in the past in the struggles of the past, especially with the struggle of the Church with the Roman Empire, and that the victory of the Church as foretold in the book is accomplished. The third school is the so-called Futurist. This method of interpretation is the only satisfying one and in full harmony with the entire Prophetic Word. We follow this method in our annotations. Nothing beyond the third chapter of this book is fulfilled; all is still future, this is the claim of the Futurist school. The two chapters in which the word "Church" is exclusively found in Revelation (chapters 2 and 3) contain the prophecy concerning the Church on earth. This divinely given history of the Church is about finished and the predicted events from chapter 4 to the end of Revelation are yet to be accomplished. Chapters 5-19 contain the specific prophecy of the end of the age, the last seven years, the unfulfilled 70th week of Daniel's great prophecy. The scripturalness of this interpretation will be readily discovered by reading the "Preface and Key to Revelation."

There are other theories of interpretation. One of them is the Judaizing interpretation of the late Dr. Bullinger, who taught that nothing is fulfilled in the Apocalypse, that the seven churches in Asia are yet to come into existence. We request our

readers and students of the Word to study carefully the article which follows this introduction and the analysis of the book.

PREFACE AND KEY TO THE REVELATION

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him." This is the first sentence with which this last book in God's Word begins. The best title therefore is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Our Lord received, according to this opening statement, a revelation from God. This must be understood in connection with Himself as the Son of Man. As the Only-Begotten He had no need of a revelation; in His deity He is acquainted with all the eternal purposes. One with God He knows the end from the beginning. But He, who is very God, took on in incarnation the form of a servant, and thus being in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself (Phil. 2:7-8). And as the Man who had passed through death, whom God raised from the dead, and exalted at His own right hand, God gave Him this revelation concerning the judgment Of the earth and the glory of Himself. "God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory" (1 Peter 1:21). What this glory is which He received from God is fully and blessedly revealed in this book. It is the revelation of His acquired glory and how this glory is to be manifested in connection with the earth. And this revelation He makes known to His servants, because His own are sharers with Him in all He received from God.

Preeminently His Revelation

The Revelation is preeminently His revelation; the revelation of His person and His glory. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me ..." (Heb. 10:7) Martin Luther asked, "What Book and what person?" and answered, "There is only one Book--the Bible; and only one Person--Jesus Christ." The whole Book, the Word of God, bears witness of Him, Who is the living Word. He is the center, the sum total and the substance of the Holy Scriptures. The prayerful reader of the Bible will never read in vain if he approaches the blessed Book with the one desire to know Christ and His glory. His blessed face is seen on every page and the infallible Guide, the Holy Spirit, never fails to satisfy the longing of the believer's heart to know more of Christ. Inasmuch as this last Bible book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, an "unveiling" of Himself, we find in it the completest revelation of His person and His glory.

It is here where many expositions of Revelation have missed the mark. Occupied chiefly with the symbols of the book, the mysteries, the judgments and the promised consummation, they have neglected to emphasize sufficiently Him, who throughout this book is preeminently the center of everything. The reader of Revelation does well to read first of all through the entire book with this object in mind, to see what is said of our Lord, of His person, His present and His future glory.

We shall find all the features of His person and His work mentioned. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last (1:11); the Ancient of Days (1:14 compare with Daniel 7:9); the "I Am," that is, Jehovah, "I am He that liveth" (1:18); the Son of God (2:18). These terms speak of His deity. His earthly life in humiliation is touched upon in the statement, "the Faithful Witness" (1:5). His death on the cross is likewise mentioned--"He hath washed us from our sins in His blood" (1:5); "He was dead" (1:18); "the Lamb as it had been slain" (5:6); "worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (5:12). He is mentioned twenty-eight times as the Lamb in Revelation and each time it reminds us of the cross and the great work accomplished there. His resurrection is seen for He is called, "the First-begotten from the dead" (1:5), and He speaks of Himself as, "He that was dead, and, behold, I am alive forevermore" (1:18); and again, "these things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is alive" (2:8).

Then we behold Him "in the midst" in glory, seen face to face by all the redeemed and worshipped by them, as well as by the heavenly hosts and ultimately by every creature, the fulfillment of Phil. 2:10-11, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Rev. 5:13-14). After the fifth chapter we have His revelation as the executor of the decreed judgments. He opens the seals; He sends forth the seven angels with the judgment trumpets and the seven angels with the judgment vials, in which the wrath of God is completed. "The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). Then He is seen in the glorious union with the bride (19:7-10) and as the victorious Christ who passeth out of heaven followed by the armies of heaven (19:11-21), conquering the opposing forces of evil, executing the wrath of Almighty God, appearing as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The twentieth chapter reveals Him as the reigning Christ. He and His saints with Him will reign over the earth for a thousand years. And all which follows reveals Him and His glory as well as the blessed and eternal results of His work.

A Book of Prophecy

Aside from the title of the book, which indicates that it deals with things future, there is a direct statement which determines its prophetic character. In the first beatitude of the seven which are found in the book, we read that it is a book of prophecy--"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy" (1:3). It is known to every intelligent student of the Bible that a good part of it is prophecy. The great prophecies concerning the people Israel and the nations of the world are found in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the New Testament there is but one book of Prophecy, the Revelation. As it is the capstone of the entire revelation of God, without which the Bible would be an unfinished book, we find in its pages the consummation of the great prophecies which were given by the prophets of God in Old Testament times.

For the study of this New Testament prophetic book, the knowledge of the chief content of the Old Testament Prophetic Word is therefore an absolute necessity. For instance, to a Christian who does not have a fair grasp of Daniel's great prophecies, or is ignorant of the place which the people Israel hold in the purposes of God, the book of Revelation is a sealed book, without any possible meaning. This is one of the chief reasons why this book has suffered so much both from the critics and from the hands of commentators. The Apostle Peter saith, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21). The better translation for "private interpretation" is, "its own interpretation." It means that the interpretation of prophecy must be done by comparing Scripture with Scripture. The holy men of God, the prophets, were the instruments of the Holy Spirit and made known God's purposes in a progressive way. To understand any prophecy is only possible by taking the entire Prophetic Word into consideration. That there is a wonderful harmony in the great body of prophetic dispensational truths as found in the Bible we have demonstrated in another volume. (Harmony of the Prophetic Word has been used under God's blessing to open the minds of many to the meaning of prophecy.) This principle finds its strongest application in the interpretation of the Revelation.

The Three Classes

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 the Apostle Paul speaks of three classes into which the human race is divided: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God. In the Old Testament there was no Church of God, for the Church is a New Testament institution. As the Revelation is the book of consummation these three classes must be seen in the contents of this book. Many expositors have seen nothing but the struggles of the Church in her history in this book. This is true of the so-called Preterist school and also of the Historical school of interpretation. The Preterist school teaches a fulfillment of all the apocalyptic visions in the struggles of the Church in the past. The Historical school also teaches that the visions concern mostly the Church. These schools of interpretation leave out the Jews and what is written concerning them and their final history during the end of the age, preceding the glorious appearing of our Lord. Of late another school of interpreters has come into existence. They teach that the entire book of Revelation concerns the Jewish people and that there is nothing about the Church in this last book of the Bible. Any interpretation of Revelation which ignores the Jews, the people Israel and fulfillment of Old Testament predictions concerning them is wrong. And any interpretation which teaches that there is nothing about the Church in Revelation is equally wrong. The Church and her destiny on earth, the destiny of the true Church and the destiny of the apostate Church, or Christendom, is found in the book. The Jews and what concerns them in the end of the age, the Gentiles, the nations of the earth, and the judgments in store for them, as well as the future of the earth, a future of glory and blessing: all this is recorded in our New Testament book of prophecy.

The True Interpretation

There is a true interpretation of Revelation which is in harmony with all previous prophecies and which opens the book to our understanding. But how are we to find this true interpretation? We answer, the book itself furnishes it. This is an important fact, both convincing and conclusive. It is therefore of no profit to examine the different theories and schools of interpretation. We shall avoid the terms Preterist, Historical and Futurist, and not try, as it has been attempted, to reconcile these different modes of interpretation. There must be one true interpretation, and we claim that this is given to us by the Lord Himself in this book.

The Key Which Fits

It has often been truthfully said, every book in the Bible contains a key which unlocks the book. The Revelation is no exception. John the beloved disciple was in banishment in the isle of Patmos, as Daniel the man greatly beloved, was a captive in Babylon. The Lord called these two great servants to behold the panorama of the future. Both wrote down their visions. While in the book of Daniel we find no direct command to write, we find such a command in the first chapter of Revelation. John received divine instruction how to write the Revelation. We find this in the nineteenth verse, "Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these." (This is the correct translation of this important verse.) John, guided by the Holy Spirit then wrote the Revelation according to the divine direction. In examining this command to write we find that three things are mentioned. He is to write first the things he had seen, then the things which are, and finally the things that are about to be after these. When John received these instructions he had already seen something and the vision he had he was instructed to write down. Then present things, the things which are, and future things, to be after present things have passed away, must be located in this book. So we have the past, the present and the future in this key verse.

Three Divisions--Where are They

It is then clear that the book of Revelation must be divided into three main divisions. How are we to locate these divisions? They are marked, so that we are not left in doubt about it. In the beginning of the fourth chapter we find a significant statement which shows where the third division begins. After these things, that is after the contents of the opening three chapters were past, John heard the same voice speaking to him once more. He sees a door opened in heaven and is told, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must take place after these things" (4:1). There can be no doubt at all that with the fourth chapter the seer beheld the things which take place after the preceding things which are have passed away. The third division of Revelation begins with the fourth chapter. John beholds future things from heaven into which he had been taken "in the Spirit." The things he had seen and the things which are, are therefore contained in the first three chapters of the book.

The first chapter contains the things he had seen. "What thou seest write in a book" was the first instruction John received (verse 11). In the nineteenth verse he is told, "Write therefore what thou has seen." Between verse 11 and verse 19 he saw a vision, which he was to write, and this vision constitutes the first section or division of the book. The second and third chapters form the second division, the things which are. The beginning of the fourth chapter to the end of the book is the final, the third division. There is no better and more logical key. And this key given in the book determines the true interpretation.

The Patmos Vision

"The thing thou has seen"--the first section of Revelation is the great Patmos vision, chapter 1:12-18. It is the vision of the glorified Son of Man in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (or lampstands).

The Things Which Are

The things which are, the present things, begin the prophetic section of the Revelation. The second and third chapters of Revelation, the things which are, contain the messages of our Lord addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor. These messages contain the first great prophecy of Revelation. The prophecy concerns the Church on earth. We shall show in our comment on these two chapters that we have in them a divine history of the Church on earth. It is one of the most remarkable sections of the Prophetic Word. What this present age is to be religiously and how it will end is made known in other parts of the New Testament. Our Lord in some of His kingdom parables (Matthew 13) reveals the characteristics of this age. The parables of the sower, the evil seed sown into the field, the mustard seed parable and the parable of the leaven are prophetic and teach, in part at least, what the Church messages reveal. The Holy Spirit in the Epistolar testimony also reveals the religious and moral characteristics of the age, and depicts its departure from the truth, and its end. The destiny of the true Church is heavenly. She has a "blessed hope," which is to be with the Lord in glory. She is the body of Christ, and He is the "Head of the body." The Church is also the bride of Christ and He is the Bridegroom. The body is united to the Head in Glory; the bride will be joined to the Bridegroom. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is the Scripture which reveals this end for the true Church on earth.

The professing Church, Christendom, which rejects the doctrine of Christ and goes into apostasy has a far different destiny. The Lord will disown that which has denied His Name, and judgment and wrath is to be poured out upon apostate Christendom (2 Thess. 1:7-9). These predictions concerning the Church on earth are contained in the seven Church messages. When we come to the close of the third chapter we find a significant promise, and equally significant threat. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (trial) which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth" (3:10). This is the promise. It tells of the removal of the true Church, composed of all true believers, from this earthly scene. "I will spew thee out of My mouth" (3:16). This is the threat to the apostate Church. Both the promise and the threat will be fulfilled. After the third chapter the word "church" does not occur again in Revelation. The reason for this is obvious. The history of the Church on earth terminates with the close of the third chapter. Because the true Church is no longer here but has been taken up into glory, and that which professes to be the Church is disowned by the Lord, therefore no more mention of the Church is made in Revelation.

The Things Which Are After These

The future things, things after the removal of the true Church from the earth, occupy the greater part of this book. It is of the greatest importance to see that nothing whatever after the third chapter of Revelation has yet taken place. Some speak of a past and partial fulfillment of some of the visions found in this section. In view of the scope of the book that is impossible. The open door in heaven, the voice which calls the seer to pass through that open door into heaven, is symbolical of the great coming event, the realization of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord for His saints. That this open door is mentioned immediately after the third chapter and John is suddenly in the spirit in the presence of the throne in heaven is very significant. It proves that the entire situation is now changed. And the first great vision is a vision of the saints in glory occupying thrones and worshipping God and the Lamb. With the sixth chapter the great judgment visions of this book begin. These great punitive dealings with the earth are executed from above. All transpires after the Lord has taken His saints into glory. No seal can be broken as long as this event has not been. But after the rapture, the seals of the book, which the Lamb received, are broken by Him, the trumpet and the vial judgments fall upon the earth. All this takes place after the home-going of the true Church and before the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (19:11, etc.).

Now this portion of Revelation from chapter 6 to 19 contains the events which transpire during the end of the age. It is the unfulfilled seventieth week of the great prophecy in the book of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27). This "end of the age" will last twice 1260 days, that is seven years. It is absolutely necessary to understand the scope of the seventy-week prophecy in Daniel in order to understand the greater part of these chapters in the Revelation. (The Prophetic Daniel by A.C.G. contains a very simple exegesis of Daniel's prophecies.) We are led back upon Jewish ground. Events in connection with the Jewish people and Jerusalem are before us. The times of the Gentiles have taken on their final form of ten kingdoms which Daniel saw on the fourth beast as ten horns, and Nebuchadnezzar on the image as ten toes. The empire in which these ten kingdoms come into existence is the Roman empire. It will have a revival and come into existence again. Then a wicked leader will take the headship of that resurrected Roman empire, and another beast, the false prophet, the Antichrist will domineer over the Jewish people and persecute their saints, the remnant of Israel, while the earth and the dwellers upon the earth experience the great judgments. The last half of these seven years is called the great tribulation. We must also remember that our Lord left behind a great prophecy concerning the end of the age. This prophecy is contained in the Olivet Discourse, the first part of which (Matt. 24:4-44) harmonizes in a striking manner with the events in Revelation 6--19. Our Lord calls special attention to Daniel and likewise speaks of the great tribulation. In our brief annotations we shall point out some of the interesting and convincing details.

The glorious climax is the visible manifestation of the Lord out of heaven, crowned with many crowns, the defeat and overthrow of the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, the binding of Satan, and the reign of Christ with His saints for a thousand years. (Compare Revelation 19:11-21 with Daniel 7:11-14 and Matthew 24:27-31.) After that follows the great white throne judgment, which is the judgment of the wicked dead, the glories of the new Jerusalem, the eternal destiny of the redeemed and the eternal destiny of the lost.

If this last great book of the Bible is studied in this divinely given order it will no longer be, as is so often said, a sealed book. All fanciful interpretations and applications of these great visions to past or present history can no longer be maintained as soon as we reckon with the fact that these visions are not yet fulfilled, and are going to be fulfilled after the true church is no longer on the earth.

The Promised Blessing

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand" (verse 3). A blessing is promised to him who readeth, and who hears and keeps. It does not say that a blessing is for him who understands and knows everything which is in this book. If such were the condition the writer and reader would have no claim on this promised blessing. The Bible teacher, or any other man, who says he knows and understands everything found in this great finale of God's Word is very much mistaken. We cannot be sure about everything in some of these visions and the full meaning of some may not be understood till the world sees the fulfillment. The blessing is promised to all His people who give attention to the Revelation of Jesus Christ. What is the blessing we may expect through the reading and prayerful study of the words of this prophecy?

First of all we receive through this book a wonderful vision of our Saviour and Lord. This is what we need as His people above everything else, and it is this which brings blessing into our lives. As stated before, this book is preeminently His revelation, a blessed unveiling of His person and glory. But we also get another blessing. In reading through this book we see what is in store for this age, what judgments will overtake the world, and how Satan's power will be manifested to the full upon those who rejected His grace. Judgment, tribulation and wrath are swiftly coming upon this age. Out of all this our gracious Lord has delivered us. There is no judgment, no wrath for us who know Him as our sin bearer and our hiding-place. Praise must fill our hearts when we read the words of this prophecy and remember the grace which has saved us from all which is coming upon this age. Another blessing is the assurance of ultimate victory and glory. Dark is the age, and becoming darker, but in Revelation we behold the glory which is coming for His saints first of all and after the judgment clouds are gone, for Jerusalem, the nations and the earth. Reading Revelation fills the heart with the assurance and certainty of the outcome of all. It is a solemn atmosphere which fills the whole book of Revelation. As we continue to read and continue to breathe this heavenly and solemn atmosphere it will result in a closer walk with God, a more spiritual worship and a greater and more unselfish service for Him "Who loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us priests and kings unto God His Father."

The Division of the Revelation

Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

I. THE PATMOS VISION OF THE GLORIFIED SON OF MAN (1)

II. THE THINGS WHICH ARE. THE SEVEN CHURCH MESSAGES REVEALING THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH (2-3)

III. THE THINGS WHICH ARE AFTER THESE, THE END OF THE AGE, THE CONSUMMATION AND THE FINAL MESSAGES (4-22)

First Division: The Heavenly Scene and Before the Throne (4-5)

Second Division: The Opening of the Seven Seals (6-8:5)

Between the Sixth and Seventh Seal: A Parenthetical Vision (7)

Third Division: The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets (8:6-11:18)

Between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets: Parenthetical Visions (10-11:14)

Fourth Division: Satan's Power and Satan's Masterpieces (11:19-13)

Fifth Division: The Power of God in Intervention: Grace and judgment Manifested (14)

Sixth Division: The Seven Angels Having Seven Plagues and the Vials of Wrath (15-16)

Between the Sixth and Seventh Vial, Parenthetical Vision (16:13-16)

Seventh Division: The Great Harlot, Babylon, and her judgment (17-18)

Eighth Division: The Manifestation of the King and the Millennium (19-20:6)

Ninth Division: After the Thousand Years and the Vision of the New

Jerusalem (20:7-22:5)

Tenth Division: The Final Messages (22:6-21)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE PATMOS VISION OF THE GLORIFIED SON OF MAN

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1-3)

2. Greeting and benediction (1:4-5)

3. The praise (1:6-7)

4. The testimony of the Almighty (1:8)

5. John in Patmos (1:9-11)

6. The vision of Christ in glory (1:12-16)

7. The commission (1:17-21)

Verses 1-3. The book does not contain "revelations" but it is one great revelation, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The third verse is of much importance. It pronounces a blessing upon all who read and hear the words of this prophecy and who keep the things that are written therein. Here, as already stated, we read that the Revelation is a great prophecy.

Verses 4-5. The churches addressed were in the Province of Asia. (See Acts 16:6; 19:10.) The words of greeting "Grace and peace unto you" tell of the two great possessions of the Church. Though the professing Church may fail in her testimony, grace and peace, even in the dark days of apostasy, will never fail. In the greeting here Jehovah-God, the great "I am"--Who is, Who was and Who is to come--stands first. Then follows the Holy Spirit in His own completeness and His diverse activities, spoken of as "the seven Spirits." And finally the name of our Lord. "He is the faithful witness," who lived as such in holiness and perfect obedience on earth. "The First-Begotten from the dead" He died that shameful death on the cross and God raised Him from the dead. "The Prince of the kings of the earth." This is His future title and glory.

Verses 6-7. This is a true glory-song. It contains the blessed gospel of grace. What He has done for us; what He has made us; and what we shall be with Him. It is the first doxology in this book. See the swelling praise and worship two-fold, three-fold, four-fold and seven-fold in chapters 4:11; 5:13; 7:12. And then for the first time in this book His personal, visible and glorious coming is announced.

Verse 8. God, so to speak, puts His seal upon it. The words of the preceding verse, "Even so, Amen," must be read with this verse. The speaker is Jehovah, the Almighty.

Verses 9-11. John was in banishment in the Isle of Patmos. Patmos is a small rocky isle, and about ten miles long and six wide. According to ancient tradition this island was used as a place of exile for offenders who belonged to the better classes. John was exiled on account of his faithful witness to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. He came to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. Does this mean "the day of the Lord," that is, the day of His visible manifestation, or does it mean He was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week? Dr. Bullinger teaches that the Lord's day means "the day of the Lord" (Isa. 2:12), and says: "John was not in a state of spiritual exaltation on any particular Sunday at Patmos, as the result of which he saw visions and dreamed dreams. But as we are told he found himself by the Spirit in the day of the Lord." But this view is not correct. It is not the prophetic day of the Lord, but the Lord's day, the day which the early Church from the beginning celebrated as the day of His resurrection. In Corinthians we read of "the Lord's Supper" in the same way as "the Lord's Day" is used here. Nor could John have been projected to the day of the Lord when his first message given to him by the glorified Christ concerned the church and her history on earth.

Verses 12-16. A voice had spoken, as of a trumpet telling him to write in a book what he was about to see and to send the message to the seven churches. And as he turned he beheld the greatest vision human eyes have ever seen. He saw seven golden candlesticks (lampstands); these represent the seven churches (verse 20) and are symbolical of the whole Church. "In the midst," John saw one "like unto a Son of Man." But He is more than Man, He is the Ancient of Days as well as Son of Man, the Alpha and the Omega, in His humiliation and in His exaltation. He was the Son of Man on earth; He is the Son of Man in glory. When He comes back to earth and receives the kingdom, He will receive it as Son of Man to judge the earth in righteousness. Here we behold Him in His judicial character. The robe down to His feet expresses His dignity as the King-Priest, who is about to enter upon His future work. The golden girdle is symbolical of His divine righteousness. His white head and hair identify Him with the person whom Daniel saw sitting in judgment (Dan. 7:9-12). The flaming eyes, the fiery burning feet, the voice like the sound of many waters, the two-edged sword, all are symbolical of His glory and character.

There is one feature of the vision which needs an explanation. What do the seven stars mean, which are in the right hand of the Son of Man? Verse 20 gives the answer, They are the seven angels of the seven churches. Angels and stars are symbolical figures. The application of these terms to church-officers or bishops and pastors is incorrect. Stars are used in scripture to typify true believers. Stars are heavenly bodies which shine during the night; so are true believers in a heavenly position with the responsibility to shine in the night. The lampstands represent the visible, professing Church; the stars represent the true believing element in the Church. They are in the right hand of Himself, held securely there. Furthermore, only true believers have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith. The stars are called angels, because an angel is a messenger and true believers are likewise that.

Verses 17-20. John fell at His feet as dead. Compare with Daniel 10:4-11. The vision was overpowering. But graciously His hand rests upon His prostrated disciple, the same who once leaned upon His bosom, and he hears the blessed words His people know and love so well, "Fear not!" Once more He bears witness as to Himself He is "He that liveth," the Jehovah, the Self-existing One; He was dead; He died the sinner's death and won the victory. He is alive forevermore; as the Risen One He has the key of Hades and of death. Then follows the commission which the reader finds fully explained in the Preface and Key to Revelation.

II. THE THINGS WHICH ARE, THE SEVEN CHURCH MESSAGES, AND THEIR PROPHETIC MEANING

CHAPTER 2

1. Ephesus: The post-apostolic period (2:1-7)
2. Smyrna: The period of persecution (2:8-11)
3. Pergamos: The corruption period (2:12-17)
4. Thyatira: The Romish corruption (2:18-29)

The two chapters which follow the introductory chapter contain seven messages to seven local churches which were in existence in the province of Asia in the days when the Apostle John was prisoner in the isle of Patmos. The view held by

the late Dr. Bullinger and a few of his followers that these churches are yet to come into existence in connection with believing Jews during the great tribulation with which the age closes, must be rejected as extremely fanciful. The omniscient Lord on the throne detected in each of these local assemblies certain traits which at different periods of His church on earth would become the leading features. We have therefore, in the seven messages the history of the entire Church in embryo. This assertion is fully confirmed by a closer study of these messages.

Verses 1-7. Ephesus was the church characterized by the greatest purity in doctrine and in walk. To the Ephesians, as "the faithful brethren in Christ," was addressed the most wonderful revelation God has given to man. It stands therefore for the model church in the apostolic age. But when Paul said farewell to the elders he predicted not smooth things, but the incoming failure (Acts 20). Ephesus means "desired" and that corresponds with her original holy character. He reveals Himself afresh as being in the midst and holding His own in His blessed pierced hands, so true of believers at all times. The descriptions of Ephesus suit the apostolic church, and immediately after the apostles had passed away, except John. But He finds fault with it. His omniscient eyes look to the heart and there He finds declension. "I have against thee that thou leavest thy first love." He, the one altogether lovely was no longer the all absorbing object before their hearts. Paul manifests the full meaning of first love. His constant cry was: "Not I but Christ"--"That I may know Him"; for him to live was Christ. Declension began in the church not with less service, less suffering or anything else, but with a decreasing heart-devotion to the Person of our Lord. That is where all backsliding begins. He calls to repentance, a return to Himself. The Nicolaitanes, whose works the church then hated, are mentioned again in the third message, where we shall define the word and the teaching of the Nicolaitanes. A promise to the overcomer follows.

Verses 8-11. Smyrna means "bitterness" and is a form of myrrh which was largely used for the embalming of the king of the Jews, the meaning of it was that the King would have to die. Smyrna was a suffering church, many of its members had to seal their faith by dying the martyr's death. Corresponding with this characteristic, the Lord speaks of Himself as "The First and the Last, who was dead and is alive." That is His comfort for the Church passing through the horrors of persecution and intense sufferings. In connection with this message to Smyrna the synagogue of Satan is mentioned. It means the Judaistic faction of the church, who, while they claimed to be Christians, also claimed to be Jews, observing the law, the Sabbath day and other parts of the legal system of Judaism. This synagogue of Satan helped in the afflictions of Smyrna. Nor is the same "synagogue of Satan" missing today in the professing sphere of Christendom.

He announces that the devil would cast some of them into prison, that they should have tribulation for ten days, and that it would require faithfulness unto death to gain the crown of life. The Apostolic age was followed by the martyr age, which lasted up to the beginning of the fourth century. Pagan emperors under the inspiration of Satan, the roaring lion, persecuted the Church. No one knows how many hundreds of thousands died the martyr's death, flayed and burned alive, cast before wild animals and cruelly tortured; thus they were faithful unto death and gained the crown of life. It is also significant that the address to Smyrna contains the number ten; Church history records ten great persecutions.

Verses 12-17. After the devil had played the roaring lion for several centuries, trying to exterminate the church of Jesus Christ, he discovered that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." He then stopped the persecutions suddenly and began to corrupt the Church. This is the meaning of the message to Pergamos, which means "twice married," a typical name for the professing Church which claims to be the bride of Christ, but is married to the world. Pergamos is dwelling where Satan has his throne. Milton described Satan being in hell.

High on a throne of royal state, That far outshone the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind, Satan exalted sat.

But that is not Scripture. Satan will be in hell, in his final abode "the lake of fire," but he is not there now. He is the god of this world (age): his throne is right here on earth. And Pergamos had been married to the world. This is also indicated by the mention of Balaam, who cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, by inducing them to take the daughters of the heathen and thus give up their God-demanded separation. The Church then gave up her pilgrim character, settled down in the world, became a world institution, as revealed by our Lord in the parable of the mustard seed. What happened in the beginning of the fourth century church-historians have proclaimed as the "triumph of Christianity." It was rather "the defeat of Christianity," for that happened which corrupted the Church of Christ.

The instrument of the devil used to bring about this was the emperor Constantine. He had a rival by the name of Maxentius, whom he faced in battle. Constantine claimed that the night before he had a vision of Christ bearing a cross

with the words: "In hoc signo vinces (in this sign thou shalt conquer). He had the next morning a beautiful banner made, which was called the Labarum, and went forth to battle, in which Maxentius was defeated as well as another competitor by name of Licinus. Constantine then became emperor and nominally a Christian and head of the Church, while retaining his heathen title as Pontifex Maximus, the high-priest. Then the corruption of the Church resulted. The Church became a political world institution, like the mustard seed, rooting itself in the field (the world) became a great tree, opening its branches to the fowls of the air to defile (Matt. 13; see annotations there). Heathen priests became Christian priests. Heathen temples were changed into Christian churches; he demanded all children to be "christened," that is, made Christians by putting water upon their heads; heathen days of feasting and drinking were made into Christian days, like our "Christmas" and nearly all the other saints' days.

Here again the Nicolaitanes are mentioned, but, while the Ephesians hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, here in Pergamos we find the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, and the Lord says: "which thing I hate." What is it, then? Some say that there was a certain Bishop Nicol who taught bad doctrines and his followers were called "the Nicolaitanes." But this Bishop Nicol is a fictitious person; he cannot be historically located.

Nicolaitanes is Greek; it is a compound. Nikao is a verb and means to have the upper hand, to domineer; laos means the people (our English "laity"). Nicolaitanes signifies "the domineers of the people." A priestly class had sprung up in the Church, domineering over the rest of the people, the so-called laity. And this domineering class claimed a superior place in the body of Christ. This evil was rejected in Ephesus, but is fully sanctioned and tolerated in Pergamos. Priestly assumption became then, and ever since has been, the corruption of Christianity. This is what our Lord hates and what He hates we must hate with Him.

Verses 18-29. The corruption which set in like a great flood with the fourth century increased till the depths of Satan (verse 24) were reached. Thyatira brings us into the period of the Papacy and its wickedness, ecclesiastical and otherwise. Here our Lord reveals Himself as "the Son of God." Rome speaks more of Him as the son of the virgin, the son of Mary, than as the Son of God. The Roman Catholic apostasy has put a woman in the place of the Son of God. Her corruption is fully revealed in verse 20. Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, was permitted to teach and seduce God's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Jezebel the wicked woman represents the Papacy. Jezebel was a heathenish woman married to an Israelitish King. She was a queen and an idolatress and persecuted the true prophets of God (1 Kings 18-21).

Apply all this to the Romish church with her spiritual fornication and idolatry. The church, or, rather, the papacy, assumes the place of teacher and dictator and Christ is rejected. The name Jezebel has a twofold meaning. It means a chaste one"; the other name is "dunghill." Rome claims to be the bride of Christ; in reality she is a harlot, and called so in chapter 17 and therefore a dunghill of all vileness and corruption. In verse 21 we find another important hint. It is said, "She repents not." Rome does not change. She is the same today in every respect as she was 500 years ago. She will continue in her perverted state of impenitence till her predicted doom will overtake her. (Compare verse 22 with chapter 17.) She is the woman of which our Lord spoke in the fourth kingdom parable in Matthew 13 (see annotations there) which took leaven (corruption) and put it into the three measures of meal (symbolical of the doctrine of Christ). It is noteworthy that beginning with the message to Thyatira the Lord announces His coming, that is, His second visible coming. Every following message speaks of it. This shows that the three preceding church periods and conditions are passed and the conditions pictured in Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea will continue till He comes. The apostolic age cannot be brought back; nor will there be again a persecution by Roman emperors nor will the church again become corrupted as in Pergamos. The Romish conditions continue to the end of the age.

CHAPTER 3

Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea

1. Sardis: The reformation period (3:1-6)
2. Philadelphia: The faithful remnant (3:7-13)
3. Laodicea: The indifferent and apostate Church (3:14-22)

Verses 1-6. We have traced briefly the decline during the 1450-1500 years of Church history. The climax is reached in Thyatira, prophetically the Roman abomination and apostasy. In Sardis we see the progress of evil stayed. Roman Catholicism, as already mentioned, is a fixed and unchanging religious system. Rome will yet have for a brief season a startling revival and get back her place as the mistress of the nations. But in Sardis we see a reaction. Sardis means "those escaping." It is the Reformation period, the movement which produced Protestantism. The Reformation itself was of God and the great men who were used were the most mighty instruments of the Holy Spirit. It was the greatest work, up to that time, since the days of the apostles. But out of it came the human systems which go by the name of Protestantism. The Reformation began well, but soon developed in the different Protestant systems into a dead, lifeless thing. They have a name to live but are dead. This is the verdict of our Lord upon the churches which sprung out of the reformation: "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead."

Verses 7-13. Philadelphia means "brotherly love." As Sardis came out of Thyatira, a protest against it, so Philadelphia comes out of Sardis and is a protest against the dead, lifeless, Spiritless condition prevailing in Protestantism. Out of the deadness of the state churches over and over again came forth companies of believers, energized by the Holy Spirit. Philadelphia has been variously applied to early Methodism, the evangelical movements, missionary efforts and to the revivals of the nineteenth century. But it is more than that, It is a complete return to the first principles. The message makes this clear. It is the one message (besides Smyrna) in which the Lord does not say, "I have against thee," it is that which pleases Him and which He commends. It is a revival and turning back to the first love. The Lord Jesus Christ is once more as the all absorbing object before the heart; Philadelphia repudiates all that dishonors Him and owns alone that worthy, ineffable Name. It is a faithful remnant gathering around His Name as there was a faithful remnant in the closing days of the Old Testament (Mal. 3:16-17). All human pretensions are rejected. The truth of the unity of all believers is owned and manifested in brotherly love towards all the saints. They walk in the path of separation, in self-judgment, in lowliness of mind; they have a little strength, which means weakness; they are a feeble few. Twice the Lord speaks of obedience to His Word. "Thou hast kept My Word"--"Thou has kept the Word of My patience." And the Philadelphian does not deny His Name.

These are the two chief characteristics of this phase of Christianity during the closing days of the professing Church on earth: Obedience to His Word and faithfulness and devotion to His Name. The Word and the Name are denied in the last days. The apostasy of Christendom consists in the rejection of the written Word and the living Word. And turning their backs upon a dead profession, going on in confessed weakness are such paralyzed in their service? Far from it! The Lord promises to open the door for service which no man can shut. Every child of God may test this. True and continued service is the result of true and continued faithfulness to the Lord. Especially is this service to be blessed to those who hold to a perverted Judaism (verse 9). And there is the great promise, which they believe and hope for, the coming of Himself to keep them out of the great tribulation (verse 10). In Philadelphia there is a revival of prophetic truth, an earnest waiting for the coming of the Lord. Philadelphia is not a defined church-period, but rather a description of a loyal remnant called out by the Spirit of God and bearing the final testimony to the whole counsel of God by word and deed. If the reader desires to please the Lord, then study the details of the message to Philadelphia and walk accordingly.

Verses 14-22. Laodicea means "The judging or rights of the people." It is opposite of Nicolaitanism. The domineers of the people still go on in Rome, but in Protestantism the people (the laity) arise and claim their rights and do the judging. This condition was also foreseen by the Apostle Paul. "For the time will come when they (The laity) will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3). We see in Laodicea the final religious and apostate conditions of Protestant Christendom and the complete rejection of the professing body. "I will spew thee out of my mouth." He Himself is seen standing outside, which shows that He is rejected. But infinite grace! He knocks and is still willing to come in and bestow the riches of His grace.

The Philadelphian Christian, who is separated from the Laodicean state, whose heart is filled with the love of Christ can learn a lesson here. If our Lord stands outside and yet knocks and waits in patience, we too with Him outside of the camp where He is disowned, can try to gain admittance to the Laodicean hearts. Epaphras did this (Col. 4:12-13). Laodicea consists in a proudly boasting spirit with total indifference to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His Name. It is a religiousness without any truth nor the power of the Holy Spirit. Lukewarmness expresses it all. "Lukewarmness, a perfect jumble of sacred and worldly matters. The word does not point chiefly to half heartedness. But as lukewarmness is produced by pouring of hot and cold water together in the same vessel, so in the Laodicean state, intense worldliness will be varnished

over by plausible and humanitarian and religious pretences."

Great reformation movements for the advancement of religion and the betterment of the world, the rejection of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation, are characteristic features of this final phase of Christendom. It will continue and wax worse and worse till His patience is exhausted. Then the true Church will be caught up with the departed saints to meet Him in the air, and Laodicea will be spewed out of His mouth. It is important to notice that Thyatira (Rome), Sardis (Protestantism) and the two phases of Protestantism represented by Philadelphia and Laodicea co-exist. They go on together. This is seen by the fact that in each our Lord speaks of His second coming (2:25; 3:3; 10-11, 16). The Lord takes His own to Himself. Rome and an apostate Protestant Christendom continue on earth during the period of judgment, preceding the visible coming of the Lord.

III. THE THINGS WHICH ARE AFTER THESE, THE END OF THE AGE, THE CONSUMMATION, AND FINAL MESSAGES (4-22)

CHAPTERS 4-5

1. The open door and the vision of the throne (4:1-3)
2. The twenty-four elders and the throne (4:4-5).
3. The four living creatures and the worship (4:6-11)
4. Who is worthy to open the book? (5:1-3)
5. The answer (5:4-5)
6. The vision of the Lamb (5:6-7)
7. Worship and praise (5:8-14)

Verses 1-3. The scene changes suddenly. We are no longer on earth but are transported into heaven. The true Church is gone and the apostate Church, while still on earth to pass into the judgments of the great tribulation, is no longer owned by the Lord and, therefore, not mentioned. That is why the word "church" disappears entirely from the book after the third chapter. The open door and the voice which calls "come up hither" and John's presence in glory in the spirit, clearly indicate symbolically the fulfillment of 1 Thess. 4:15-17. That for which the faithful remnant waited, the blessed hope of the Church, has suddenly come to pass. The departure of the true Church from the earth will be as sudden as its beginning (Acts 2:1-2).

John's first vision in heaven is the established throne, the sign and symbol of the universal government of God. While thrones on earth begin to totter and to fall and man's day closes in the predicted upheavals, there is a throne which cannot be affected or disturbed. Yea, He who sitteth there and looks down upon earth and sees man's rebellion and madness laughs at them and holds them in derision (Psalm 2:4). The occupant of the throne was to look upon like a jasper (rather the diamond) and a sardine stone. Our Lord and the glory of His person are symbolically represented in these stones. His glory in the brilliant stone, His redemption work in the blood-red sardine. The rainbow in emerald-green tells us that in the judgment about to come upon the earth mercy will also be remembered. It is the covenant sign. Though judgments come, yet mercy is in store for Israel and the earth.

Verses 4-5. Who is represented by these twenty-four elders? They cannot be angels. Angels are never seated upon thrones (not seats, as in the Authorized Version), nor are they crowned, nor can they sing redemption's song as the elders do. There is only one possible meaning. They represent the redeemed, the saints in glory. They are priests (clothed in white) and they are kings (crowned); they are the royal priesthood in the presence of the throne. And why twenty-four? It points us back to the work David did for the temple. He appointed twenty-four courses of the priests (1 Chron. 24). Twice twelve would suggest the saints of the Old and New Testaments.

There were lightnings and voices and thunderings. This is repeatedly stated. See 8:5, 11:19, 16:18. It is the symbol of God's throne in its judicial aspect.

Verses 6-11. The sea of glass is a reminder of the great laver in Solomon's temple in which the priests had to wash. Now it is solidified because no more water is needed for the cleansing of the saints. The word "beast" should be changed to "living creatures" or "living ones." They are not symbolical of the Church, or a special class of saints, but they are the same supernatural beings seen in the Old Testament and always in connection with the throne and the presence of Jehovah. They are the cherubim of Ezekiel's great vision, chapters 1 and 10. Their constant cry, "Holy, Holy," reminds us of the seraphim also (Isa. 6). The worship here is the worship of Him who is the creator.

Chapter 5:1-3. Much has been written about the meaning of the book written within and on the back side, and sealed with seven seals. What the book contains is no secret whatever. Beginning with the sixth chapter the seals are opened and after they are all broken the contents of the book are made known. The book contains the judgments for this earth preceding His coming in power and glory and the beginning of His reign. It is, therefore, the book of the righteous judgments of God, preceding the glorious manifestation of the King of Kings.

Verses 4-5. John receives the answer to the question the strong angel had proclaimed. One of the elders told him, "Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and the seven seals thereof." No further comment is needed; the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lion of Judah and the Root of David. "The King's wrath is as a roaring lion" (Prov. 19:12). He is now to be revealed in mighty power and strength to execute judgment. (See Gen. 49:9.) And He is also the Root of David.

Verses 6-7. And now He is seen who alone is worthy to open the book. He does not appear as a lion in majesty, but He is seen by John as a Lamb standing, as having been slain. The Lamb slain is the lion. His victory was gained by dying, and, therefore, He must have as the lion the victory over all His enemies. Thrice the number seven is repeated revealing His perfection. Notice especially three descriptions. He is "in the midst." He is the center of God's government and of heaven itself, as He is for His people the center of all their thoughts and affections. He is seen "as a Lamb standing." Now He is seated at the right hand of God, but when the time comes when His enemies are about to be made His footstool, He will arise to act. He will arise and have mercy upon Zion (Psa. 102:13). And He is seen as "the Lamb slain." The Greek word here suggests "slain in sacrifice."

Verses 8-14. A great worship scene follows at once. The four living creatures join in with the elders, but the latter alone have harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. The harps express their great joy and praise and the bowls full of incense denote the priestly ministry of the redeemed. Such is part of our glorious future, an endless praise of deepest joy, and perfect ministry. The prayers of the saints are not the prayers of the past, but the prayers of Jewish saints, so beautifully rewritten in the Psalms, when the time of Jacob's trouble is on the earth. And then the new song! This is redemption's song, the song of redeeming love; the old song was the praise of God as the Creator in His glory (job 38:7). Redemption is now accomplished for the saints in glory; they look forward to the glorious manifestation with Himself and the great new song bursts forth. The praise of Him becomes universe-wide. The innumerable company of angels joins in it. "The number of them was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands." (This is according to the Greek.) And the praise described here leads us on to the time when God will be all in all. It is the never-ending praise, the hallelujah-chorus of redeemed Creation! The four living creatures say "Amen"; the elders worship. Omit "Him that liveth forever and ever." as these words do not belong here.

CHAPTERS 6:1-8:5

The Opening of the Seven Seals

1. The first seal (6:1-2)
2. The second seal (6:3-4)
3. The third seal (6:5-6)

4. The fourth seal (6:7-8)
5. The fifth seal (6:9-11)
6. The sixth seal (6:12-17)
7. Parenthesis: The remnant of Israel (7:1-8)
8. The saved multitude (7:9-17)
9. The seventh seal (8:1-5)

Verses 1-2. The Lamb, invested with all the authority to execute judgment, having received His commission from God, begins now to open the seals of the book which is in His hands, the hands which were once nailed to the cross. It is evident that the breaking of the seals does not begin till His saints are gathered around the throne in glory. Until then it is still the day of grace. When the first seal is opened one of the living creatures said in voice of thunder, "Come." The words "and see" must be omitted here and in verses 3, 5 and 7. A rider upon a white horse appears; his is a bloodless conquest. He has a bow, but no arrow. He receives a crown and goes forth to conquer. Many expositors make this rider the Lord Jesus or some power which represents Him. It is positively incorrect. The rider here is a great counterfeit leader, not the personal Antichrist, but the little horn which Daniel saw coming out of the ten-horned beast (Dan. 7). This coming leader of the revived Roman empire will go forth to conquer and become its political head. He is Satan's man as we shall see later.

Verses 3-4. The second seal reveals a rider upon a red horse. He takes away the false peace, which the rider upon the white horse as a divine judgment act established. The universal peace of which the world dreams without the presence of the Prince of Peace, will be of short duration. Another awful war follows. It will not be war alone between nation and nation, but it will be a world-wide reign of terror and bloodshed, a carnage unknown before in the history of the world. See in Matthew 24 how our Lord mentions the great conflict of nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

Verses 5-6. The black horse rider brings famine, exactly what our Lord mentions next in Matthew 24: "There shall be famines." Famine follows war and inasmuch as the second seal brings the greatest war, the third seal will bring the greatest famine. The judgments of God fall then on the earth. Our Lord also mentions famines.

Verses 7-8. The next rider under the fourth seal is named death. And Hades, the region of the unseen (not hell), is populated. Sword, hunger, death, that is pestilences and the beasts of the earth, claim an awful harvest (Ezek. 14:21). And so our Lord spoke of "pestilences." These four seal judgments are hardening judgments.

Verses 9-11. The four living creatures have uttered their four-fold "Come." They are thus seen in connection with the providential government of the world. Under the fifth seal the scene changes completely. John saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain. And they cry, "How long, O Lord!" Who are they? Not the martyrs of past ages. They are risen from the dead and are in glory with redeemed bodies. The words of the Lord in the Olivet discourse give us the key. Speaking to His Jewish disciples He said: "Then shall they deliver you up, and shall kill you and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake" (Matt. 24:9).

The Lord speaks of another company of Jewish disciples who will bear a witness during the end of the age, after the rapture of the Church. He will not leave Himself without a witness. He calls a remnant of His people Israel and they bear a witness to the coming of the Messiah, their coming Deliverer and King. Many of them suffer martyrdom. Their cry, "How long?" is the well-known prayer of Jewish saints; and their prayer to have their blood avenged is equally a Jewish prayer. Christians are not supplicating for vengeance on their foes. The prayer for vengeance refers us to the imprecatory psalms prewritten by the Holy Spirit in anticipation of the final persecution of Jewish believers. And the fellow-servants and their brethren, who are yet to be killed (verse 11), are the martyrs of that remnant during the final three and one-half years, which is the great tribulation.

Verses 12-17. Are the things mentioned under this seal to be taken in a literal sense or symbolically? Most of it is symbolical, yet at the same time great physical phenomena are also involved. The earthquake possibly means a literal earthquake. "Earthquakes in diverse places" our Lord predicted. And they increase as the age draws to its close. But the language is symbolical. Everything is being shaken in this poor world. The civil and governmental powers on earth all go to pieces; every class from kings to slaves is affected by it and terrorized. The political and ecclesiastical world is going to pieces. And when these shaking times have come, when thrones fall and anarchy reigns, when the great collapse of civilization and human society has come with signs on earth and in heaven, the earth-dwellers will see in anticipation the approaching day of wrath. Terror fills every breast and those who sneered at prayer, as the Christ-rejectors do now, will gather for a prayer-meeting to appeal to the rocks to cover them. Read the following Old Testament passages in connection with this seal: Isaiah 24, 34:2-4; Joel 2:30-31; Zephaniah 1; Haggai 2:6-7.

Chapter 7:1-8. This is the first parenthesis. It must not be taken chronologically. The six seal judgments extend over the entire period of the ending age. The rider upon the white horse will be on the scene to the end, wars will continue to the end, and culminate in the battle of Armageddon, and so do the famines and pestilences. And the sixth seal brings the end in view. We shall see the correspondence with the seventh trumpet and seventh vial later. The trumpet and vial judgments are more intense and more terrible than the seal judgments. In a certain sense they are parallel; the effect of each is continuously felt. The parenthetical vision of the seventh chapter also covers the entire period of the last seven years and brings before us even the vision of what will be after the great tribulation.

How much confusion would have been avoided if expositors and Christians in searching for the meaning of this vision, had not lost sight of two great facts: 1. This chapter can have no application to the Church on earth, nor to the Church in glory, for the simple reason that the Church is already complete and translated to glory. 2. The vision states clearly that the sealed company is "of all the tribes of the children of Israel."

The sealed company is of Israel. After the Church is removed to glory, when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in (Rom. 11:26) the Lord will turn in mercy to Israel and call, before the judgments fall, a remnant which will also be sealed (See Ezek. 9). This remnant is frequently seen on the pages of Old Testament prophecy. This sealed company also bears a great testimony. They are the preachers of the gospel of the kingdom, as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Matt. 24:14). Therefore, during the time when the judgments are executed from above there will be a world-wide preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, proclaiming the coming of the King, calling to repentance and faith in His Name, and offering mercy still.

Verses 9-17. The application of this passage of Scripture to the redeemed Church in glory is wrong. This Scripture does not apply to the Church in glory, but to saved Gentiles on earth. It is a company which comes "out of the great tribulation." The Church enters the glory before that great tribulation begins. The great multitude represents those Gentiles who will hear the final testimony and believe. They will have turned in repentance to Him and will be washed in His precious blood. Our Lord speaks of them in the great judgment of the nations as sheep, who stand at His right hand and inherit the kingdom (Matt. 25:31, etc.). The brethren of our Lord mentioned in Matthew are the remnant of Israel. (For a complete exposition see *The Gospel of Matthew*, by the author of this volume.) This great company, therefore, does not stand before a heavenly throne, but before the millennial throne on earth. It is a millennial scene after the tribulation is passed.

Chapter 8:1-5. The silence in heaven when the seventh seal is opened is indicative of the solemn things which are now to come. The scroll is now fully opened and there is an ominous hush as the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets of judgment. John beholds these seven angels, but before they begin to sound "another angel" is seen standing at the altar. This angel is not a creature, but like the angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament, is our Lord Himself. He is seen as the Priest in behalf of the praying, suffering saints on earth. No angel can offer the prayers of the saints, but He, who is the one intercessor, alone can do that. And for what do they pray on earth? For mercy for those who persecute the remnant of Israel? No! They pray for divine intervention, for the fire of judgment as Elijah did.

CHAPTERS 8:6-11:18

The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets

1. The first trumpet (8:6-7)

2. The second trumpet (8:8-9)
3. The third trumpet (8:10-11)
4. The fourth trumpet (8:12-13)
5. The fifth trumpet (9:1-12)
6. The sixth trumpet (9:13-21)
7. Parenthesis: The angel and the little book (10:1-11)
8. The temple (11:1-2)
9. The two witnesses (11:3-12)
10. The earthquake and the seventh trumpet (11:13-18)

Chapter 8:6-7. The judgments which follow can hardly be fully interpreted at this time. It would be folly to dogmatize about them. The historical application we reject, because the scope of the book makes it clear that these judgments have not yet taken place. What many of these things mean may perhaps never be fully understood till they are actually in fulfillment. The first four trumpet judgments evidently stand by themselves. The fire the Lord cast down is doing its work. The first trumpet manifests the same evidences of divine wrath as came upon Egypt, when Israel suffered there, under the seventh plague (Exodus 9:23). Hail (heat withdrawn), fire and blood are all symbols of divine wrath. The trees and the green grass were burned up. The green things are symbols of agricultural and commercial prosperity.

Verses 8-9. That this is not a literal mountain is obvious. A mountain in Scripture language represents a kingdom (Isaiah 2:2; Zech. 4:7; Psalm 46:2; and especially Jer. 51:25). The sea is typical of nations. Some kingdom, internally on fire, signifying probably revolution, will be precipitated into the restless sea of nations, and the result will be a still greater destruction of life and commerce, which is represented by the ships.

Verses 10-11. In the preceding trumpet judgments things were cast upon the earth, but here is a star which falls. It is some person who claimed authority and who becomes an apostate, whose fall produces the awful results given here. It may be the final Antichrist who first may have claimed to be for Israel a great teacher with divine authority and then takes the awful plunge. Wormwood is his name and the waters became wormwood and bitter.

Verses 12-13. The sun, the moon and the stars are now affected. The sun is the symbol of the highest authority; the moon, who has not her own light, is symbolical of derived authority; and the stars are symbolical of subordinate authority. The symbolical meaning of this trumpet judgment is that all authority within the revived Roman empire will be smitten by the hand of one above and as a result there will be the most awful moral darkness. These four trumpet judgments tell of prosperity taken first from the earth; a great power burning with the fires of revolution affecting the nations; a great leader will fall and become wormwood; and authority disowned and smitten will fill the territory of the Roman empire (Europe) with the densest darkness.

Chapter 9:1-12. The remaining three trumpets have a "woe" attached to each. This is announced in the last verse of the preceding chapter, where the word angel should be "eagle." An eagle, the bird of prey, proclaims the threefold woe. He acts thus as a herald of great judgments (Matt. 24:28, Rev. 19:17-18). The fifth trumpet is a special judgment upon apostate Israel: because those who suffer are they "which have not the seal of God on their foreheads" (verse 4). The great tribulation in the second half of the week, comes now into prominence. If we turn to chapter 12:12 we read something similar to the eagle's message of woe. "Woe unto the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

Preceding the sounding of the fifth trumpet the eagle proclaimed the woe upon the inhabitants of the earth. The star which is seen fallen from heaven with the key of the pit of the abyss is Satan himself cast out of heaven. The details of this event we learn in the twelfth chapter. He has the key to the pit of the abyss, the same word "deep," used in Luke 8:31. "And they (the demons) besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep (abyss)." He unlocks the prison house of the fallen angels and the most awful satanic agencies come forth to begin their "dread" work of torment. The smoke first, symbolical of darkening; the locusts next, symbolical of these demon powers. Awful darkness prevails and the most diabolical delusions, producing fearful torments among apostate Israel and the inhabitants of the earth. It is the time of the strong delusion (2 Thess. 2:4-11) which has come. And over them is a king. His name is given in Greek and Hebrew, showing that it is both Jew and Gentile that come under His power. Both names mean destruction.

Verses 13-21. The sixth angel is commanded by a voice from the horns of the golden altar to loose the four angels who are found at Euphrates, and as a result an innumerable company of horsemen is released. (Greek: twice ten thousand times ten thousand, that is, 200 million. The number would indicate the immense, uncountable hordes.) They are prepared for a specific time to do their work. Euphrates is once more mentioned under the pouring out of the sixth vial. We believe the sixth vial judgment gives the key to these horsemen here. Euphrates does not mean the Turkish Empire, as we shall more fully show when we come to the sixth vial. This river was both the boundary line of the old Roman Empire and the land of Israel. Restraining influences held back the tide of nations on the other side of the river, this restraint is now removed and therefore a great invasion takes place. As the land of Israel is nearest it will suffer first, but the revived Roman empire will be the objective of these invading hordes. The "third part" stands for the Roman Empire, the coming European confederacy. This invasion is under the king of the north. It is seen in its beginning here and is consummated under the sixth vial. There the "kings of the sunrise" are included. And under the sixth vial they are more specifically gathered for the great day of God Almighty.

Chapter 10:1-11. The proclamation of the mighty angel is the first recorded event in this parenthesis. Who is this angel? It is Christ Himself. We saw our Lord in angel's form before the opening of the seventh seal and then He appeared in priestly dignity. Here before the sounding of the seventh trumpet He appears again in the same form, but He is called a mighty angel and we behold Him in royal dignity. The cloud, the rainbow, the face like the sun, His right foot upon the sea, the left on the earth, the voice like a lion and the seven thunders, all declare this to be correct. The hour is rapidly approaching when the kingdoms of this earth are to become His kingdom. This is seen under the seventh trumpet. And, therefore, He is seen now in this attitude of royal dignity. The words which He speaks (verses 6 and 7) bear out this interpretation. "There shall be no longer delay." Man's day is about to close. The mystery of God is now to be finished, "as He hath declared to His servants, the prophets"; or in better rendering "the mystery of God also shall be completed according to the good tidings which He declared by His own servants, the prophets." How great has been that mystery! Evil had apparently triumphed; the heavens for so long had been silent. Satan had been permitted to be the god of this age, deceiving the nations. And Israel, too, is included in this mystery. And now the time has come when the mystery of God will be completed, when the glorious messages, the good tidings of the prophets concerning Israel's blessing and the kingdom, will be fulfilled.

But what is the little book which the angel holds in His right hand? It is not a sealed book, but open. It stands for the prophecies in the Old Testament relating especially to Israel during the time of the great tribulation, which is yet to come upon the earth, culminating in the personal and glorious appearing of the Lord to begin His millennial reign.

Chapter 11:1-2. We see at once how Jewish things come now into view. To apply these verses to the Church and make the temple the Church is absolutely wrong. The temple and the altar are Jewish; the holy city is Jerusalem. After the Church has left the earth the Jewish people will be fully restored to their own land, and their land restored to them. They will possess Jerusalem once more. When the Jews are once more masters in their own promised land they will erect another temple and then restore the Levitical worship as far as it is possible. Such a temple must be in Jerusalem. (See Isaiah 66:1-4.) In that temple the personal Antichrist, the beast out of the land of whom we shall read in chapter 13, will appear and claim divine worship. (See 2 Thess. 2:3-4.) Apostate Israel in corrupt alliance with equally apostate Gentiles is seen in the opening verses of this eleventh chapter, as the court without the temple. But in the midst of this corrupt mass, which will follow the delusion of the Antichrist and accept Satan's man as their Messiah, there will be the God-fearing remnant. This remnant is here divinely recognized as worshippers. Therefore that coming is called "the temple of God," because the Lord owns the true worshippers found in the midst of the unbelieving mass.

Verses 3-12. Much has been written on these two witnesses who will appear in Jerusalem. It is clear they are still future and their work will be in that city. Some make them Enoch and Elijah and others think they will be Moses and Elijah returned in person. Some have claimed to be a reincarnation of Elijah. Such claims are fanatical. No second coming of Moses is anywhere promised in the Word. Something, however, is said about the work of Elijah in the future (Mal. 4:5-6). But the words of our Lord in Matt. 11:14, speaking of John the Baptist, and Matt. 17:12, seem to make clear that no literal coming of the same Elijah, who went into glory, without dying, is meant. Yet the deeds of these two witnesses clearly link them with the work of Moses and Elijah. They each do both the things Moses and Elijah did separately. We take it then that these two witnesses represent the great testimony to be given in Jerusalem during the 1,260 days of the great tribulation. Perhaps the leaders will be two great instruments, manifesting the spirit of Moses and Elijah, endowed with supernatural power, but a large number of witnesses is unquestionably in view here. They maintain in the midst of the Satanic scenes a powerful testimony for God.

The period of the great tribulation was mentioned in verse 2. Here for the first time the beast is mentioned. This beast coming out of the pit of the abyss, the deep, is the revived Roman empire under the little horn, seen by Daniel on the four-horned beast (Dan. 7:8). While he dominates over the Gentiles, he will turn in fury against these Jewish saints, and the two witnesses will be slain. He makes war with the godly remnant (Dan. 7:21). A part of that remnant will be killed. The vileness of these coming days of Satan's rule on earth is seen in the treatment of the bodies of Jehovah's servants. The wicked are so elated over the silencing of the testimony that they refuse to permit their burial so that they may feast their eyes upon the sickening spectacle. They rejoice and make it a festive occasion, because torment had come to their consciences through the testimony of the slain.

Gentiles, who side with apostate Israel are mentioned, but especially a class which is called "they that dwell on the earth" rejoices over the end of the witnesses. The same class is mentioned several times. Study the passages where they are mentioned: Chapter 3:10, 6:9, 10; 8:13; 11:9, 10; 12:12; 14:6, 7; 17:8. They are the apostate, nominal Christians who are utterly blinded and hardened. Phil. 3:18-19 gives their character and destiny. They claim possession of the earth as belonging to them, but God is not only the God of heaven, He is also "the God of the earth" (Rev. 11:4). God's power is manifested in the physical resurrection and the visible translation of the two witnesses. Their enemies see a great miracle. The apostates who ridicule even now a physical resurrection, who sneer at the blessed hope of a coming translation of the saints, will witness these two great facts. No wonder that a great fear fell upon them. The raised witnesses belong to the first resurrection (20:4).

Verses 13-18. The terror becomes still greater when the whole city is shaken by a mighty earthquake. This is not a symbolical earthquake but a convulsion of nature by which the fourth part of the city falls and 7,000 men are killed. It marks the end of the second woe. Then those who escaped the visitation gave glory unto the God of heaven. It is only inspired by fear. They do not turn in repentance unto God. Here ends the parenthetical vision.

The seventh trumpet brings us to the very end of the tribulation and to the beginning of the millennial reign. It is Jerusalem's deliverance. He who alone is worthy receives the kingdom. How clear this ought to make the fact that our Lord has no earthly kingdom now, but He receives the promised kingdom on the earth at the end of these things. See Dan. 7:14. Heaven worships too; they celebrate the fact that He has taken His great power. It is a review of all that takes place and what follows when He appears out of heaven. The nations were full of wrath (Ps. 2; 46:6); His wrath is come; resurrection will follow; this points to the time after the kingdom (chapter 20:12). And His servants, the prophets and the saints, receive their rewards, to reign with Him.

CHAPTERS 11:19-13

Satan's Power and Masterpiece

1. The vision of the opened temple (11:19)
2. The woman with child (12:1-5)
3. The escape of the woman (12:6)

4. War in heaven (12:7-12)

5. The dragon persecuting the woman (12:13-17)

6. The beast out of the sea (13:1-10)

7. The beast out of the earth (13:11-18)

Chapter 11:19. What follows now brings the great tribulation, the 1,260 days, into prominence. As we have seen the seventh trumpet takes us right to the end. But now we are led back.

Verse 19 of chapter 11 belongs properly to the twelfth chapter. The ark contains the covenant made with Israel. This is now to be remembered and connected with it are the manifestations of coming wrath for those who oppress His people.

Chapter 12:1-5. Who is represented by the sun-clothed woman? Romanists have made out of her the Virgin Mary. Many expositors claim it is the Church which is represented by this woman. Some claim the woman is the professing Church and the man-child represents, according to their view, a class of overcomers who will escape the tribulation. This is a favored interpretation of some of the so-called "holiness people."

In the light of the scope of this book the woman cannot possibly have anything to do with the Church. Again, Christian Science has made the most absurd claim that this woman represents that instrument of Satan, the deluded woman, whom they worship as the founder of their cult. A hundred years ago another sect existed in England under the leadership of a woman, who also claimed to be the one of this vision. We do not need to seek long for the true meaning of the woman seen by John. She represents Israel. Everything in the symbolical statements bears this out, especially the crown with the twelve stars (Gen. 37:9).

"Thus she is seen clothed with the glory of the sun--that is, of Christ Himself as He will presently appear in supreme power as Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2); for the sun is the ruler of the day. As a consequence, her glory of old, before the day-dawn, the reflected light of her typical system, is like the moon under her feet. Upon her head the crown of twelve stars speaks naturally of her twelve tribes, planets now around the central sun."

It is Israel, what she is in the purposes of God. And the child, the nation brought forth, is the Messiah, Christ. Even so Paul writes of Israel, "of whom as according to the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5). The identity of the child is established beyond controversy by the fact that the child is caught up unto God and His throne, destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 2:27). The great red dragon, the enemy of the woman and the child, is Satan. Seven crowns are symbolical of his authority as the god of this age and the ten horns symbolical of his power. These historical facts are seen first through this vision. But this is done for the one purpose of bringing into view what is yet in store of Israel during the end time. Christ ascended upon high, took His place at the right hand of God, is waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. Then the present Christian age began. It is not recorded in this vision at all. He who came from Israel and who was rejected by His own, is nevertheless Israel's Messiah, the hope of Israel. In Him and through Him alone the promises made to Israel can be fulfilled. The fulfillment of these promises is preceded by great sorrows and tribulation, the travail pains which come upon Israel during the great tribulation, before He, whom Israel once disowned, is revealed as Deliverer and King. And the red Dragon will do His most awful work during that period of tribulation, a work of hatred against the faithful seed of the woman.

Verse 6. The flight of the woman, Israel, has been taken by some to mean the dispersion of that nation during this age and Israel's miraculous preservation. But this is incorrect. It is true Israel has been miraculously preserved and Satan's hatred, too, has been against that nation. But here we have a special period mentioned, the 1,260 days, the last three and one-half years of Daniel's seventieth week. It means, therefore, that when the Dragon rises in all his furious power to exterminate the nation, God will preserve her. However, before we are told the details of that preservation and Satan's hatred, we read of the war in heaven. Satan is cast out of heaven, down upon the earth. Verses 15-17 and the entire chapter 13 will tell us what he will do on the earth.

Verses 7-12. This great scene takes place before the great tribulation begins. Satan's place is not in hell at this time. As we saw in the message to Pergamos his throne is on earth, he is the god of this age. His dominion is in the air, he is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). Our present conflict as believers is "against principalities, against authorities, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the wicked spirits in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12). Satan as the accuser of the brethren has access even into the presence of God. His accusations are ended. All the redeemed are gathered before the throne. All the malice and power of Satan could not frustrate the purpose of God. His grace and power have been victorious. Thus when the saints come into the heavenly possession Satan's dominion there is at an end. The purchased possession, the region above, will be redeemed by the power of God (Eph. 1:13).

Michael and his angels will begin their short and decisive war against Satan and his angels. Michael is the one archangel mentioned in Scripture. It is not the first time he meets Satan face to face (Jude 9). And Daniel speaks of Michael, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12: 1). From this we learn that Michael will not only cause the expulsion of Satan out of heaven, but he will also stand up for the believing portion of Israel.

Satan is then cast out into the earth and his angels are cast out with him. It is identical with what we have seen already under the fifth trumpet, the star fallen out of heaven, opening the pit of the abyss with the darkening smoke and the locust swarms coming forth. Then there is joy in heaven because the accuser is cast down and his accusations are forever silenced. And the "woe" is pronounced upon those who dwell on the earth.

Verses 13-17. He turns in fury against the woman which brought forth the man-child. Satan realizes now that his time is short. His exclusion from heaven will soon be followed by his arrest and imprisonment in the pit for a thousand years, and after that there is prepared for him his eternal home of misery, the lake of fire. As he knows that Israel is mostly concerned in the final drama, and the believing portion of that nation will inherit the kingdom, he turns in wrath against them. Verse 6 should be connected with verse 14. It is symbolical language again we have here. The wilderness is a place of isolation, and the place prepared, speaks of God's care for them. But it is not the entire nation. The apostate part sides with Satan and with Satan's man, the Antichrist. But there is another part, which is preserved. This part is in the place of isolation among the nations. The water cast out by Satan is symbolical of the hatred which Satan stirs up against the people amongst the nations. But there will be other agencies in the earth by which this Satanic attempt to wipe from the face of the earth this faithful part of the nation will be frustrated.

Chapter 13:1-10. This chapter brings now fully into view the Satanic powers operating during the great tribulation--the forty-two months. Satan's masterpieces are on the earth; energized by him and endued with his powers they work together to stamp out all that is left of the truth on earth. Their combined efforts are directed against the godly remnant of Jews and against those Gentiles who accepted the message of the gospel of the kingdom.

And John sees this first beast having ten horns with crowns and seven heads and these heads have names of blasphemy. Daniel had seen Babylonia, Medo-Persia and Greco-Macedonia under the emblem of the lion, the bear and the leopard. John sees this beast here like a leopard, with bear's feet and lion's mouth. This revived Roman empire is an amalgamation of parts of the previous world empires. The preceding ones are absorbed by the last, the Roman empire. Therefore the revived Roman empire will contain the different elements in one great monster. This Roman empire will be revived in the first part of the final seven years. We saw this under the first seal. Here is the beginning of the period for which the dragon gives to him his power, and his throne and great authority. It becomes now fully possessed by Satan. The ten horns are the ten kingdoms which will exist in that empire. We are told later that these ten kings "have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (17:13).

In the same chapter the beast is also seen coming out of the abyss (17:8) denoting its Satanic origin. The heads represent the seven forms of government which have characterized the empire in the past, the seventh becomes the eighth. One of the heads is especially mentioned; later we read "he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (17:11). He was as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the beast. This head denotes the imperial form of government, which had died, and now is revived in the person of the leader, the prince of Daniel 9:27, the little horn, which Daniel saw in the midst of the ten horns. This will be Satan's man, one of his masterpieces. The whole earth will wonder after that beast and its Satan-possessed head.

Verses 11-18. The second beast is not an empire with a great leader, but a person. The first beast is out of the sea; the second out of the earth (land). The first has ten horns; the second has two. The beast out of the sea comes first; the other beast follows him. The first beast is a political power, the second is a religious leader. The first is a Gentile power and its head a Gentile; the second is a Jew. The first beast has Satanic power; so has the second beast. The second beast induced the worship of the first beast whose dominion is over the entire Roman world and after whom the whole earth wonders; the sphere of the second beast is Palestine. The first beast through its head makes in the beginning of the seven years a covenant with many of the Jews, but in the middle of the week he breaks that covenant (Dan. 9:27). That covenant will probably be the permission given to the Jews to build a temple and to resume their sacrificial worship.

The first and the second beast make a covenant, which marks the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel. But when the little horn, the first beast, becomes energized by Satan, he breaks that covenant. Then the second beast demands the worship of the first beast as well as the worship of himself. This second beast is the final, personal Antichrist. He has two horns like a lamb, and speaks like a dragon. He is a counterfeit lamb and his two horns are an imitation of the priestly and kingly authority of Christ. He is the one of whose coming our Lord spoke (John 5:43). He is the man of sin, the son of perdition described by Paul in 2 Thess. 2. He must be a Jew or his claim of being Israel's true Messiah would not be accepted by the Jews.

Daniel also gives an interesting prophetic picture which bears out his Jewish character and his wicked, satanic ways. See Daniel 11:36-39. This second beast is also called the false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). He does lying wonders. He reigns as the false king in Jerusalem and sits as god in the temple. He will be the religious head of apostate Judaism and apostate Christendom. It is the strong delusion of the second chapter of Second Thessalonians. He also demands the worship of the first beast. He makes an image of the first beast and gives breath to it, so that it can speak. Whoever has not the mark of the beast on hand and forehead cannot buy nor sell, and whosoever does not worship the beast will be killed. And those who worship the beast and receive the mark are lost souls. Great will be the number of martyrs at that time. To find out what the mark is and some of the other details would only be guesswork. No one can imagine the horrors of that time when Satan rules for a short time on earth and produces the great tribulation, such as was not before on earth, nor ever can be again.

But what does the number 666 mean? If we were to state all the different views on this number and the different applications we would have to fill many pages and then we would not know what is right and wrong. Seven is the complete perfect number; six is incomplete and is man's number. Here we have three times six. It is humanity fallen, filled with pride, defying God. The number 666 signifies man's day and man's defiance of God under Satan's power in its culmination.

CHAPTER 14

Grace ancient

1. The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)
2. The everlasting gospel (14:6-7)
3. Fall of Babylon anticipated (14:8)
4. Wrath for the worshippers of the beast (14:9-11)
5. The blessed dead (14:12-13)
6. The harvest and the vintage (14:14-20)

Verses 1-5. A series of visions follow the dark scenes in chapter 13. The conditions under the domineering power of the two beasts are going to be changed. The Lord will answer the prayers of the persecuted Jewish people and deliver them by His personal coming out of the opened heaven. This glorious manifestation is fully revealed in the nineteenth chapter.

Here it is anticipated. There is much said about this intervention in behalf of the suffering godly remnant in the Old Testament. As an illustration we call attention to Psalms 44 and 45. In the Forty-fourth Psalm we find a description of their suffering and the cry to heaven: "Arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercies' sake." In the Forty-fifth Psalm the answer to this prayer is recorded. The King riding in majesty, dealing with His enemies, surrounded by redeemed companies, is beheld in that Psalm. The entire book of Psalms should be studied from the viewpoint of prophecy; it will shed much light upon these events of this portion of Revelation.

But who are the 144,000 standing with the Lamb upon Mount Zion, having His Name and His Father's Name written on their foreheads? In the previous chapter we saw a company on earth who have the mark of the beast on their foreheads; but here is a company who have His Name and the Father's Name on the forehead. A good many have made of this company a portion of the Church, as first-fruits, who, according to this theory, have lived separated lives and are caught up into heaven, while the other believers, who did not live as near to God as they did, will have to suffer in the great tribulation.

The reader who has followed the unfolding of this book will see at once that such an interpretation is impossible. These 144,000 have nothing to do whatever with the Church. And the 144,000 learn to sing this new song. Who then are the harpers? They are the martyred company seen in connection with the fifth seal and they also include now their brethren which were slain during the great tribulation. The characteristics of the 144,000 are next given. Verse 4 must not be interpreted in a literal sense. Those who apply it to a first-fruits of the Church have done so, and it has led to much confusion and even worse things. Literal impurity is not in view. If it had a literal meaning this company would consist of men only. The woman, the great harlot Babylon and her daughters, the godless and christless religious world-systems (chapter 17) are then on earth. They did not defile themselves with the corruptions and idolatries prevalent on the earth. They kept themselves from spiritual fornication. They are the first-fruits and the earnest of the blessings soon in store for the earth. They were devoted to the Lamb and no lie (not guile) was in their mouth. The lie and delusion of the end-time were utterly repudiated by them.

Verses 6-7. This has nothing to do with the preaching of the gospel during this church-age. The angel must not be taken as a literal angel. The preaching of any gospel to those who dwell on earth is never committed to angels, but to men. This is true of the gospel of grace which redeemed sinners are privileged to proclaim during this age, and of the everlasting gospel during the end of the age. The gospel preached is the gospel of the kingdom and the preachers are this faithful remnant of God's earthly people. Nothing of this preaching was said in chapter 7, though the result, the gathered multitude coming out of the great tribulation is seen there. But here, where the moral and spiritual characteristics of the remnant of Israel are seen, their testimony also comes into view. What this everlasting gospel is we need not explain, for verse 7 gives us the information. It is everlasting because it concerns the Creator as the only object of worship. And it will sound the loudest and go forth in no uncertain sound at the time when pandemonium reigns on earth, and heaven is about to open to manifest the King of glory. How great is God's mercy! And the nations who hear and turn to God will enter the coming kingdom. Read in connection with verses 6 and 7 Psalm 96. It will give you a great deal of light on this portion of Revelation.

Verse 8. This is an anticipative announcement of what will also happen as the great tribulation nears its close. The particulars are not given here. These and what Babylon is and how Babylon the great (city must be omitted in this verse) falls, we shall find in chapters 17 and 18. God's intervention in judgment upon the great whore is simply mentioned here.

Verses 9-11. Here we have a third angelic announcement. It concerns the worshipers of the beast. They drink of the wrath of God. It is "without mixture," that is, no mercy is found in the cup of His indignation. It serves as a solemn warning. Babylon falls prior to the glorious appearing of the King, and the beast will afterward manifest his power as never before. Therefore, the warning concerning the inevitable fate of those who worship the beast and take its mark.

Verses 12-13. It is a voice which proclaims this. It refers especially to those who are martyrs at that time. Certainly all our loved ones who fall asleep in Jesus are blessed. They are absent from the body and consciously present with the Lord. But here is the comfort for those who faithfully resist the worship of the beast, who refuse to take the mark. They become martyrs. The book of Revelation will be read and studied during the great tribulation. Satan through the beasts, will try to annihilate it and the rest of the Bible. But it will be a failure as all former attempts to get the Bible out of the world have failed. Here then, is first the warning. If they worship the beast they will be lost forever. Then there is the alternative to resist the beast and be killed as to the body, but die in the Lord. "From henceforth" means during the tribulation when the great persecution goes on.

Verses 14-20. This brings now the coming of the Son of Man with judgment power into view. The harvest and the vintage have come. The sickle is put in. The reapers used will be angels (Matt. 13:41). The day of vengeance has come. Read Isaiah 63:1-6; Joel 3; Zechariah 12-14. This will greatly help to a better understanding of the harvest and the vintage. The nations and their armies will be in the land; the Assyrian from the north, foreshadowed by the wicked work of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8) will do his awful work, the false prophet, the second beast is in Jerusalem. But then the judgment clouds break. The battle of Armageddon comes into view for the first time in verse 20. How we ought to praise Him for His infinite grace which has separated us from these awful judgments of vengeance and wrath. His people will be at home when these things come to pass.

CHAPTERS 15-16

The Seven Vials

1. The victors' song and worship (15:1-4)
2. The seven angels leave the temple (15:5-8)
3. The first vial (16:1-2)
4. The second vial (16:3)
5. The third vial (16:4-7)
6. The fourth vial (16:8-9)
7. The fifth vial (16:10-11)
8. The sixth vial (16:12)
9. Parenthesis: The seventh vial (16:13-21)

Chapter 15:1-4. And now the last seven angels appear; seven seal judgments first, followed by seven angels with trumpets and next the last seven angels. With these seven angels who have the seven last plagues for the world, the wrath of God is completed. Before these angels go forth we behold another worship scene. Who are they? Not the twenty-four elders, but they are the harpers which we saw harping and singing in chapter 14:2-3. They are the martyred company worshipping in glory. Here we are told of their victory and their song, the song of Moses and of the Lamb. The song of Moses (Ex. 15) is the song of an earthly deliverance and the song of the Lamb concerns a spiritual deliverance. They are redeemed by power and by blood.

Verses 5-8. A wonderful sight it is. There is again an ominous silence similar to the silence in connection with the opening of the seventh seal. The silence is not mentioned. But the text shows an impressive scene of silence. Quietly the procession of these ministers of judgment file out of the temple. They are clothed in pure, white linen; this is symbolical of the righteousness which demands the judgment wrath about to be poured out. And the golden girdles with which their breasts are girdled speak still more of divine righteousness. God in His righteousness must judge and now His wrath in completeness is about to be felt on the earth. The angels left the temple empty-handed, but the four living creatures give into their hands the bowls full of the wrath of God. And behind that smoke is the fire of judgment.

Chapter 16:1-2. The great voice commands the seven angels to go on their way and to empty the bowls upon the earth (Ps. 49:24). And these vials of judgments affect not only the Roman Empire, but the entire world, for the whole world is guilty before God. The first vial poured out produces a grievous sore upon the worshippers of the beast. While it is undoubtedly true that we have symbols also in these vial judgments, it is nevertheless possible that some of these plagues may have, besides the symbolical, also a literal meaning. The sixth plague which came upon Egypt, the first judgment upon the

persons of the Egyptians, was also a sore (Ex. 9:10-11). The worshipers of the beast and of the image will be dreadfully afflicted.

Verse 3. This is poured out into the sea. The sea represents the Gentiles. These will now experience the wrath of God. See the plague in Egypt (Ex. 7:17-25). That was a literal thing; but not so here. Some apply it to the continued carnage which will be one of the leading features of the final history of the times of the Gentiles. That it presents a state of the most unspeakable corruption and spiritual death is obvious.

Verses 4-7. Another scene in which the blood is prominent. The apostates denied the blood, sneered at it as the Unitarians and Christian Scientists do in our own days, and now the angel of the waters saith, "Thou has given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." They have to feel the dreadful results of having rejected the Christ of God and accepted the man of sin. The children of Israel had to taste their own idolatry when Moses put the ashes of the burnt golden calf in the water and made them drink it (Ex. 32:20). They have to taste the vileness and bitterness of their apostasy. They reap what they sow. All the joys of life typified by rivers and fountains of water, are poisoned and corrupted. It is a retributive judgment of God falling upon the earth.

Verses 8-9. The fourth vial is poured into the sun and men are scorched with great heat. Some also apply this literally, but the symbolical meaning is to be preferred. There can be no doubt that the powers of nature will also bear witness to the wrath of God. Famines, droughts, great floods, volcanic disturbances, great and widespread earthquakes and other physical phenomena will occur throughout these days of tribulation. However, the sun here is not the physical sun, but means, as under the fourth trumpet, the supreme authority governing them (the Roman empire). Under the fourth trumpet great moral darkness came upon all; here it is fearful, fiery agony "scorched with great heat." The government, Satan-ruled as it is, becomes now the source of the most awful torment to those who are under its dominion. God, in judgment and in His wrath, permits those terrible things to come to pass. Everything under these vial judgments will become more aggravated than under the trumpet judgment.

Verses 10-11. Under the fifth trumpet we saw the star fallen from heaven. It synchronizes with chapter 12:7-12-Satan cast out of heaven. Then Satan fallen from heaven gave his power and authority to the beast, the head of the empire. Here the throne (not seat) of the beast is dealt with. His throne and his kingdom are deluged with wrath. All becomes darkness.

Verse 12. Once more the river Euphrates is mentioned. It dries up when the sixth bowl is poured out so that the way of the kings of the east (literal: from the rising of the sun) might be prepared. We have hinted before at the correspondence between the trumpet judgments and the pouring out of the vials. This now becomes very marked, for under the sixth trumpet the river Euphrates is also mentioned. There the forces which keep back hostile powers are removed and here the river is dried up.

As already stated the Euphrates was the boundary of the Roman empire and the land of Israel. It is a kind of barrier which separates the west from the east. This barrier symbolized by the river Euphrates is now completely removed, so that the kings from the sunrise can invade the land. This invasion is also seen in connection with the sixth trumpet. The nations must gather from all quarters in and about Palestine. We find much of this revealed in the Old Testament and it would be strange if the Revelation were silent on so important an event. Ezekiel describes a great invader, a confederacy of nations (Ezek. 38 and 39). Gog, Magog, the Prince of Rosh (Russia), Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Cush and Put are mentioned as forming this confederacy. The term "Kings of the sunrise" may even mean the far Eastern Asiatic nations, like China and Japan. The drying up of the Euphrates seems therefore to mean the removal of the barrier, so that the predicted gathering of the nations may take place (Joel 3:2). What began under the sixth trumpet is consummated when the sixth vial is poured out. It is an act of judgment-wrath, while at the same time these opposing nations are gathering for the great day of God Almighty.

Verses 13-21. Just as we had a parenthetical vision between the sixth and seventh seal, and between the sixth and seventh trumpet, so we find here a very brief one between the sixth and seventh vial judgments. Armageddon is not yet, but it now comes in view. Unclean spirits, like frogs, creatures of the slimy, evil-smelling swamps and of the night, now proceed out of the mouth of the trinity of evil. The dragon is Satan; the beast, the political head of the empire, and the false prophet, the Antichrist. Satanic influences, emanating from him and his two master-pieces are then at work; and they are of such a nature that we cannot fully understand them. They are the spirits of demons, working miracles.

The seventh angel pours his vial into the air. This is Satan's sphere. His power and dominion are now dealt with in wrath. While Satan was cast out of heaven, he may still maintain part of the atmosphere immediately above the earth, thus upholding his claim as the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). A great voice declares "It is done." All that follows shows that the climax is reached. The judgment shown is sweeping everything. A great earthquake as under the sixth seal and the seventh trumpet takes place. The great city Babylon is divided into three parts; the cities of the nations fall. It is the hour of collapse, when the stone from above does its smiting work (Dan. 2). "It is done!" The Lord has come. The nineteenth chapter will furnish us the particulars.

CHAPTERS 17-18

Babylon, the Harlot, and Her judgment

1. The description of the woman (17:1-6)
2. The angel's interpretation (17:7-15)
3. The desolation of the whore (17:16-18)
4. The angelic announcement (18:1-3)
5. The call to separation (18:4-5)
6. Her pride and destruction (18:6-8)
7. Lamentation and jubilation (18:9-20)
8. Her utter and eternal destruction (18:21-24)

Chapter 17:1-6. Babylon was mentioned for the first time in this book in chapter 14:8; her fall was then anticipated. In two chapters we have a description of her and the details of her overthrow and complete destruction. Babylon is seen as a great, world-wide ecclesiastical, political and commercial system, and her dwelling-place, from where she exercises authority, is a great city, which is the seven-hilled city Rome. There are many who believe that the literal Babylon is in view here in these two chapters. It is claimed that literal Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates is to become once more a large city and the seat of government during the end of this age. Literal Babylon never was a part of the Roman empire, and as the Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18 is seen in closest identification with the empire, and for a time at least is at its center and capital, the Babylon in Asia is ruled out at once. Rome was the great center of the Roman empire and Rome will once more become the seat where the woman pictured in this chapter will exercise her authority.

In the first part of this chapter we have a description of the great harlot Babylon. Who, then, is this woman, branded a harlot, whom one of the seven angels who poured out the vials showed to John? She represents the papal system in its final power and control in the world. We shall see how this assertion is fully confirmed by the words of this chapter.

We saw in the church-message to Thyatira, which stands for the papacy and its great corruption, that Rome is pictured as the woman Jezebel, corresponding to the woman in the parable of the leaven. And of Thyatira it is said "she repents not." This shows that Rome will continue in her corrupt ways to the end, till judgment overtakes her. She is to be cast into great tribulation (2:22).

When the true Church is caught up, the papal system, as we call it, the Roman Catholic "church" will see a great revival. For a time she has been stripped of the temporal power she once had, but it will be restored to her. Along with the revival of the Roman empire there will be a revival of papal Rome. But we must look very briefly at some of the descriptions of this woman, the harlot. "She sitteth upon many waters." We find the interpretation in verse 15. "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth are peoples, and multitudes, and nations and tongues." Rome even now can boast of her

children among all nations. She gets her support from the whole world. And when she gets her revival she will have a still greater dominion. The kings of the earth will yield once more to her spiritual fornication. Then John saw the woman upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. Who is the Beast she rides? It is the first beast of chapter 13, the revived Roman empire. She becomes identified with that empire. Her attire is purple and scarlet and she is decked with gold, precious stones and pearls. The pope and his cardinals wear these colors. Purple and scarlet are the leading colors displayed in great Romish celebrations; gold, precious stones and pearls describe her enormous wealth and dazzling glory, so attractive to the natural man. And in her hand was a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

How clearly this describes papal Rome. Her service, called worship, her rituals, her splendid edifices, etc., all are fair to behold and pleasing to the eye, like a golden cup. But inside we find her filthiness in doctrine and in practices. She encourages sin by her indulgences. With the celibacy there is also filth connected. And then the vileness and abomination of the confessional. Her shameless character is written upon her forehead. The true Church is to have His name upon the forehead and the great harlot-system bears an inscription.

Verses 7-15. The interpreting angel told John who the beast is, the beast, that was, and is not, and yet is (verse 8). It is the Roman empire as stated before, it was, in an imperial form in John's day. In the fifth century, A.D., it ceased existing as imperial Rome; it is not. But it is to be again, a revival which is here described as coming out of the pit of the abyss (chapter 13). Verse 9 shows Rome (seven mountains), where the woman sitteth. Therefore, Rome speaks of "the See of the Papacy," and "See" is derived from the Latin Sedes, which means seat or throne.

The seven kings or heads in verse 10, mean different forms of government of the Roman empire. Five are fallen; these were kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs and military tribunes. These are past forms of government. But in John's day the empire had the imperial form of government. This is the meaning of "one is." The other and final form of the Roman empire "is not yet come." That is in John's day it had not yet come. It is the Satanic revival and control of the empire as we saw it in chapter 13. And the eighth head, which goeth into perdition, is the man who heads the empire, the little horn, which Daniel saw on the ten-horned beast. The ten horns in verses 12-13 are kings. They correspond to the ten toes on Nebuchadnezzar's image and the ten horns on the fourth beast which Daniel saw coming out of the sea. And these ten kings yield their power and strength unto the beast. In verse 14, their awful future is seen. We shall see this more fully in chapter 19:11-21. They are going to make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb, who is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, will overcome them. With Him are the called, the chosen and the faithful, that is the redeemed, who come with Him and are manifested when He appears.

Verses 16-18. The woman rides the beast for a short time only. She will not be long successful in her regained power. The ten horns, the ten kingdoms, and the beast hate her and turn against the whore. ("And the Beast" is not in the Authorized Version; it is added in the Revised Version and belongs rightfully in the text.) First they were all for her and now they unite in making her desolate and naked and burn her with fire. But more than that "and shall eat her flesh," just as Jezebel was eaten by the dogs. It is God in His righteous judgment who decreed her desolation in this way.

Chapter 18:1-3. Babylon is now seen under another aspect. In the former chapter we have the religious center of Rome and her wicked idolatries, in the present chapter it includes also the whole system of apostate Christendom in its social and commercial aspect, the so-called "Christian civilization" in its final apostate condition and doom. Papal Rome in her short revival becomes the head of apostate Christendom and controls everything till her appointed doom comes upon her. While we saw in the preceding chapter the desolation of the whore by the ten kings and the beast, here we see how God views her and that He dethrones this system in His judgment. A strong angel comes down to announce her doom and to lay bare her inner and most awful corruption. A strong descending Angel whose glory lightened the earth, shows what the boasting thing, she, who bore the blessed name of Christ, has become. (This angel may represent the Lord Himself. If this is correct we have the third manifestation of our Lord in the garb of an angel: 8:3 in His priestly dignity; 10:1 in His royal dignity and here as the herald and executor of the vengeance of God upon Babylon.) She is seen to be the habitation of demons. Even now behind all the denials of the doctrine of Christ and the false doctrines which mark the onward march of the predicted apostasy, demons are the leaders (1 Tim. 4:1).

And the nations drank eagerly her cup and the kings committed fornication with her. These kings are not the ten kings of the Empire for they are used in the judgment of the whore, while the kings mentioned here bewail her destruction (verse

9). And with the system there was connected great commerce; merchants through her became rich.

Verses 4-5. God always calls out His true children from that which is evil. His own must be a separate people. Saints in past centuries have heard this call and left behind the Romish abominations and thousands sealed their testimony with their blood. And in these days in which our lot is cast, days of increasing signs, heralding as never before the approaching end and the homecall of His people to meet Him in the air, in these days God demands the separation of His true children. Christendom is becoming daily more and more the religious camp of apostasy. And, therefore, He calls: "Let us go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13). He who remains in that which denies His Name, is partaker of her sins (verse 4; compare with 2 John, verses 10-11). As all drifts back to Rome and the coming political and religious confederacy, this final Babylon looms up; God's people must hear that call. To whom is this call addressed? Undoubtedly to the remnant of God's ancient people, the believing remnant and also to that large number of Gentiles who hear the final message, the gospel of the kingdom.

Verses 6-8. Like ancient Babylon, the whole apostate system, Rome and all her offspring, was filled with pride. She was lifted up in all her earthly glory and now God breaks her completely. "She shall be utterly burned with fire." As her smoke is to arise forever and ever (19:3) it is possible that the proud city, Rome, the center of the system of apostasy and commerce, will be destroyed by volcanic action, and where the seven-hilled city once stood there may be instead an immense crater, testifying through the millennium of God's righteous retribution. In view of the volcanic conditions on the Italian peninsula this is more than possible.

Verses 9-20. And now follows the great and universal lamentation over the destruction of the great world-system. There is weeping and wailing when at last this anti-Christian civilization, all Christendom united with Rome, and for a time controlling the commerce of the world, is wiped out by the hand of God. The kings, the merchants, the ship masters, the company in ships and sailors, all are seen mourning, weeping and wailing. The destruction of the system and of its proud city affects them all. They bewail their great loss. Notice twenty-eight things are mentioned by them. The first is gold and the last is the souls of men. How this describes Rome! She is the trafficker in souls and the destroyer of souls as well. And in studying the articles of the commerce of apostate Christendom we notice that these are nearly all articles of luxury. The greatest panic has then come and there will be no recovery of the market. The rich men will weep and howl for their misery is come upon them (James 5:1). See also Zeph. 1:11, 15.

Heaven is called to rejoice over her, and three classes are mentioned (Revised Version), saints, apostles and prophets. "For God hath judged your judgment of her." This is the better rendering. The judgment which the saints pronounced on her is now executed. The next chapter shows us more fully the rejoicing heavens.

Verses 21-24. In Jeremiah 51:60-64 we read that Seraiah was commissioned by Jeremiah to attach a stone to the book containing the prophet's words and to cast it into the Euphrates. "And thou shalt say, thus shall Babylon sink and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her and they shall be weary." Here an angel took up a millstone and cast it into the sea, showing by this action the complete and final destruction of the wicked system and the equally wicked city. And what revelation there is in the statement, "for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived." In chapter 20 we read that the old serpent deceives the nations. Sorceries, wicked spirits, demon-powers blinded the eyes of the nations to follow Rome's seductive lure. And thus it is with a lifeless, spiritless Protestantism and its bloodless gospel. The sorceries of Rome, the demons underneath it all, attract apostate Christendom so that all will be united in the great, final Babylon.

So that we may not question that both chapters refer to Rome, though the entire apostate Christendom is also in view, her blood-guiltiness is mentioned once more.

CHAPTERS 19-20:6

The Manifestation of the King and the Millennium

1. Heavenly hallelujahs and the marriage of the Lamb (19:1-6)
2. Heaven opened and His visible manifestation (19:11-16)

3. The battle of Armageddon (19:17-21)

4. The binding of Satan (20:1-3)

5. The thousand-year reign (20:4-6)

Verses 1-10. Once more we find the significant phrase "after these things" (chapter 4:1; 7:1; 18:1). "After these things"--the things which are described in chapters 17 and 18, the fall of Babylon and the complete destruction of the whore and the system over which she presided and domineered, after these things, voices in heaven are heard again. We were first introduced to the heavens in this book in the fourth chapter.

In chapter 18:20 we heard the words addressed to heaven, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." And now we see heaven rejoicing. "I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven saying, "Hallelujah." Hallelujah means "Praise ye Jehovah." This Hebrew word is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Four times this word of praise is found in the beginning of this chapter; the Hallelujah times for heaven and earth are imminent. The book of Psalms closes with many hallelujahs; the blessed time which the Psalms so often anticipate, when the earth is judged in righteousness and the glory of the Lord is manifested, is now at hand. The praise here is on account of the righteousness of God exhibited in the judgment of the great whore "which did corrupt the earth with her fornication" and because the blood of God's servants shed by her is now avenged. The great multitude whose Hallelujah is heard first must be the company of martyrs who died during the tribulation. The souls under the altar and their brethren which were slain later utter this praise now. They are seen as a distinct company from the twenty-four elders. A second hallelujah is uttered by them, while the smoke of the destroyed city goes up forever and ever.

The whole redeemed company, Old and New Testament saints, add their amen and hallelujah to the outburst of praise on account of the execution of the righteous judgment. And they worship God, for it is of the righteousness which accomplished the destruction of the great whore. In the midst of this wonderful and impressive worship-scene the throne begins to be heard. A voice from the throne said: "Give Praise unto God all ye His servants and ye that fear Him both small and great." And the command is at once obeyed. John hears the fourth hallelujah and it is the greatest, the most magnificent. It is the great hallelujah-chorus of heaven. Like the voice of many roaring waters, like the voice of mighty thunders, a great multitude saith, "Hallelujah for the Lord our God Omnipotent reigneth."

Who is this great multitude? In the first verse we heard the Hallelujah of the martyred companies. The twenty-four elders and four living creatures did not join in this first hallelujah. Their hallelujah followed. And now the great outburst of a great multitude. This multitude includes all the redeemed in glory. And they rejoice and give glory for an additional reason which is made known for the first time in this book. The marriage of the Lamb is about to be consummated. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife has made herself ready." The harlot, which claimed to be the bride, being judged, the true bride of Christ is seen in glory. And it is the marriage of the Lamb. His joy is now filled full for He receives her, who is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. The second Man, the last Adam, is joined to her who is to rule and reign with Him.

But who is the bride about to become the Lamb's wife? Some teach that it is Israel to be united with the Lord in the closest bonds. But these expositors forget that the scene is a heavenly one. This marriage does not take place on earth where the faithful remnant looks up, expecting Him to appear for their deliverance, but this marriage is in glory. It is true such relationship is declared to be Israel's in the Old Testament. She was married to Jehovah in a legal covenant and on account of her faithless condition, because Jerusalem played the harlot (Ezek. 16:35), she was put away. For a time Israel was the wife of Jehovah (Is. 54:1) and then on account of her wickedness became divorced. She will be taken back in the day of her national repentance when the Lord comes. But as one who had been divorced she cannot be a bride again. The bride of Christ to become the Lamb's wife is the Church of the New Testament.

All who accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord since the day of Pentecost constitute the bride of Christ. The Church began on Pentecost and her completion will be the translation to glory (1 Thess. 4:17). She is both the body of Christ and the bride of Christ, as Eve was of the body of Adam and also his bride. The Church is the nearest and the most beloved object of His loving heart.

But how has she made herself ready? And what does it mean, "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white for the linen is the righteousness of the saints"? The grace of God has supplied the robe and the precious blood is her title to glory. In this respect she was ready. But the words here refer us to the judgment seat of Christ, that award seat before which we must appear. Then the hidden things are brought to light and the wood and the hay and stubble are burned (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Then "every man shall have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5) and what grace accomplished in each one and through each will be manifested. And the clean white linen "is the righteousness of the saints." The word "righteousness" is in the plural. It means more than the righteousness which we are in Christ or the faith in Him which is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:3). It includes all the blessed results in life and service produced by the Holy Spirit, the practical righteousness of the saints. And yet even these need the washing in that precious blood without which all is unclean and unholy.

And so it is grace after all, as indicated by the word "given" (Revised Version); "it was given to her to be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure." He himself has made her ready and removed every spot, every wrinkle and every blemish. God grant that we His people may daily meditate on this coming glorious event, the marriage of the Lamb, and walk worthy of such a Lord and such a calling. Once more John is commissioned to write: "Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And who can estimate the blessedness of being in His ever blessed presence, at His table, at the marriage supper of the Lamb!

Verses 11-16. And now we reach the great event so often mentioned in the Old Testament, the event for which this world is waiting, the visible manifestation of Him, whom the heavens received, who returns to judge the earth, to receive the promised kingdom and rule over the earth for a thousand years. We have reached the great climax in the Revelation. His own words are now to be fulfilled. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:29-30).

Impressive words--"And I saw heaven opened." Heaven was opened unto Him when He came out of Jordan at His baptism. While His baptism foreshadowed His death in the sinner's place, His resurrection and ascension are foreshadowed in coming out of the waters and the open heaven. In heaven at the right hand of God He has been ever since, unseen by human eyes. At last the time has come when God is to make His enemies as the footstool of His feet. Heaven is opened so that He might be revealed in His glorious majesty. And out of the opened heavens He comes forth. He comes as the mighty Victor to judge in righteousness and to make war. "And behold a white horse; and He that sat thereon was called Faithful and True and in righteousness He doth judge and make war." The white horse is symbolical of victorious warfare and glorious conquest. When, seven years before the first seal had been opened (6:1), a rider appeared upon a white horse achieving great conquest, it was the false king who was then seen in vision. He is as the beast on earth with the King and their armies to make war with the coming King who comes out of the opened heaven. Glorious sight! He is coming to conquer and to claim His inheritance. The appointed day has come in which God "will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Upon His head are many diadems. The saints wear crowns, but He to whom belongs all power in heaven and on earth wears many diadems, encircling His head in dazzling splendor.

"And He had a name written, that no man knew but Himself." And again it is written, "His Name is called the Word of God." And on His vesture and on His thigh there is a name written, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." The unknown Name is the name of His essential deity. No human name can express what He is in Himself "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." His Name "the Word of God" refers us to the Gospel of John. As the Word He is the express image of God, that is, He makes God visible. He is the expression of God in His character, His thoughts and counsels. And the third name mentioned, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," expresses what He is in relation to the earth.

"And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood"--"And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations, and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The blood-dipped vesture has nothing to do with His work on the cross. He is described in Isaiah 63:1-4 as the One who has the day of vengeance in His heart, and this passage in Isaiah is here being fulfilled. The two-edged sword refers us to Isaiah 11:4: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked."

But He is not alone. The armies of heaven follow the great King. They are, like Him, upon white horses and are clothed in fine linen, white and clean. These armies are not angels. It is true, angels will be with Him as He comes, for it is written, then He shall be revealed with His holy angels. Angels will be the reapers in the judgment (Matt. 13:41) when the age ends and they will be used in the regathering of Israel (Matt. 24:31). But the armies here are not angels. They are the glorified saints; the fine linen, white and clean, identifies them fully. In faith and blessed assurance, you, dear reader, and the writer can say, we shall be in that company with Himself as leader. The Son brings His many sons unto glory (Heb. 2:10). What a sight that will be for the earth-dwellers! Each in that company bears His own image; each reflects His own glory.

Verses 17-21. And what a sublime vision comes next! An angel is beheld by the Seer standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he summons the birds that fly in mid-heaven to gather themselves to the great supper of God to eat the flesh of the slain. The birds of prey are summoned in anticipation of the battle of Armageddon which is then imminent. And now the hour of judgment has come. An angel, standing in the sun, the place of supreme authority, gives the invitation to the birds of prey to be ready for the feast which a holy and righteous God will have for them. The day of wrath has come. The slain of the Lord shall be many (Isaiah 66:16).

And down on earth there is the greatest gathering of armies the world has ever seen. The beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire, is the commander-in-chief. The kings of the earth are with him. Vast armies camp on all sides. The great valley on the plains of Esdraelon is filled with soldiers. The hills and mountains swarm with armed men. Satan's power has gathered and blinded this vast multitude to the utmost. The unclean spirits, the demons working miracles, have brought them together to the battle of that day. And the hordes from the north, under the Prince of Rosh are coming later. These vast multitudes from the north and beyond Euphrates are described in Ezekiel 38-39. And in that Old Testament prophecy we find a statement which reminds us of the great supper of God in Revelation. "Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, assemble yourselves and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood" (Ezek. 39:17). "Thus shall ye be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God" (verse 20).

Zechariah 14:2 is now being fulfilled. While the vast armies are covering valleys and hills, the objective will be Jerusalem. All nations are gathered against her. "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." And now as these armies are massed together the great battle of Armageddon takes place. They are ready to make war against Him, who comes through heaven's portals. "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations" (Zech. 14:3). The battle does not consume much time. Sennacherib's army was suddenly smitten and they all perished, and here are armies in comparison with which Sennacherib's forces were insignificant. One mighty blow from above, one flash of glory and all their strength and power is gone. The stone has fallen (Dan. 2). With one blow the dominion and misrule of the Gentiles is at an end.

The kings of the present day might profitably listen to Nebuchadnezzar's letter in Daniel 4. He began at the times of the Gentiles, and has left this letter to be read by his successors. The words our Lord spoke while on earth "on whom this stone falls it shall grind him to powder" have been fulfilled (Matt. 21:44). Such is the awful fate which "Christian civilization" (?) and "Kultur" (!) and a Christless Christendom is rapidly approaching. And while the armies perish as to the body and God's wrath sweeps the earth clean of the mass of apostates, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel, the beast (the head of the empire) and the false prophet (the second beast of chapter 13), that is the false Messiah, the Antichrist, are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. They were not annihilated, for a thousand years later we still find them there (20:10); and still they are in existence and will ever be as individuals in that place of eternal punishment. And those that were slain as to the body will be raised after the millennium and also share the place with the two, whom they followed and worshipped.

Chapter 20:1-3. And now Satan, who was cast out of heaven three and one-half years before the visible and glorious coming of the Lord, and who has been on earth in person, though not beheld by human eyes, is seized to be put into his prison for a thousand years. And the demons, who were liberated by Satan (chapter 9) are likewise shut up in the bottomless pit, though this is not mentioned because it is self-evident. The terms "key" and "great chain" are of course figurative. He is mentioned in all his infamous titles. He is called dragon on account of his horrible cruelty and vileness,

the old serpent on account of his maliciousness, guile and deception; he is the devil, the arch-tempter of man, and Satan because he is the accuser of the brethren, the one who opposed Christ and His people. He is now dethroned as the god of this age, completely stripped of his power; and his dethronement means the complete enthronement of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here is the important statement that this being, the once glorious Lucifer, the Son of the morning and light-bearer, who fell through pride, has been the deceiver of the nations.

Verses 4-6. Thrones are seen next by the Seer. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them." Daniel also saw thrones in connection with the judgment of the beast, but nothing is said of those occupying the thrones in Daniel's vision. Here we have the complete revelation, and several times the blessed statement is made that Christ and His saints shall reign with Him for a thousand years. The new age in which all things are put in subjection under His feet, the personal reign of Christ, in which all His redeemed people have a share, begins. It will last a thousand years. Six times we read of the thousand years in this chapter. Because this coming age will last a thousand years it has been called by the Latin word "millennium." Not a few have made the astonishing declaration that such a period of time during which Christ and His saints reign over the earth has but little foundation in the Scripture.

It is quite true that the only place in which the duration of such an age is given is this great final book of Revelation. And that should be sufficient for any Christian to believe in such an age of a thousand years. However, this age of unspeakable blessing and glory for this earth is revealed throughout the entire Bible. The Old Testament contains hundreds of unfulfilled promises of blessing for Israel, the nations of the earth and even for all creation, which have never seen even a partial fulfillment. Isaiah is full of such promises. In the New Testament there are also passages which clearly teach and point to such an age of glory for this earth. Read Matt. 19:28; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 8:19-23; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20; Phil. 2:9-11. What awfully disheartening pessimism it would be if we had to believe that the terrible conditions prevailing on the earth now, conditions which have steadily become worse, were to continue and that man's work is to remedy them and produce something better. This earth has a bright and glorious future. Nations will some day no longer turn, as they do now, their plowshares into swords, but change their swords into plowshares. Righteousness and peace will surely kiss each other and creation's curse and travail pains will end. Mercy and truth meet together.

But when? Never as long as the great unfoldings of this book, which we have briefly followed, have not come to pass. There can be no better day for the earth as long as He is absent and not on the throne which belongs to Him. But when He comes, when He has appeared in glory and in majesty, then the earth will find her rest and groaning creation will be delivered. As we do not write on the great blessings and glories to come when He comes, we must refrain from following these things. Here in our book the revelation is given that Christ shall reign for a thousand years and His Saints shall reign with Him.

Let us notice briefly the different classes mentioned who are associated with Christ in His personal reign. The entire company of the redeemed, as we saw them under the symbolical figure of the twenty-four elders, occupying thrones and wearing crowns, are undoubtedly meant by the first statement, "they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them." They judge with Him. This is the raptured company whom we saw first in glory in chapters 4 and 5; and we, dear fellow-believer, belong to this company. Then follow the martyrs, whom we saw under the fifth seal (6:9-11): "And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus and for the Word of God." Then we have a third company. "And I saw those who had not worshiped the beast, nor his image, and had not received his mark on their forehead, or in their hands." These are the other martyrs who were slain during the great tribulation, when the beast set up the image and demanded its worship (13). They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The first resurrection is passed and all who have part in it reign with Christ, are priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Oh! wonderful grace which has saved us! Grace which has saved us in Christ and through His ever precious blood delivered us from eternal perdition! Grace which saved us from Satan's power, from sin and all its curse! Grace which has lifted into such heights of glory and has made us the sons of God and the joint-heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ! And how little after all we enter into all these things, which ought to be our daily joy and delight. How little we know of the power of the coming glory of being with Christ and reigning with Him!

After the Thousand Years and the New Jerusalem

1. Satan's last revolt (20:7-10)
2. The great white throne (20:11-15)
3. The eternal state (21:1-8)
4. The vision of the holy city (21:9-27)
5. The glories of the redeemed (22:1-5)

Verses 7-10. Satan who was put into the abyss a thousand years before, is now loosed out of his prison. God permits him to come forth once more. Who would have ever thought of such a thing! The archenemy who had done his vile and wicked work among the human race, for a thousand years put at least into the place of perfect restraint, and now loosed once more to continue, for a brief season, his work! And he finds nations ready for his deception, not a few, but a number "as the sand of the sea." God permits Satan to come out of his prison, so that the absolute corruption of man might be demonstrated. Man has been tried and tested under every possible condition. He has failed in every age. He failed under the law and he failed even more in the grace-dispensation; and now, under the most glorious conditions, during the millennium, when the Lord Himself is known in all the earth and reigns in righteousness, when want and nearly all the sorrows of a ruined creation are banished, when there is peace on earth, man also fails and does not fully respond to a gracious Lord.

But here is a difficulty which many have. Many a sincere post-Millennialist, who has studied the pre-millennial coming of our Lord, has asked this question, "If the whole world is converted during the millennium, how is it then that Satan finds nations ready to side with him after the thousand-year reign of Christ and then leads them on to destructions?" The difficulty is far from being as great as it is generally made. In fact it is easily explained. As far as Israel is concerned, the "all Israel" living, when He comes, the trusting remnant of Israel, they will constitute the blessed nation in possession of all her promised blessings. They are not mentioned as siding with Satan. No more backsliding for that nation. Isaiah 59:20-21 vouches for this.

And the Gentile nations in the beginning of the millennium will also be converted. However, the human conditions of the earth will continue. The nations are not in a glorified state. Marriage will continue. Children will be born during the millennium. Indeed the earth will be populated as never before. Billions of human beings can be sustained upon our planet and they will come into existence by natural generation during the golden age of glory. Wars will be unknown. No longer will the flower of manhood be cruelly murdered by human passion in that legalized horrible thing called war. Earthquakes will no longer sweep thousands upon thousands into an untimely grave, nor can famines and pestilences claim their millions. Nor will there be the great infant mortality. Physical death will no longer be the universal rule, but rather an exception (see Isaiah 65:20).

Now every child born during the millennium of the converted nations comes into the world the same as the children in the present age, it is still true, conceived and born in sin. And it is equally true, they must be born again.

As many children of pious, godly parents in this age are gospel-hardened and live on in sin, though they hear the gospel and see its power, so in the millennium, an enormous multitude will see the glory, live under the best and most glorious conditions the earth has seen since before the fall of man, and yet they will be glory-hardened and only submit to the righteousness of that age and yield obedience through fear, for disobedience to the governing laws of the kingdom on earth, will mean sudden and certain judgment. It is not the obedience produced by a believing, trusting heart, but only a feigned obedience. Three prophetic Psalms which speak of these millennial conditions make this clear, if we consider the marginal reading. "As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me, the strangers shall yield feigned obedience unto Me" (Ps. 18:44). "Say unto God, How terrible art Thou in Thy works! Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies yield feigned obedience unto Thee" (Ps. 66:3). "The haters of the Lord yield feigned obedience unto Him, but their time might have endured forever" (Ps. 81:15). Study these Psalms in their millennial bearing. Thus many nations submit while sin is in their heart and in their blindness they long and hope for the day when they may cast off the restraint. And that day comes when Satan is loosed out of the prison to deceive these nations again.

It was the final attempt of the dethroned usurper to regain his lost dominion. For thousands of years, in the all-wise purposes of God, he was permitted to be the prince of the power of the air and the god of this age. We have followed his history in this book and seen how he was cast out of heaven upon the earth where he caused the great tribulation. Then we beheld him stripped of all his power. The kingdoms of the world became the kingdom of Christ and the old serpent was cast unto the abyss where he remained a thousand years. Loosed for a little season he tried once more to become earth's master. And fire out of heaven devoured the nations who had revolted.

The devil receives his final doom. He is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. He goes to a fixed place, a locality where unspeakable and eternal torment is his portion. This place is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). And all the wicked will share that place. And he finds others there. The first beings who were cast into this final abode were the beast (the emperor of the Roman empire, the little horn of Dan. 7), and the false prophet (the personal Antichrist, the second beast of chapter 13). They were put there a thousand years before, and as they are there as persons it shows they were not annihilated. And they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever--for the ages of ages--never ending--for all eternity. What a solemn truth this is! Yet men meddle with it and deny future, conscious and eternal punishment. Besides these three persons, the nations who were judged and condemned in the beginning of the millennium, when the Son of Man sat upon the throne of His glory (Matt. 25:31), are also in the Lake of Fire.

Verses 11-15. And now we reach the last great judgment scene of God's holy Word. Much confusion prevails among Christians about this judgment. There is no such thing in the Word of God as a universal judgment, nor is there a universal resurrection. Every human being that has died will be raised at some time. Our Lord spoke (John 5:28) of two resurrections, a resurrection unto life and a resurrection unto judgment. The Revelation speaks of the first resurrection. "This is the first resurrection" (20:5). And previously the apostle wrote of a resurrection from among the dead (Phil. 3:11). The first resurrection was finished in the beginning of the millennium. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." The rest of the dead come now into view and they are of necessity the wicked dead, who died in their sins, and whose is the resurrection unto judgment.

Some, like "Pastor" Russell, who echoes the evil teachings of others, have invented a third resurrection, a resurrection of the unsaved for a second chance. In the light of this final Bible book there is no room whatever for such a resurrection, which would give the lost another opportunity. Nor does the rest of the Bible mention such a third resurrection. And this great judgment is not a universal judgment. It is taught that the entire human race, the living and the dead, will appear before this great throne. But this is incorrect, for it saith, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." No living people are there at all. Again the judgment-scene in Matthew 25:31, etc., is spoken of as being the universal judgment and identical with the judgment here in Revelation. But this is another error. In the judgment of Matthew 25 the dead are not there, but living nations are judged in the beginning of the millennium. And these nations are judged on account of the treatment of the Jewish preachers of the gospel of the kingdom heralded by them during the last seven years of the age. They did not accept the last offer of mercy and that is why they treated the messengers as they did.

Furthermore, the throne which the Son of Man occupies in Matthew 25 is upon the earth; the throne in Revelation 20:11 comes into view after earth and heaven fled away. The Church and the saints of God are not concerned at all in the judgment of Matthew 25, nor in the great white throne judgment. They are at that time in His own presence glorified. Every Christian should have these things clearly defined and know that for him, as in Christ, there is no more judgment or condemnation (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1). The judgment seat of Christ before which believers have to appear (2 Cor. 5:10) does not concern their eternal salvation, but their works and rewards.

Who is the occupant of this great white throne? Not God the Father, but God the Son. "The Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). The earth and heaven fled from His face. Sin-stained and defiled as they were they flee away from the face of the Holy One. The great conflagration of 2 Peter 3:7-12 takes place. (See Annotations on 2 Peter 3.) Fire of judgment swept the earth before the millennium, the day of the Lord, began; but the all consuming fire comes after the millennium. out of that great conflagration there arises a new heaven and a new earth (21:1).

But what about the millions of saved Israelites and Gentiles who are on the millennial earth? Where are they during this great conflagration? What becomes of them? That they share the eternal blessings and glories in the eternal state is certain.

But their abode between the burning of the earth and the calling into existence of the new heaven and the new earth is unrevealed. Speculation on it would be wrong. We should accept the silences of Scripture as much in faith as we accept the promises of God.

And John sees the dead standing before the throne. Books were opened and another book was opened, the book of life. "And the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." The books are symbolical; conscience and memory will speak loudly. Twice we read that they are judged according to their works. And in the "book of life" none of their names were written, or they would not have been in that company. "All this would seem to show that, though a millennium has passed since the first resurrection, yet no righteous dead can stand among this throng. The suggestion of the 'book of life' has seemed to many to imply that there are such; but it is not said that there are, and the words 'whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire' may be simply a solemn declaration (now affirmed by the result) that grace is man's only possible escape from the judgment" (Numerical Bible).

The second resurrection takes place. The sea gives up the dead and death and Hades give up the dead. Hades gives up the soul, and death, used here for the grave, gives up the bodies. Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. Both had come into existence because man had sinned, and, therefore, they are cast into the place where all belongs which is contrary to the holiness and righteousness of God. And then that solemn word! "And whosoever was not found written in the Book of life was cast into the lake of fire." It corresponds to that other solemn statement in John 3:36. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." To be written in the "book of life" means to have life in Christ. Not our works, not our character, not our religiousness, not our tears, our prayers or our service can put our names in the "book of life." Grace alone can do it, and grace does it, as we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Reader! is your name written there?

The saints of God are in eternal glory; the wicked dead, the lost, are in an eternal lake of fire and suffer conscious, eternal punishment. And how man, blind, presumptuous man, yea, even such who know God, rise up against this solemn truth, the eternal punishment of the wicked. They accuse God of injustice, as if the judge of all the earth would not do right. That the suffering of the lost differs is obvious. It is eternal, because the evil condition remains unchanged. There is no repentance, no faith, no new birth in hell. As there are different rewards for the faithful service of the saints, so are there different degrees of punishment for the unsaved (Luke 12:47-48). This is the second death, not blotting out of existence, but endless in a separation from God.

Chapter 21:1-8. And now the eternal state comes into view. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and the sea is no more." This is the revelation concerning the final and eternal state of the earth. "Thou hast established the earth and it abideth" (Ps. 119:90); "But the earth abideth forever" (Eccl. 1:4). These divine statements are now fulfilled. Many Christians have a very vague conception of the eternal state of the earth and the abode of the redeemed. They think of it as a spiritual state destitute of any locality. But it is not so. The earth and the heaven abide as definite places throughout all eternity. What a marvellous fact this is! In chapter 20:11 we read that the earth and the heaven fled away and there was found no place. We saw that at that time the great conflagration of which Peter speaks took place, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements, shall be dissolved with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

But we read in the same chapter "nevertheless we, according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (verse 13). During the millennium righteousness reigns upon the earth, but now a state comes for the earth when righteousness shall dwell there. The great burning up meant not an annihilation of the earth and the heavens; God does not annihilate anything, nor does Scripture teach an annihilation of material things and much less the annihilation of human beings, as false teachers claim. The conflagration of the earth and the heaven means their complete purification. The heaven mentioned cannot be the entire heavens; for there is a heaven which cannot be touched by these fires of purification. The heaven is that which surrounds the earth and which was once the peculiar sphere of the great usurper, the prince of the power in the air. And when Peter writes that all this is according to His promise, he has a well-known prophetic statement in Isaiah in mind. "For as the new heaven and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain ." (Isaiah 66:22. See also 65:17).

From this statement we get definite information that the redeemed Israel established upon the new earth will throughout the eternal state be distinct from the saved nations. They will throughout all eternity bear witness of God's faithfulness as

the covenant-keeping God. The new heaven and the new earth are therefore the abodes of the redeemed. The new earth, the eternal glory spot of redeemed Israel and the redeemed nations, and the new Jerusalem will come out of heaven to fill the new earth and the new heaven as well. "And I John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

The new Jerusalem, the holy city, comes into view. During the millennium the city of Jerusalem was known as the place of glory for the earth. Numerous Old Testament predictions were fulfilled. In chapter 20:9, she is called "the beloved city." But in Revelation 3:12 we have another Jerusalem mentioned, the same city which John sees coming down out of heaven, the place of the highest glory. It is the abode of the Church in all her glory; the statement "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" establishes this beyond controversy. She is called "holy" for all is holy; and a "city" because the Saints are in blessed communion and fellowship there. In the highest glory she had her abode. But now she is being revealed in all her eternal glory and beauty.

During the millennial reign this wonderful city was above the earth and from there Christ reigned and His saints with Him. But here she comes down out of heaven. A thousand years before the marriage of the Lamb had taken place (19:7-8), and now after a thousand years of unspeakable glory, she is still seen "as a bride adorned for her husband." And yet all these things are given in figurative language. What will be the reality! The masterwork of God is at last fully manifested; what He accomplished through Him, who left the glory to die on the cross, is made known. The eternal, never ending riches, purchased by Him who was rich and became poor for our sakes, are beginning to be displayed in all their unfading splendor. Then the saints of God will learn to know the full meaning of Eph. 2:7, "that in the ages to come He might display the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." "And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." This is the glorious consummation. It is the goal of a holy, loving God.

In Eden God visited man unfallen, walked and talked with Him. Then sin severed this fellowship. He dwelt in the midst of Israel in the holiest of the tabernacle. In this age the Church is His habitation by the Spirit, but the blessed consummation in the eternal state will result in God dwelling with His redeemed creatures. What holy, glorious, never-ending intimacy that will be! It is the time when God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). When that time has come all the former things are passed away. "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain and suffering, these came into existence through sin. And all these things, the effects of sin, are now gone. What relief and what joy!

And next comes the eternal state of those who have rejected the gospel, who lived in their sins and died in their sins, unsaved, unregenerated. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." God still speaks. How many false teachers are meddling today with the solemn Scripture doctrine on the endless punishment of the wicked.

Verses 9-27. With the ninth verse we are brought back once more to the millennial state. What was briefly stated in chapter 20:4-6 is now more fully revealed and we have a description of the bride, the Lamb's Wife, in her millennial glory, in relation to Israel and to the nations on the earth. one of the angels which had the seven vials appears on the scene to show something to the seer. We had a similar scene in chapter 17:1-3. There one of these angelic bearers of the vials showed to John the harlot woman and her judgment; but now he is to see the bride, the Lamb's wife. "And he carried me away in the Spirit, and set me on a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." She is seen coming down out of heaven. This coming down precedes the one mentioned in verses 2-3 by a thousand years. Her coming down does not mean here that she actually comes down upon the earth, to dwell on the earth during the millennium. Her coming out of heaven in verses 2-3 is undoubtedly to the new earth. But here she comes down to be over the earth.

For a fuller exposition of the symbolical language we refer the reader to the larger exposition of Revelation by the author. We mention briefly that the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem are twelve precious stones.

The jasper again stands first; the wall itself is of jasper, while the first foundation stone mentioned is also jasper. It stands

for the glory of God. Then the stones follow in their order. The sapphire (blue); the chalcedony (a combination of grey, blue and yellow); the emerald (green); the sardonyx (a pale blue); the sardius (blood red); chrysolite (purple and green); the beryl (bluish green); the topaz (pale green or golden); the chrysoprasus (mixed blue, green and yellow); the jacinth (combination of red, violet and yellow), and the amethyst (purple). And what must be the deeper meaning of all these precious stones! What varied aspects of the glory of God they must represent! And the redeemed in their heavenly city shall know, understand and enjoy it all. What wonderful, unspeakable glory is ahead of us! May we look forward to it every day and willingly serve and suffer the little while down here.

The city itself was seen by John as of pure gold. Gold typifies the righteousness of God in His nature and such the holy city is, composed of the saints who were made through grace the partakers of the divine nature. "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each one of the several gates was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold as it were transparent glass." How suitable the pearl to form each gate, the entrance to the city divine. The Pearl is a type of the Church. She is the one pearl of great price for which the Lord gave all He had (Matt. 13:45-46). And the golden street like unto pure glass shows that all the ways and walks in that city are according to righteousness and that defilement is eternally impossible.

And there was no temple in that city; the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. There is no need any longer of a certain access into the presence of God, as it was on earth, but there is a free and unhindered fellowship with God and with His ever-blessed Son, the Lamb. Precious it is to hear Him again mentioned as the Lamb. His blessed work which He accomplished can never be forgotten by the saints in glory. And the light is not created light, but the light is the glory of God and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. The glory of God and Christ, the Lamb of God, will be the light and supersede all created light.

"And the nations shall walk by its light and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor unto it (the better rendering); and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations unto it." From this we learn that the glory light which shines eternally and undiminished in the holy city is the light in which the saved millennial nations on the earth walk. And the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor unto it; not "into" it as it is rendered in the Authorized Version. The heavens then rule, for Christ and His co-heirs are in that holy city, and the government and rule over the earth proceeds from there. The kings bring their glory and honor unto it, they bow in homage in the presence of the holy city.

Heaven is acknowledged as the source of all light, glory and blessing. When the nations and the kings of the earth go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord of Hosts during the millennial age (Psa. 72:8-11; Is. 60:1-3; Zech. 14:16) we doubt not, they will turn their faces upward. Mount Zion in Israel's land will have resting upon it the glory and above it the vision of the city in which the glory dwells and from which the glory emanates. And unto it they bring honor and glory. The open gates, never closed, denote security and suggest also communication and intercourse with the earth. "There shall be no night there"; the night of sin and sorrow is forever gone for the dwellers in the holy city. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Chapter 22:1-5. After the coming, Jerusalem and her blessings are once more revealed. In the opening verses of this chapter we find the glories of the redeemed.

Unspeakably beautiful and glorious are the concluding statements of this glory-section of the Revelation. Seven glories of the Redeemed are enumerated. 1. There will be no more curse. It means a perfect sinlessness; perfect holiness. 2. The throne of God and of the Lamb is there and the redeemed are forever linked with that throne. It is a perfect and blessed government which can never be disturbed by disorder. 3. His servant shall serve Him. Heaven will not consist in idleness. The holy city knows of service. And the service the saints will render to God in glory will be a perfect service. What will it be? We do not know what service it will be. God will have many surprises for His saints in glory. 4. There is also an eternal vision. "And they shall see His face." Oh! joy of all the joys in glory to see Him as He is and never lose sight of Him in all eternity. 5. His name shall be in their foreheads. It tells of eternal ownership and eternal possession. His name and the glory connected with it will be ours in eternal ages. 6. An eternal day. No more night; no need of any light. He is the light for all eternity. 7. An eternal reign. And they shall reign forever and ever. What glory and blessedness all this means. Such are the coming glories of the redeemed.

CHAPTER 22:6-21

The Final Messages

1. The angel's message (22:6-11)
2. The message of the Lord (22:12-13)
3. The two classes (22:14-15)
4. His final testimony (22:16)
5. The answer of the Spirit and the bride (22:17)
6. The final warning (22:18-19)
7. The final word--the final prayer (22:20-21)

Verses 6-11. Here it is an angel who speaks. "And the Lord God of the holy prophets (literal: of the spirits of the prophets) sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done." This reminds us of the beginning of the book, where we find a similar announcement. Suddenly some day these things will come to pass. The Lord will call His people to glory in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and then these things John had beheld will shortly come to pass. And then His own voice breaks in: "Behold I come quickly; Blessed is He that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Three times we find this announcement in the last chapter (verses 7, 12 and 20). Here it is connected with the walk of the believer.

Just as in the beginning of the book a blessing is pronounced upon them that read the words of this prophecy (1:3), so we have at the close of Revelation a similar beatitude. And keeping these blessed words means more than believing in them; their power is to shape our conduct and walk. What godly lives God's people would live on earth, what unselfish and sacrificing lives, if they remembered constantly Him who thus testifies three times in the last chapter of the Bible, "Behold I come quickly." Note the awful results in Christendom today for not having kept the sayings of the Prophecy of this book.

Then the Seer is told not to seal the sayings of this prophecy. Daniel was told to do the opposite (Dan. 12:4). Old Testament prophecy reveals prophetic events in the far distance. They could then not be fully comprehended. But after Christ came and the full revelation of things to come is given, no sealing is needed; the events are at hand, yet grace has delayed and delays still the fulfillment. And the heavenly messenger announces also the fixed state of the two classes into which all humanity is divided. The unjust and filthy, the unsaved, continue to exist in the nature which they possess, and the fact that the desires of that corrupt nature can no longer be gratified must constitute in itself an unspeakable torment. The righteous and holy, those saved by grace, partakers of the divine nature, will always be righteous and holy.

Verses 12-13. And now the Lord speaks again. For the second time He announces His coming. Here it is in connection with rewards. "My reward is with Me." He Himself will receive His reward which is due Him as the sin-bearer. He will see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. And with His coming, His own people will receive their rewards. What a stimulating power His soon coming is to service! And the coming One is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Verses 14-15. Once more the two classes come into view. This is in fullest keeping with the end of the book and the end of the Bible. The Authorized Version here is faulty. Instead of "Blessed are they that do His commandments" the correct reading is "Blessed are they that wash their robes." The former is an interpolation; the latter is the divine statement. (All leading scholars like Alford, Darby, etc., make the change. Even the Vulgate has it "Beati, qui lavant stolas suas in sanguinem Agni.") Eternal life and eternal glory cannot be obtained by keeping commandments, by the works of the law. The blood of the Lamb alone is the title to glory. And then the other class. The one who rejects Christ, and thereby denies

his lost condition and need of a Saviour, loveth and maketh a lie. He lives according to the old nature and the fruits of the flesh are there.

Verse 16. How He speaks in this last Bible book! In the beginning of Revelation we find His self-witness in the church-message and once more we hear His voice, bearing testimony to Himself. How majestic: I, Jesus! He reveals Himself once more by the name of humiliation. What comfort it must have been to John! What comfort it is to us! Then He speaks of Himself as the Root and Offspring of David. He is David's Lord and David's Son (Psalm 110:1). He is the hope of Israel and in Him the promises made to David will all be realized. This will be the case when He comes to reign in power and great glory. But He also speaks of Himself as "the bright and morning-star." His coming in power and glory is the sunrise for Israel and the Gentiles, the breaking of the millennial day. But for His Church He comes first as the morning star, as the Morning star in the eastern sky precedes the rising of the sun in all its glory. The Lord will come as the Morning star some time in the interval between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel and as the Sun of Righteousness after that week has come to an end.

Verse 17. As soon as He mentions Himself as the Morning star, there is an answer from the earth. The Spirit now down here, for He came down from heaven on Pentecost, and the Bride, the Church, say, "Come." It is addressed to the Lord. They both long for His coming. And each individual believer who heareth is asked to join with this "Come." Surely in these days of darkness and world-confusion, the Spirit saith, "Come!" And never before were there so many individual believers on earth who say "Come," who wait for His coming. And the Come--from loving hearts--will increase and become a loud and pleading cry, till one blessed day He will answer and come to take His waiting people home. Here also is the final gospel message of the Bible. He that will, let him take the water of life freely. Once more a loving God makes it clear that the water of life is free to all who want it. It is the last "Whosoever" in the Bible.

Verses 18-19. And what a solemn warning is given! In a larger sense the warning applies to the entire Word of God. Higher criticism, which takes away, and false teachers, who add unto it, find written here their deserved judgment. But the Revelation is specially in view. Whosoever meddles with His Revelation must fall under the severest divine displeasure. Beware! oh ye critics! Beware! ye who call this book uninspired and warn against the study of it!

Verses 20-21. We reach the final statements of this great book. For the third time He announces His coming. "He that testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly." It is the last time our Lord speaks from heaven. The next time His voice will be heard will be on that day when He descends out of heaven with a shout. While the two former announcements of His coming found in this chapter are preceded by the word, "Behold," this last one affirms the absolute certainty of the event. And there is the answer, the blessed response. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It is the Church which answers His positive and certain announcement. It is the last word recorded in the Bible coming from the lips of man.

The first word we hear man address to the Lord in the Bible is the solemn word "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid" (Gen. 3:10). The last word addressed to the Lord by redeemed man is "even so, come, Lord Jesus." And between these two utterances in Genesis and Revelation is the story of redemption. Well might this final prayer of the Bible be termed the forgotten prayer. But it is equally true, with the revival of the study of prophecy, more hearts and lips are praying today for His coming, than ever before. And the prayer will be answered. May the reader and the writer pray for His coming daily and may our lives too bear witness to the fact that we expect Him to answer the petition of His people. The final benediction assures us once more of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The better rendering is "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints."

APPENDIX

Prominent Names and Their Symbolical Meaning in Revelation

Abaddon. (9:11) Destruction. The king over the locust army, denoting Satan and his agencies.

Abyss, The. (9:1; 20:1-3) The pit of the abyss or the deep. This expression occurs seven times in Revelation. Out of the deep, the lowest pit, there comes the demon and into the pit of the abyss Satan will be cast for 1000 years. The lake of fire is a different place.

Accuser, The. Satan is the accuser of the brethren (12:10). His expulsion out of heaven occurs in the middle of the week, followed by the great tribulation on earth.

Alpha. The first letter in the Greek alphabet; Omega is the last letter. Therefore Alpha and Omega is equivalent to an A and Z. Symbolical of the first and last (1:8; 21:6; 22:13).

Amen, The. A name of our Lord. He is the verily," the truth, and assurance and certainty are expressed by this word (1:18).

Angels. Angels are prominently mentioned throughout Revelation. The exposition shows that the angel mentioned in 8:1-5; 10:1 is the Lord Jesus Christ. Angels will be used in the end of the age to carry out the decreed judgments. On the angels of the different churches, the symbolical meaning, see the exposition, chapter 1:20. The angels are the messengers who carried the Lord's message to the churches. They needed the power of the Spirit to do it. Hence the churches were to hear what the Spirit said to the churches (Rev. 2:7, etc.).

Antichrist, The. The final and personal Antichrist is mentioned for the first time in Revelation in chapter 13:11-18. He is also called the false prophet, because he heads up the ecclesiastical corruption and apostasy of the end of the age. He must not be confounded with the first beast out of the sea who is a political head, the emperor of the revived Roman empire, the little horn of Daniel 7, and the prince that shall come of Dan. 9:26.

Antipas. An unknown faithful martyr in Pergamos, known to Christ (2:13), meaning one against all.

Apollyon. (9:11) The Greek name of Abaddon, the King over the Locust army. The name means destruction or destroyer.

Ark, The. (11:19) It is seen by John in the temple. It means symbolically the assured presence of Jehovah with His people Israel, the faithful remnant, in the trying times of Jacob's trouble.

Armageddon. Mentioned for the first time in the parenthesis between the sixth and seventh vial, (16:12-16). It means "The hill of slaughter." The battle of Armageddon will be of brief duration. It is the stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream smiting suddenly the ten toes, the ten kingdoms (Dan. 2). The battle of Armageddon is briefly described in chapter 19:19-20.

Alleluia. "Praise ye the Lord." The four hallelujahs are found in chapter 19:1-5.

Babylon. On the literal and mystical Babylon see exposition of chapter 17. The literal Babylon will undoubtedly be restored as a city of Influence. But the city mentioned in chapter 17 is not the literal Babylon, but Rome. Not only will the Roman Empire be revived, but also papal Rome. Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, will see a great revival. The system in its corruption is described in chapter 18.

Balaam. The heathen prophet who could not curse Israel, but put a stumbling-block before the children of Israel. Used in Revelation to describe the corruption in the professing Church in giving up the divinely demanded separation from the world (chapter 2:14).

Beast, The. The expression "four beasts" in Rev. 4 and 5, etc., is faulty. The correct rendering is "the four living creatures" or the "four living ones." The term "beast" applies to the revived Roman empire and its head, the little horn of Daniel, also called beast in Daniel's vision. The Antichrist is likewise called a beast. The work of the two beasts is seen in chapter 13.

Birds, unclean and hateful. Symbolical of evil persons outwardly professing to be something but full of corruption. They describe the apostate masses of Christendom (Rev. 18:2. Also Matt. 13:31-32).

Black Horse. The black horse comes into view with the opening of the third seal. Black is the color of night, darkness and death.

Blood, with Hail and Fire. (8:7) Not literal things, but symbols of divine judgment for this earth.

Bow, The. (6:2) The bow without an arrow as in possession by the rider upon the white horse is the symbol of a bloodless conquest.

Bride, The. (21:2) the Bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife (19:7); it is not Israel but the church.

Brimstone and Fire. The symbols of divine wrath (Isa. 30:33).

Candlestick, Golden. Symbolical of that which gives light. Representing the seven assemblies. The Church is on earth to give light.

Crowns. The symbols of given glory and also rewards for service. The crowns seen upon the seven heads of the dragon (12:3) and upon the four horns of the Beast (13:1) denote despotic authority.

David, Key of. Symbolical of the right to open and to enter in. See Isa. 22:22. It is a prediction concerning Christ. The authority of the kingdom of heaven.

David, Root and Offspring. (22:16) Christ is the Root and offspring of David.

Demons. Fallen spirit beings; the wicked spirits over which Satan is the head. They will be worshipped by the apostates during the end of the age. Demon-worship is even now going on to some extent, for the Antichristian cults are produced by demons (1 Tim. 4:1). See Rev. 9:20-21. The word devils must be changed to demons. There is but one devil, but legions of demons.

Dwellers on the Earth. This class mentioned repeatedly in Revelation is the large number of professing Christians, who did not receive the love of the truth and rejecting the gospel follow the strong delusion and are utterly blinded, as well as hardened, during the tribulation.

Eagle. (8:13) The word angel must be changed to "eagle." Symbolical of the coming judgment, as an eagle is a bird of prey. Eagle's wings (12:13-17) are symbolical of swift motion, escape and deliverance.

Earth. The prophetic territory of the Roman Empire is mostly described by this form, though the entire earth is also indicated.

Earthquake. Symbolical of the shaking of all political and ecclesiastical institutions. But, as we show in our exposition, literal earthquakes will take place.

Elders, Twenty-four. The twenty-four elders typify all the redeemed in glory. Old and New Testament saints are included. After chapter 19 this term does not appear again, because the Church, the bride of Christ, is then seen separate from the entire company of the redeemed, and takes her exalted position as the Lamb's wife.

Eternal State, The. The eternal state is described in chapter 21:1-8.

Euphrates. This great river is mentioned twice in Revelation, 9:14 and 16:12. It is the boundary line of the Roman empire and the land of Israel. See exposition of these passages.

Everlasting Gospel. (14:6) The declaration of the gospel of the kingdom during the tribulation, and the proclamation of God as Creator to the heathen nations of the world, to prepare them for the gospel of the kingdom.

Fire. often mentioned in this book and symbolical of the judgments which will be executed upon the earth as well as the everlasting wrath upon the unsaved.

Fornication. Spiritual wickedness in departing from the Truth of God, followed by the literal lusts of the flesh. The days of

Lot will be on the earth before the Son of Man cometh.

Four. This number appears a number of times in Revelation. Four living creatures; four corners of the earth; four horns of the golden altar; four angels; four winds. Four is the number of universality.

Frogs. Mentioned between the sixth and seventh vial. Symbolical of demon influences, denoting filthy and wicked things. Frogs come out of slimy and dark waters; evil doctrines.

Glass, Sea of. (4:6). Compare with Ex. 30:18-21 and 1 Kings 7:23, etc. Symbolical of fixed lasting holiness. No more water needed for cleansing from sin, for the saints in glory are delivered from the presence of sin itself.

God, Supper of. (19:17) Symbolical of God's judgment upon the wicked nations and the earth dwellers.

Gold. Symbolical of divine righteousness.

Grass. (8:7) Symbolical of human prosperity (Isa. 40:7 and 1 Peter 1:24).

Hades. The region of disembodied spirits; literally "the unknown." Christ has the keys. Hades with death, because they came into existence through sin, will be cast into the lake of fire.

Harvest of the Earth. The harvest is the end of the age. In chapter 14:14-15 we read of the Lord's judgment dealing with the earth.

Hidden Manna. (2:17) Symbolical of the reward those who overcome will receive from the Lord.

Horns. Horn is symbolical of power. Horns mean typically kings, and powers and kingdoms (Dan. 7:24).

Image of the Beast. (13:12-15) Compare with Dan. 3. It will be a literal image of the princely leader of the revived Roman empire, the first beast, which John saw rising out of the sea.

Islands. Mentioned under the sixth seal and the seventh vial. Mountains typify kingdoms and governments; islands are symbolical of smaller and isolated governments. All will be affected. No doubt when the great earthquakes will shake the very foundations of the earth, many islands will also disappear.

jasper. A precious stone, most likely our diamond. See exposition of chapter 4.

Jerusalem. The earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem are mentioned in the book. During the tribulation the earthly Jerusalem will be the seat of the Antichrist, the false prophet. Jerusalem is for this reason called "Sodom and Egypt" (11:8). Then Jerusalem will pass through her worst history. A great siege will take place at the close of the tribulation period and the city will fall (Zech. 14). After that Jerusalem will become the capital of the kingdom of Christ and a great temple will be erected, the universal place of worship during the millennium. The heavenly Jerusalem is above the earth. From there the glorious reign of Christ and the saints will be executed. This glorious city will come down out of heaven at the end of the millennium to find its eternal resting-place on the new earth (chapters 21-22).

Jezebel. Symbolical of the Papacy. The corruptress which claims to be the bride of Christ, but plays the harlot. See chapters 2 and 17.

Judgment. Judgment falls upon the earth during the seven years, which constitute the end of the age. When the Lord comes in His glory the great judgment of the nations takes place. Chapter 19:11, etc., compare with Matt. 25:31. After the millennium the second resurrection takes place and the great white throne judgment is the judgment of the wicked dead.

King of the Nations. (15:2-4) King of the saints should be changed to King of the nations. Our Lord is the King of the nations, the King of Kings.

Lake of Fire. The place which God has prepared for the devil and his angels. The beast and the false prophet will be cast there; also the Assyrian, the king of the north, the nations who followed the beast and all the wicked dead. Death and Hades will likewise be put into that place.

The Lamb. The Lamb (John 1:29), our Lord in His sacrificial character, is mentioned twenty-eight times in the Revelation. The Lamb is worshipped by all. Thus we find the song of the Lamb, the throne of the Lamb and the marriage of the Lamb, and the wife of the Lamb (the Church) in this book.

Lightning. Symbolical of the divine judgment, Wrath.

Locust Army. Symbolical of the host of demons, which come out of the abyss to torment mankind.

Lord's Day, The. Mentioned but once in 1:10. It is the first day of the week on which John saw the great Patmos vision.

Man-child. (Chapter 12) The Man-child is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark of the Beast. Some special mark which declares ownership. As the Holy Spirit seals those who trust on Christ, so Antichrist will put his mark upon those who follow him.

Millennium, The. Millennium means "a thousand years." Six times this period of blessing and glory is mentioned in Rev. 20.

Moon as blood. The Moon is symbolical of derived authority. Blood is the symbol of death. Apostate Israel and the apostate Church passing through the most severe judgments are symbolized by this figure.

Morning Star, The. Christ in His coming for the Church (22:16; 2:28).

Mountain. A kingdom.

Mountains, Seven. Rome is the city built upon the seven hills. See exposition of chapter 17.

Nicolaitanes. Mentioned in the message of Ephesus and Pergamos. They signify the domineering, priestly class which assumed an unscriptural place of authority in the Church.

Palms. Emblems of victory.

Rainbow. The symbol of covenant and of mercy. Mentioned twice. Around the throne (chapter 4) and around His head (chapter 10).

Rest of the Dead. (20:5) Meaning those who had not part in the first resurrection, hence the wicked dead.

River of Life. (22:1) Symbolical of the fullness of life, glory and blessing.

Saints. The saints in Revelation include all the saints. The Old and New Testament saints are seen under the figure of the twenty-four elders. The suffering saints are the Jewish saints and the remnant of Israel, as well as the multitude of nations, who accept the final message and come out of the great tribulation (chapter 7).

Satan. The entire book reveals his person, his work and his destiny. His work may be traced in the church-messages. Then we have his work during the tribulation and his final work after the millennium.

Scorpions. Symbolical of the torment caused by the army of demons under the fifth trumpet judgment.

Sea. Symbol of the nations. Also the literal sea, which gives up the dead. Then there will be no more sea, All wickedness and restlessness will cease forever.

Seven. The divine number. No other book in the Bible contains so many "sevens" as this final Bible book, the Revelation. There are seven angels, churches, attributes of the Lord, heads, horns, eyes, spirits, lamps, seals, trumpets, vials, plagues, stars, thunders, times and a sevenfold doxology.

Song. The songs of the redeemed and the song of Moses and the Lamb are mentioned in the book.

Stars. See exposition on the meaning of the seven stars in His hand. Stars are also symbolical of lesser authorities, which will all fall during the tribulation period. Lights in the night.

Sun. The symbol of supreme authority.

Synagogue of Satan. Mentioned in the messages to Smyrna and Philadelphia. It means a Judaized Christianity as seen in ritualistic, professing Christendom.

Temple. The tribulation temple is in view in chapter 11:1-3. The millennial temple is seen in 7:15. Then there is the temple of heaven (16:17). In the heavenly Jerusalem there is no temple (21:22).

Third Part. Mentioned in connection with men, the sea, the stars of heaven, the sun and the moon. It probably refers exclusively to the Roman Empire, which in its different aspects and authorities, will be affected during these judgments.

Two horns. The beast out of the land has two horns like a lamb, but speaks like the dragon. He is the counterfeit Christ.

Waters, Many. Symbolical of peoples and nations over which the Romish whore has authority.

White. Color of righteousness and purity; also denoting victorious conquests. We have in Revelation, white robes, the white horses, white linen, a white cloud and a white throne.

Witnesses. See in Rev. 11 about the two witnesses.

Wrath. We read of the wrath of God and the wrath of the Lamb. The wrath of God is completed with the pouring out of the vials. The wrath of the Lamb will be executed when He comes in glory.

Zion. Mentioned only once in Rev., chapter 14:1. It means the literal Zion in Palestine. Upon that holy hill of Zion the glory will rest during the millennium. See Psalm 132:13-14.