

NOTES AND MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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W.W. Fereday's devotional commentary walking through the Gospel of John, drawing out the glory of Christ revealed in each chapter.

22 Chapters

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Notes and Meditations on the Gospel of John

Preface

My chief object and pleasure was to call attention, as far as the Lord helped me, to His personal excellency and glory. The second part (consisting of chapters 3 and 4), if I mistake not, and if the Lord graciously own it, will prove helpful to converted people who only know the Lord as a Deliverer from the wrath to come. Man's true state, and the distinctive character of the great foundation truths then coming out for the first time — a new revelation really — are dwelt on in it, and will, I hope, be interesting to many who hardly know the infinite blessedness of knowing these things in their distinctive value and importance.

Amidst the general contention concerning the ground and object of faith, His Person, glory, mind, and ways have well nigh disappeared, lost to the view of the combatants in the smoke and tumult of the battle. How few of them could honestly say that they were contending for the faith once delivered to the saints!

1884.

Chapter 1

The first chapter of Genesis is a history of the other day, of yesterday, compared with the first chapter of John. Christ had no beginning; it is God that is there. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

It is said the human mind never was so active as it was at this time. They said that matter was evil, that the principle of evil was the God of the Old Testament, and so on. That Satan inspired these vain thoughts and speculations, there can be no doubt. They denied Jesus Christ, come in flesh, not simply that He was come in flesh, which was something about Him, but they denied Himself, when so come. They denied that Jesus was the Christ, they denied also that He was the Son of the Father; that is, they denied Him, first, in His Person, and then in His relations, both to man and to God the Father, as Messiah — Anointed Man; and as Son of the Father; "a threefold rejection." He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). They maintained also the eternity of matter.

John's writings are a divinely given answer to all this, which was simply the expression, in man's heart, of Satan's enmity against Jesus Christ come in flesh, God's Lamb for taking away the sin of the world, and only-begotten Son of the Father.

Verse 2. "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." There is where Genesis begins; that shuts out all other beings. How exclusive the Spirit of God is here! It is Jesus who was the Creator, we shall see Him afterwards as Redeemer. As to His spiritual locality, where was He? The Spirit of God says, He was with God. If we look at Proverbs 8, we find a precious revelation — two divine Persons there together. It is a question of Persons, not Places. It is much more important that I should know all about the Person of Christ, than that I should know about heaven itself. "Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee."

Verse 4. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." All you and I want is to get into the luminous atmosphere where Christ is. He is the eternal denial of all these philosophic and well-studied arguments of men, they have never chased the darkness away, nor stilled the groanings of a single human heart. The darkness (and it is ever true) comprehended not the light. "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33). That His testimony is true, the Trinity itself bears witness. Himself utters the words, as sent of God, and "God giveth not the Spirit by measure." The words are God's words, and spoken by Christ, in the unmeasured power of the Spirit. Not human reasonings, but the Holy Spirit, given without measure, is the alone power of intelligence in the things of God. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true" (1 John 5:20). His glory, what He was, was always coming out. Man was darkness, and could not comprehend it. "The life was the light of men," putting out all other lights. Some years ago I heard the following remark, "It was not said that He was the light of angels, but there was one light of men especially, "as there is one Head of every man, which is Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3). It is not the same as the Head

of the body. I believe it means that He is the Head of man, the relationship of man as man to Christ. The Head of every man is Christ. Having become a Man, He is the Head. God has committed all judgment to Him, not because He is the Son of God, but because He is the Son of Man.

Verse “5. “And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.” The darkness means the state of humanity, morally it was darkness, and in himself man does not see the light, his eyes must be opened. In the gospels, the side which men term Calvinistic is in John, there God gives eternal life absolutely. “He that hath the Son hath life.” “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” What they call Arminian is chiefly found in the other gospels, where man’s state, as responsible and under law, is dealt with and brought to light.

Christian responsibility is connected with our new state, under grace, not under law. “If ye are led by the Spirit [the Christian position] ye are not under law” (Gal. 5:18). To follow Christ, to keep myself from all evil, to maintain the testimony at all cost, that is my responsibility, as a Christian, under grace, and I shall be dealt with, in a certain sense, according to it. It is plainly no question here of obtaining forgiveness or life, but of faithfulness and service, and reward connected therewith, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward (2 John 8). The day of Christ will measure this responsibility. “That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain” (Phil. 2:16). He will complete the work until the day of Christ; we have these two things, the fixed purpose of God to bring us to glory, and, on the other side, what we sow we reap, get chastening for, and all kinds of dealings.

Verse 8. “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.” In chapter 5, the Lord calls him the bright and shining lamp. The Lord was the Light, John was the candle or lamp.

Verse 9. “That was the true Light, which, coming into the world, lightens every man.” Christ is the only true Light for any man, for every man. “The life was the light of men” (He tasted death for every one, everything). It is what people call absolute, to the exclusion of everything else that could be a light for man. “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours alone, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2: 2, JND). He is the Light for every one, but people shut their eyes to the Light, and will not look upon it. He only is the Light of men, He only made everything, and “without Him was not anything made that was made.” “The life was the light of men”; it is the same thing as to say that the Light of men was the Life — a reciprocal proposition.

In the tenth verse you get the result of all this, as Light, He was not comprehended. Light shines, the opposite to light is darkness, that is man’s state by nature. And when they did know Him externally, then they hated Him.

Verse 12. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” “Children of God,” it should be. First of all, He gives them everything, not merely saves, but He gives them the privilege of being children of God. In Judaism, they were servants, not sons. ‘Sons’ is a title of privilege and honor; ‘children’ is a much deeper thing. Where it is a question of nature and intimacy, there it is “children.” How that exclusive, absolute way of putting things runs through this gospel! “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”; they received Him, and only Him, and they were born of God. Everything else is excluded. A person who was studying the Word of God, and desirous of penetrating (or rather, of being

penetrated by) the thoughts of the Spirit of God, would pay especial attention to these expressions. Again, the Spirit says, “John was not the Light, do not let the thought of John come in, he was not that Light. Then again, “He gave them the privilege.” Had not they anything to do with it? Not at all! — “which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Verse 14. It is not “was made flesh”. Christ could not be made anything, but He could become something. How could the eternal, uncreated Son of God be made anything? He became flesh. In verse 1, the Word was God, and was with God, but here you get a similarly absolute statement of His presence, as Man, with men. “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father”: it is not external glory, it is the moral thing. There is a difference between “only-begotten” and “first-born” (Col. 1:15, 16).

“Firstborn” is in connection with the creation; but in connection with the Father, He is “the only-begotten.” There can be no other Son of the Father. The more you examine such passages, the more you feel the exclusive character of the glory of His Person. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” God has no other Son but Him; we become sons by adoption, you understand. He is the only-begotten Son of God.

John says, he saw His glory in this character, that is, a holy, tender kind of thing. Every soul knows how short we come, in entering into this in spirit. It is not a common Christian, a careless Christian, I mean, that can enter into this. The Spirit of God makes one feel how little one has thought of it, how little one has realized it.

“A glory as of an only-begotten with a father.” What the Lord is Himself, in His relationship to the Father, is not that higher than what you get in Revelation 19, where He is riding on the white horse, or in Psalm 45 — “Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty, and in Thy majesty ride prosperously”? That is one form of glory, and the transfiguration is a picture of the heavenly glory of the kingdom, but all that comes infinitely short of this verse 14, for all that is in His relationship to man in government, but this is His essential relationship to God the Father. There was His glory — did angels behold it? We know that it was believing man’s highest privilege: “We beheld his glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a father”! What a revelation for man! Have I read this gospel of John in such a way, that I have got any idea in my soul of what is the beauty, the special beauty, of this Only-begotten?

I do not suppose I know myself how deeply I am (may I not say all of us are?) spoiled by the world. That is a great thing in Matthew 25 that God is waking up His saints. There is such a thing as the virgins trimming their lamps, and going forth to meet the Bridegroom. Bad as things are, that is true, and that is true now.

Verse 16. “And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

It means an abundance of grace, grace piled up upon grace. In Romans 5 you get, they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. “It is abundance of grace. How much better should we understand and realize these privileges, were it not for our worldliness and moral distance from God! May He deepen us in the true knowledge of these wondrous blessings, “abundance of grace and gift of righteousness”!

Verse 17. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law was given, but grace came. I was reading some of those chapters in Job, (7, and others) where we see how uncertainty, as to his spiritual relations to God, made the anguish of his bodily sufferings still more intolerable — the pardon of his transgressions was unknown, his iniquity not taken away — and, I thought, I had before me a very perfect delineation of the real state of thousands of persons, even in this our day. They are really turned Godward, yet cannot find Him; no divinely righteous ground as yet discovered on which to plant their weary feet, (the righteousness of God being practically unknown). They cannot trust in themselves any more than in God: "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me" (Job 9:30). Redemption, as accomplished in the grace that came by Jesus Christ, is really unknown. And then there is this added difficulty, from which poor Job was free, they have put themselves under law. They have not learned, any more than Job, that "he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." No Abba cry breaks forth from their sad hearts; for them God is a Judge, not a Father; nor does their personal experience go beyond the groan, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver?" No "thank God, through Jesus Christ," as yet; the "no condemnation," all unknown. For people in this state, it can hardly be said the darkness is past, or passing, I speak of their state; the light most truly shines, the full revelation of God, but they are not in it yet, though quickened; the light is present, but one needs eyes to see. To refer to Job 7 — never had such a state of soul as yet been revealed; the rays of light breaking in amidst the clouds and darkness, the chaos of the poor human heart. "What is man, that Thou shouldest magnify him, and that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him?" (Job 7:17). But then there was the "I have sinned, what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou preserver of men!" A Preserver of men, and yet He had set poor Job as a mark against Himself! No righteousness in man for God, nor, as yet revealed, righteousness of God for man (cp. Rom. 1:17 with 3:21). The Interpreter was not there, nor had the true Daysman come; "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." It says in this chapter, "the light shineth in darkness," and the darkness "comprehended" it not. "Moral darkness, and incapacity of seeing, was man's state. But when the Lord is seated in heaven, and had sent the Holy Ghost, then it could be said, the darkness was passing. We have not apprehended the thing! Why, I stand in the full blaze of the revelation of God! When I come to read the scriptures, I feel, thank God, I know a "little bit about it, get a little kindling. I know but little about it, but see what I have got in Christ, in God, and what a glorious thing it is to be shut up to it. We are in a better state to know the Lord now than the disciples, because we have the Holy Ghost. It must have been a wonderful sight, some one has remarked, to see the Spirit descending in this form and abiding upon Him. Yes, it was wonderful; but all that appertains to Jesus is wonderful. Was not "Wonderful" one of His names? They all "wondered" at the gracious words that came out of His lips. They were obliged to cry out at times in such language as, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee"! and, "Never man spake like this man!"

Verse 18. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The Spirit would say, "Do not listen to any one that pretends to reveal the Father, except the Son. "Then how are we to know about it? The only-begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him. It is a wonderful thing, the privilege of knowing, in the love and intimacy of His own nature, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have got as far as the end of "the golden preface," as the ancients called it.

We may notice that the relations of Christ in verse 14 are twofold: first, Godward, "We have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father"; and secondly, manward, "full of grace and truth." The first were natural (that is, according to the divine nature). How could it be otherwise? He was, and is, the Father's only-begotten Son. But His position manwards was altogether wonderful, He dwelt among us — the fallen sons of men — in a character which, but for sin, could never have been known, full of grace and truth. Grace, which is divine love, asserting itself, and maintaining its ways, in the midst of all that is contrary to it; truth, that brings the real character of everything to light, by showing its relation to Himself. Grace and truth were never in the world before, they are spoken of as one in verse 17. "Grace and truth came [subsists, "New Translation] by Jesus Christ." It is interesting, the verb being in the singular, as though they formed but one thought in the mind of God. Grace and truth had their being, in the world, only through Christ. What belonged to man was "the" e. Look at Ephesians 4:25, "Wherefore putting away the lie, speak every man truth." The lie! that is what characterizes "man," that is his moral state. The new man is created in righteousness and holiness of truth; the converse of the old state is thus presented in the epistle, "The truth which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." The Lord tells us that every man who hears His voice is "of the truth." The old man is of "the lie"; Satan its father, himself a liar from the beginning. The Spirit of God expresses it as a principle, as the "lie." And if Satan from the beginning was a liar, man, fallen under the power of his lie, has from the beginning falsified the character of God. Like the fallen angels, he did not keep his first estate — dependence upon God, whose love and delight in the wonderful creature He had just made in His own image and likeness, and His mind about him, paradise itself could in no way measure or unfold (See Psa. 8; Eph. 1 end; Rev 21.) I have just hinted at the mind of God about man; the first expression of man's mind about God, came out in his departure from Him. His first recorded act betrayed the love of the lie, this shut him out of paradise — the last word about him announces the exclusion from the heavenly city of him who loves and makes a lie. Man believed Satan's lie, preferring it to God's truth, he thought that God was keeping something from him.

Now think of the teaching of John 16 and Ephesians 1. All things that the Father has are Christ's; this takes in the heavens (things in heaven), and the earth, to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. It was in God's mind that His beloved people should partake with Christ in all this measureless glory; man, who was to inherit all things according to the counsel, love, and power of God, departed from Him, believing that He was withholding from him the means and sources of happiness. By the word and Spirit of God, His saints had been acted on from the beginning; but till He came, there was not in this world what God could call truth and grace; they are one in the mind of God.

There is nothing so profound anywhere, in God's revelations, as the gospel of John — what mind that thinks has not found this out? I speak not of philosophers, but of the mind of Christ in His people. It speaks of more than the deep things of God, for it tells us of God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We were speaking of grace and truth being united in Christ; it is true, in a yet deeper way, of life and light, they cannot be separated. The life that was in Christ, expressed amongst men, was man's proper and only light. How He shines in the light of His life, and the grace of the truth of His nature! What He measures as "Truth," He manifests as "Light," and so you get the truth of things from out the cobwebs of lies. Amabilities that you call Christian, when you bring them to the light of Christ, are not the truth, nor of the truth very often. "Try the spirits whether

they are of God” — he gives a test to bring out the truth, whether these spirits were of God, or of Satan. You see what a new and wondrous thing this is, grace and truth, in all their fullness, present in the world, in the Person of Jesus Christ; and where was or could there be such a manifestation of this as in His atoning death? Thus, He met man’s moral need, grace reigning through righteousness (and truth in every way), unto eternal life.

But, in the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, you get what He was Godward. He speaks of Himself, in one place, as the Son of Man which is in heaven; but, of heaven itself, it had been stated, “Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.” Could that be said of the bosom of the Father? Could creation glorified present anything like that? It is the manner of his being with God, not revealed in the first verse. He was with God, as being in the Father’s bosom. In the transfiguration, we see Him in the heavenly glory of the kingdom, His face did shine like the sun, and His garments were white and glistening. In the glory of the earthly kingdom, when God anoints Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows, His garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia. His fitness for that glory had been manifested. Fairer than the children of men, grace was poured into His lips, therefore God blessed Him for ever; He loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore His God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. When He comes forth on the white horse, making war, His garment is dipped in blood, glorious, in character and ways before, as after, the war. In the last position, many crowns were upon His head, and many were the names of greatness which He bore — Faithful and True, Word of God, King of kings, and Lord of lords — all unspeakably interesting to His people. But which of these glories is like that of an only-begotten with a father, the Son in the Father’s bosom? When we reach this dwelling-place, the Father’s bosom, in thought and quickened affections, the attractions of glory seem to yield to those of love, what He is in His being, but “glory as of an only-begotten with a father,” cannot be separated, the glory from the love. Think of the Only-begotten with the Father! there could not be a second. It is love in its deepest, holiest relationship. This is what was seen in Christ, and what John’s heart was occupied with. Of His love to usward he is speaking when he says, “Hereby know we love.” Well, how do you know it? Because He laid down His life for us. Divine love and eternal life were in Him. And where is the glory of Sonship seen save in Christ? He tells us of what he had seen, but also of what we know, and the how, “Hereby know we.” All is learned in Him.

“The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” Now is not this a wonderful way of getting at the truth? Christianity is founded on the revelation of the Father and the Son. In John 17:3, we read, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” When the devil has his great agent upon the earth, he denies the Father and the Son, because in the knowledge of this truth lies the foundation of Christianity. We talk of salvation as though it, and not the glory of the Son, were the great end of revelation. Peter’s blessedness consisted in the Father’s revelation to his soul of the Person of the Son. It is He who is the effulgence of God’s glory, the exact expression of His substance. He that confesses the Son has — salvation? Yes, without doubt, but that is not what the Word says here. He that confesses the Son has the Father also! Is not that immeasurably more than salvation? And again, he that hath the Son, hath (not salvation, though that be true, but) life, eternal life, that is in the Son. A far deeper blessing, necessarily including salvation, but how much more! Beside that blessed “word of truth, the gospel of salvation, there are many other precious “words”; the

“word “of the Father, the “word of Christ, the “word “of life, the “word “of the cross, the “word” of promise, and more. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The fruits of the tree of life are yielded every month, eternal freshness there. The manna, too, you remember, came with the dew. When the dew had fallen upon the camp, then it was that the manna fell also, to be eaten in the freshness in which God sent it.

We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father (vs. 14). What are you thinking of there? You are thinking of the Son. But when you come to verse 18, you are thinking about God — “He hath declared Him.”

I think that is as Father. There is no way of getting at anything, except through Christ. There never was a creature who knew what grace was, without Christ, and there never was a creature that knew truth, apart from Christ. What thought of love, or of judgment, of righteousness, purpose, or glory, apart from Him? The Son of Man brought near to the Ancient of days (Dan. 7), to receive the investiture of all beneath the heavens, is a glorious thought, but what to that of Only-begotten with His Father?

What answer to the Father's heart, and now to ours, save in Him! The inner thing, how far above the outer, and our place is with Himself within. The deepest, sweetest thought, next to this, we have in the Epistle, eternal Life with the Father. The Word was with God, the eternal Life with the Father, but the innermost of all such thoughts is expressed in, “We saw His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a father.”

To get the affections fed in this divine way, why, it is like being in heaven! It is the very same kind of thing we shall get in heaven. We are rarely in a condition of soul to desire this heavenly food. We cannot get into it. But take one weaned from the world, in whom the pride of life is broken, when he begins to feel what he is in nature, the character of the scene he is passing through; seeing on every side but contradiction to God, groaning in himself at life's labor lost, weary of sin, disappointed in everything, man's life a lie, the wine out. The longing for good, for Christ, the condition we were talking about, exists. Turning to Christ, he finds himself in the midst of new-creation scenes, where all is not only new, but “of God,” and He is Love, and revealed in Christ. Thousands of Christians are so engaged with their work even, their daily service, that they get no time to be occupied with Christ. We, through our weakness, allow of separation between communion and service, but that comes from not dwelling in love.

And yet Thy love's unchanging,

And doth recall the heart.

Now just get into that, and you will find that He who is Love is Light also. John says, “I have seen that eternal Life which was with the Father, it is all luminous. “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

“It is all unclouded light”, he says, “I have looked upon.” “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:6). Peter says, he was an eye witness, and heard a voice. What Peter saw and heard, that he testified, so Paul, so John. If we are to be in power in testimony, we must go on what we have seen ourselves, we cannot act on the faith or intelligence of another. So it is said of the Lord Jesus Himself in John 3:32 “What He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth.” He was not

going upon a vague report; you get, it in John, Peter, and Paul, and in the Lord Himself first. Now you see, when you look at theologians and Pharisees, that such a principle is unknown to them. Poor Nicodemus, he was theologian and Pharisee too; he had not much to say of what he had seen and heard, theologian and teacher of Israel though he was.

When I speak of our going upon what we have seen, I speak, of course, in the spiritual sense, of our individual realization of the truth, by faith and the Spirit.

We have already had the deep depths of His Person, but verse 18 gives us the deep thing of His testimony — the revelation of the Father. I have already referred to John 17:3, where we learn, that to know the Father and the Son is eternal life. The old writers called the first part of this chapter “the golden preface”; the gospel itself they termed “the heart of Christ.” One loves to think of our brethren of eighteen hundred years ago thus appreciating this precious gospel.

Does one inquire if there must be knowledge prior to the enjoyment of communion? Yes; but with many the relationships of the divine Persons are but feebly comprehended. People are glad to be saved, but the mind hardly takes in what sonship really means; we worship God, and cry “Abba,” by the same Spirit by which we call Jesus, Lord. The Father and the Son are so little known, it is no wonder there is so little communion. Even where there is some knowledge, the world comes in, and that hinders, and that is what John is thinking of when he says, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, for all that is in the world, . . . is not of the Father.” That is the very thing that hinders this communion. John Baptist has only one thing to say of himself, and he was a blessed man in saying it. So precious to his heart, and glorious, was the Subject of his testimony, that all of John disappeared, save the voice that rendered it. The power of glory strengthens, as much unto lowliness, as unto all patience. This is a very fine and remarkable scripture. It permits us to see the effect on one who beheld it, of the moral glory of Him who was meek and lowly of heart, even unto participation of the nature; as Peter speaks of our being partakers of the divine nature. If the promises could have that effect, how much more the presence of the divine Person, “in whom these promises are all yea and Amen.” “I am nothing but a voice,” he said, “but one thing I want, a way set up for Jehovah, the King of glory.” (The Lord is Jehovah. Very often the word translated Lord is used for Jehovah, as you will see in the New Translation (by J. N. Darby).) They had not macadamized roads in those days, you know. When a prince or a king was coming, they set about to make a road for him; a king might have a hundred thousand men making a road for him, a “royal road.” That is the idea. John uses it in a moral way. The voice that cried in the wilderness said, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” The voice that cries at midnight says, “Behold the bridegroom!” When this voice reaches the heart, one awakes from one’s slumbers, and the reproach of Laodicea rolls away.

Were His “deep perfections” only better known, there would be no lack of “adoring fervor,” in which to await His return. John was a wonderful man; like Paul, he had only one Object, and that Object governed him. Paul goes beyond all bounds in the fervor of his attachment, refusing to count his life dear to him, when compared with his Object. “I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:8). It is the power of the Object. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So Simeon, as he held the Babe in his arms, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy

salvation.” All these things are morally important for us, because we have all got the spirit of the world in us fearfully. Christ had all His springs in the divine nature, ours flow forth from corrupted human nature until He has become our life. The knowledge of a glorious Person who passed through a defiled scene, touching it continually, yet never affected by it, and who in the end could say, “I have overcome the world”; this it is which breaks its power over the heart of the believer.

From verse 29 to 35, it is what He does; as Lamb of God, He takes away the sin of the world; this will be the great result; (His atoning death the immovable basis and foundation of all divine working in the new creation), and He baptizes with the Holy Ghost. He had Himself, alone of men, received the unction of the Spirit without blood. We have this set forth typically in Exodus 29: Aaron was anointed with oil without blood. Upon man the Spirit is not the seal of regeneration, but the witness to the value of the blood. It was announced to John that He, upon whom he saw the Spirit descending and abiding, would baptize with the Holy Ghost. “And I have seen and bear witness,” John adds, “that this is the Son of God.” He is Lamb of God and Son of God, glorious names, here announced for the first time, and in connection with what He does — taking away the sin of the world, and baptizing with the Holy Ghost. It does not say, or mean, that the sin or sins of the world have been taken away (already). The sins of His people, He Himself bore in His body on the tree, that being dead to sins they might live unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2). As to sin, Paul tells us that God, “having sent His Son . . . for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,” its dwelling-place. And if Peter speaks of believers being dead to sins, Christ their Substitute having borne them in His own body on the tree, Paul gives believers their place as dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. But this is not taking sin out of the world, but God dealing with it in judgment in the cross of Christ. But verse 29 gives us the glorious result for the world, as such, not merely, “The kingdom of the world of our Lord and of His Christ is come, and He shall reign,” but the sin of the world taken absolutely away. In that day, it will be said, “The tabernacle of God is with men” (Rev. 21:3). It is written, “He tasted death for every man, “so that any man may come (whosoever will), so also, coming into the world, He shines as Light for every man. Like the sun in the heavens,” which shines upon the just and upon the unjust. It does not mean that He enlightens every man, but simply that He shines for all; Jews or Gentiles, it makes no difference. “God so loved the world.” But the full meaning of this title or designation, “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world,” is best expounded in John’s vision of His glory on high. On earth, the cross of Christ had been accounted foolishness, the expression of His weakness, His own had hidden their faces from Him; but there all is changed save Himself. A Lamb, as it had been slain, was standing in the midst of the heavenly throne, with the symbols of the power and the wisdom of God. If any hid their faces there, it would be the seraphim while they cried, “Holy, holy, holy.” His positional glory, as seated on the heavenly throne, was the fruit of the moral glory of the path by which it was reached. The memorials of His sufferings are associated there with the power and the wisdom of God. But Paul tells us that the “called,” both Jews and Gentiles, had already seen in the crucified One whom he preached, in the midst of a rejecting world, both the power and the wisdom of God. What precious faith was that! But I refer to Revelation 5: mainly for the sake of verse 13. When the angels had proclaimed the worthiness of the Lamb that had been slain, John hears every creature upon the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, ascribing honor and glory unto the Lamb. This is anticipative, it is true, but it is anticipative of the praises of a world from which the Lamb of God will have taken away sin. As God, He had created the world, and, when ruined and lost, had come to be its Savior, overcoming it, as Man, in its whole spirit and ways. So that when the lord of

its darkness came, he found nothing in Him, save light only; as the Father found nothing but His own reflection. Finally, He takes away its sin, and thus delivers the kingdom of the world to the Father. I would just add, He has actually taken away the sins of His people, yours and mine. By the grace of God, too, He tasted death for every man, that is propitiation; in bearing the sins of His people He was their Substitute. You will note in the gospel, that when He was on earth, His deepest humiliation could not veil His glory from the opened eye; so, the glories of the heavenly throne do not conceal the tokens of His sufferings and rejection. "A Lamb, as it had been slain" — He cannot be hid, whether in the scenes of glory, or of humiliation.

In Psalm 24:8, the question is raised, "Who is this King of glory?" — here, one might ask in like spirit, "Who is this Lamb of God?" No lifting up of everlasting doors, that the King of glory might enter His earthly dominion, would be the proper reply to such a question as this; rather, through the door opened in heaven, would the answer be found, in the midst of the throne itself — in the songs of elders and living creatures — in the voice of angels, and of every creature in the heaven, and upon the earth; and then in the temple of the holy city that comes down out of heaven from God — in the light of the glory that lightens it, for "the lamp thereof is the Lamb." According to these beautiful figures and symbols, the throne, and temple, and light of glory, answer the question, "Who is this Lamb of God?" "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb, as it had been slain." But John had seen greater things than these, and in scenes bounded only by the cross; there he had contemplated, in Jesus the Nazarene, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father; Who such an one is, not the throne of God, but the bosom of the Father, alone can tell. The great voice from the angels who surround the throne, rolling its mighty wave of seven-fold praise, swelled by that of all creatures, and absorbing, as it were, the worship of the heavenly saints, will be the result, but not the whole result, of the taking away of "the sin of the world," by the "Lamb of God." It is interesting to note that this ascription of praise to the Lamb, which commenced with the heavenly saints, is closed by them also (Rev. 5:14, JND).

Think of John, and his relations to Christ. He had known Him as a houseless, homeless stranger, a Nazarene, "despised of the people, as one having nothing, yet in His own right possessing all things. He had stood by the cross, and beheld Him in His sufferings, as God's Lamb, had "in the Spirit" seen Him in the glorious result of those sufferings, and receiving creation's praise. He had seen Him in the heavenly glory of the kingdom, His garments all white and glistening; and contemplated Him in that of an only-begotten with a father; and, finally, as the Lamb of the divine glory that lightens the holy Jerusalem. And all these precious revelations are now committed unto us. What advantage had the Jew?" said Paul, writing to the Romans, then, answering his own question, "Much every way, but chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God"! In the gospel it seemed to be for Christ, what the world would term, "a losing game"; but the Revelation lets us know that this "losing game" was the foundation of glories, as various as they are eternal.

As He can endless glory weave

From time's misjudging shame,

In His own world He is content

To play a losing game.

We have read through the introductory part, where the Spirit declares Who Jesus is; but now we have come to the testimony of what He does, in positions referred to in other scriptures, but here first brought fully to light — He baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and takes away, as Lamb of God, the sin of the world. This title — Lamb of God — is in connection with His atoning death; as baptizing with the Holy Ghost implies His previous ascension and glory with the Father. “The Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men” (Psa. 68:18). All this, referring to the sending of the Spirit, awaited, according to the counsels and order of God, the victory of the Son of Man over Satan, sin, and death. From the day of Pentecost onward, “Now is come salvation and strength,” could be said, for the Holy Ghost is the seal of righteousness and salvation, the power of life and holiness, the earnest of glory and Spirit of sonship. But who is this who baptizes with the Holy Ghost? Who but the One upon whom the Spirit descended and abode, and this, apart from any question of atonement or sprinkling of blood, to whom (when, fulfilling all righteousness, He had manifested, in submitting to the baptism of John, His perfect sympathy with the Spirit's work upon sinful men) the heavens opened! The act of a Man upon earth becoming the occasion of infinite delight in heaven, the Father's heart was touched — not that there could be change there — but there was an occasion of new delight, for it was found in man, and that Man was His beloved Son in whom He found His delight. Once before, the angel of the LORD had spoken out of heaven to man upon earth: “By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because Thou hast done this thing . . . that in blessing I will bless thee.” But here was the “Son of Abraham,” the Seed in whom all the nations were to be blessed, on His way to that solemn hour, when He became both offering and offerer, the true Lamb of God's providing, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; and because He hath done this thing, and, in doing it, has, besides the sufferings of atonement, suffered at the hand of man also, Jehovah said unto Him, “Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” Moreover, seeing that, at the same time, He humbled Himself to the death of the cross, God has highly exalted Him, the wondrous, lowly Man! giving Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. And further, if He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that same glory required that the Son who had glorified Him upon earth — had finished the work which He gave Him to do — should, according to His own demand, be glorified with the Father, with the glory He had with Him before the world was. Thus the call from Jehovah to a seat at His right hand, the great name above every name conferred by God, and the Son's place with the Father in the eternal glory, must be taken together to give the divine estimate of the work, and of Him who did it. Jesus glorified by, and with, the Father, is, of course, the fullest expression of the Father's heart in reference to His Person and work. Now we know who the “Son of Abraham” was, and understand that word, “Before Abraham was, I am.” If God was glorified in that which Jesus did, in that work finished in His atoning death, remember that taking captivity captive — annulling him that has the power of death — forms part of that glory by which God was glorified. Now see the connection of this with the truth presented in verse 33, “He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. In the virtue, or strength, of His victory over Satan, He ascended on high. Now, that you cannot separate His ascending from His descending, the apostle tells us (Eph. 4). He first descended into the lower parts of the earth, there was the enemy overthrown with his own weapon. “By death annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Henceforth you can never separate the precious truth, “Thou hast ascended on high,” from “Thou hast taken captivity captive.” That He ascended,

what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" It was the necessary result of His descending, as His resurrection was the certain consequence of His death (it was not possible that He could be holden by it). It was one thing (through the necessary moral connection) the ascending and descending, accomplished also by one and the same Person. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." From the lower parts of the earth, to far above all heavens, to receive from the Father the promised Spirit, that He might be the baptizer with the Holy Ghost! Thus He received the Holy Ghost a second time, and as Man too — Man victorious, Man in the glory of God (See John 7:39; read also John 14:26, and John 15:26). Was He less acceptable, less morally glorious, in receiving the Holy Ghost at the first when He descended upon Him in the day of His humiliation, the seal of His perfection and acceptability with the Father in that wondrous path? Note, too, how, in connection with the sending of the Spirit, the three Persons are presented together, as on the former occasion, when He descended on Jesus alone. Here, He receives from the Father the promised Spirit, to "shed" on others. What a subject for the hearts of His people!

And now, before proceeding further, let me ask one question, in Jesus words, "Have ye understood all these things?" For I remember the difficulties and trials of early days in connection with the study of the Word of God, and, in particular, that but few of those from whom help might have been looked for, had searched for themselves into the meaning and application of these great and primary truths. If we had not the Holy Ghost, we should not be sealed, we should have no power; we might have the life, but not the power of the life. If I had asked beloved Christian friends about the meaning, "bearing," and scriptural development of this most precious truth, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, how it was, and what are the consequences for us, I should have waited in vain for any satisfactory answer. Two subjects almost exclusively engaged their attention, that of the atonement, and the Psalms, which give us for the most part the experiences of the converted, but undelivered, Jewish remnant. They found comfort there, their own state being so similar, hence in their prayers they entreated that God might not be angry with them forever (it was thus evident they had not peace), and that He would not take His Holy Spirit from them — proof that they knew nothing of the doctrine or truth of the Spirit's presence in the church, or in the individual, as either seal or earnest. They were, though converted, unconsciously on Jewish ground. How many are in precisely the same position now! Let us recall another of our Lord's words: He that received seed into good ground, is he that heareth the word of God, and understandeth it. "Have ye understood all these things?" is a question for souls now as then. "To him that hath shall be given." Not the quantity or range of truth is the question here, but rather, what He sends do we possess? "Gather of it, every man according to his eating." How great, then, is our responsibility if we regard ourselves from the point of view, that from those to whom much has been given, much will be required! Think of the light given us on this very point, of the presence and power of the Spirit amongst His people, and how feebly we have answered to the grace thus shown us. It is well to have ever before us the solemn truth, that with regard to our responsibility as Christians, the day of Christ will measure everything, not of course as to salvation; it is a sadly neglected truth.

But to return to John's testimony. "Behold," he says, "the Lamb of God!" This is rather the meditation of his heart, than direct witness, nevertheless of all the forms of testimony such heart-utterances are often the most powerful. When asked who he himself was, he replied, "I am

the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” When he opens his lips, you find that what he says is what he is, a voice of testimony for the Lord. Hitherto we have found nothing in scripture so like the Lord’s language in John 8:25, where, when asked “Who art Thou?” — “Altogether that which I also say unto you,” was His reply (See New Translation). His speech presented Himself. This was power indeed! And he who was greatest of those born of women was most like Him in this. His heart was welling up a good matter, and the waters, flowing over, bore the disciples from the side of John unto Jesus. Did it grieve John to be thus abandoned for his Lord? No, this was the perfection and end of his ministry. The end, as well as source, of all true ministry, is ever the Lord Himself. Paul thus expresses it, “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 Ghost.” For the disciples the Lamb of God is the Teacher, whom to see in His own abode is the one desire of their hearts. “Where abidest Thou?” Strange words from the lips of man, not often heard in the dry and thirsty land through which His feet pressed on.

Verse 39. “And they abode with Him that day.” What cravings of the soul, and spiritual needs were met and satisfied as they abode with Him that day! Who but Himself could truly reveal the Lamb of God, announced to them by John, whence had He come, and whither was He going, to what end born and come into the world! How many difficulties disappeared, and what darkness was dispelled that day, while they abode in the presence of “the Light of life! With what wonder they must have listened to the gracious words that fell from His lips — the words of life, which He alone, possessed! But was He only an answerer of questions or interpreter of mysteries? Jesus was the Revealer of the deep and secret things of God, as being God Himself. He declared the Father also, as only-begotten Son in His bosom; things which eye had not seen nor ear heard. Once again, when His work was done, we find Him, as the day declined and it was toward evening, the Guest (not, as here, the Host) of two disciples, of whose thoughts, as in the former case, He was Himself the Object. Their hopes seemed about to perish, the “Hope of Israel” being no longer with them. The angels word, that He was alive, made them astonished. Then He caused them to see Himself, as presented in the Word of God, its theme and Object. Afterwards, having broken the bread, and given it to them, their eyes were opened, and they discerned Himself. Henceforth their state was changed, they had now the key to the understanding of the scriptures, and knew Himself personally. The time of slowness of heart was gone, that of burning of heart was come. But the time of power was not yet come, for that is realized through the presence of the Spirit — “the Holy Ghost was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified.”

But we were speaking of the disciples in verse 39, who abode with Him that day. We may be sure that they were not there to “prove Him with hard questions,” but to “commune with him of all that was in their hearts.” And what did Jesus tell them? It is said of the wise king, “he told the queen of Sheba all her questions.” Could that be said of Jesus in the scene before us, that He merely told them all their questions? It is quite right that we should commune with Him of all that is in our heart, and this we do when in His presence; but when Jesus communes with us, He tells us of all that is in His heart (something far deeper than answering our questions) and this in turn becomes the basis of our communings with Him. “Now they have known that all things, whatsoever Thou hast given Me, are of Thee. All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. And Solomon told her all her questions, there was nothing hid from Solomon that he told her not.”

But of what was in his heart, nothing was said, there were no communings about that. It is not imagination to say that no such truths were ever heard in the house which Solomon built, as in the place where Jesus abode that day; yet Jesus, Lamb of God, was the Jehovah whose glory once filled that house. The disciples followed Jesus, who, in replying to their inquiry by the words, Come and see, “presents Himself as Center and Way. John’s testimony could not go higher than “Behold the Lamb of God, “nor could Jesus take ground lower than the height of the glory of His Person, to meet the spiritual need of man. He was Himself the only Center and the only Way for man. He alone had the words of life, none come unto the Father but by Him. The disciples were not contented to get a passing glimpse of the blessed Lamb of God, but they want to know where He dwells. He accepts that and says, “Come and see.” The subject of John’s testimony is the Lamb of God; then we get the truth from Jesus that He (God’s Lamb) is both Center and Way. Voluntarily or involuntarily every one must think of Him. In Matthew, when He was a babe, the apostate king wants to kill Him; the Magi come to present myrrh and frankincense, and to worship Him. The priests knew where the Messiah, the Judge of Israel, was to be born; but they communicate the knowledge to this murderous king, whose only desire was to take away His life. All are occupied about Him — angels as well as men. Joseph is told by the angel of the Lord, to take the young child and go into Egypt; and, in the next chapter, He is the heavens’ Object — they open unto Him — the Father reveals Him as His beloved Son, the Spirit descending, abides upon Him. In the following chapter, He is the special Object of Satan’s enmity, on Him his wiles and temptations are concentrated. The ministry of angels, of which He is the Object, succeeds the attacks of Satan.

So, in Luke, it is with Him that the hearts of the remnant are engaged. “Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace,” exclaims Simeon, when he had taken the infant Jesus in his arms, “for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” And Anna, coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel. In Luke 2, we see the whole Roman world put into activity, on account of the Babe that was born at Bethlehem. On the cross, the enmity of Jew and Gentile finds its common Object in Him. “For of a truth against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.” The cross exchanged for the throne, the Center of man’s enmities becomes the Center of man’s praise (Rev. 5).

Loud and far each tongue partaking,

Rolls around the endless song.

Thus, in infancy, in His life down here, on the cross, in the midst of the throne, in the new Jerusalem, He is everywhere the Center and Object.

Verses 40-42. Then Andrew, one of the two disciples who had been with Jesus, finds first his own brother Simon, and telling him they had found the Messiah, leads him to Jesus, and there, standing in His presence without the intervention of priest or apostle (for as yet there were none), law or ritual, church or temple, saints or angels not being so much as named, Simon the sinner hears the words of grace: “Thou art Simon “-- his name in nature — thou shalt be called Cephas, “a stone, or Peter, his new name in grace, in connection with Himself the Rock; Petros, a stone; Petra, a rock.

Verse 43. "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me." Here we get the other thought, He was the Center before, now He is the Path. He is the Lamb of God, the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, the Center of all from God towards man, and the Path for man. In the wilderness there is no beaten path, we find in a spiritual sense Christ's footsteps. How often questions arise as to the true character of the path of life, while it is forgotten for the time that all is summed up in that word, "Follow me." There and there only this path is found. We find the same truth in the history of Israel in the wilderness, they had to follow the ark, that is, to follow Christ. This is always the path of the sheep; "My sheep hear My voice," said the Good Shepherd, "and I know them, and they follow Me." How often, in neglected passages, and expressed in simplest language, as from One too great to despise the least, principles of the utmost importance are unfolded, but overlooked by the careless reader. In the last chapter of this gospel, we find these words again. He said to Peter, when he asked about John, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." How weighty a word, yet unweighed and forgotten by many! That path is only found in following Him, the light of life ever shines upon it, the Spirit's power, too, is realized there. They might have marched in that path, the ark leading (following Christ), straightway from the land of darkness to the pleasant land, eleven days journey. How different would their experiences have been from those of their forty years journeyings in the wilderness, but "they turned back in their heart, they understood not his wonders in Egypt, they lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, they despised the pleasant land." Thus Egypt, the wilderness, and Canaan, alike witnessed against them. The flesh never follows Christ, one must walk in the Spirit to do that. In the beginning, before the path is trodden at all, how grateful to the opened ear are His own blessed words, "Come to Me, and I will give you rest . . . learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Has He no word, of equal sweetness, for those on the way? "I am the way. I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is always Himself; "Come to Me"; "Learn from Me"; "I am meek and lowly in heart"; "I am the way"; "Follow Me." It is only in following Him, that we accomplish the will of God. Have you found another way of doing that? "My meat," He said, "is to do His will and to finish His work? I do always the things that please Him." Is it so with us? How often one rises in the morning, without one thought of Christ in the heart! But with the returning tide, the flowing of the waters of Shiloah, that go so softly (Isa. 8:6; John 9:7) the consciousness of the presence of the Sent One, that He had kept us, in those hours when we could not keep ourselves, awakes in the heart. "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." That was the truth, the Lord sustained him, and He comes in Himself with the truth. Now one is ready to "follow Him." I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. It is a good thing to commune with one's heart upon the bed, in the night watches, but prayer comes with day; when the conflict begins, then the time of communing with the heart is passed, the time to pray is come. "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee." Thus one renews one's strength, walks in the Spirit, follows Christ.

Verses 45-51. Now we come to Nathanael. He was a simple saint of God. The Lord bears him witness: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." In saying, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" it is plain that Nathanael already, through grace, was a lover of righteousness, and a hater of iniquity; and the Lord, in grace, recognizes it in "the Israelite indeed, and without guile." This character, in its perfection, is seen in Christ Himself with God's appreciation of it. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, Thy God,

hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psa. 45). Nathanael says to Him, "Whence knowest Thou me?" a very different question from that of the two disciples, "Where dwellest Thou?" and belonging to a different character of thought or state of soul. The desire to know about the Lamb of God from His own lips, is not the same thing as to find that we are known already by One whom we know not — Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth. "Such knowledge is too wonderful" for him, He can only be God who knows him in this way (when Thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee), and he is in His presence. "I will praise Thee," seems then to have been the language of his soul (Psa. 139). There is a sound of worship in his words, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the king of Israel." A beautiful answer, through grace, to the words spoken in grace, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." The Savior and the sinner bear testimony to each other. Surely it was a day of grace! That was a fine outburst from a heart prepared, by the sweet energies of the Spirit, for the reception of the new testimony, for the reception of the Lord Himself. Of redemption, or of divine righteousness, or of the Spirit's presence as its seal, Nathanael as yet knew nothing; but a new nature was there already, with its feelings and capability of answering to the formative action of the Holy Spirit. "Because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou?" Nathanael had owned Him, according to the glory of Psalm 2, as Son of God and King of Israel. The Lord told him he should see greater things than these, he should see Him in the glory of the Son of Man, over all the works of creation, according to the testimony of Psalm 8, the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him, a glorious and wondrous position for Man (Eph. 1:22). In the day of His lowliness and humiliation, the heavens had opened to Him personally, and He saw the Spirit, as a dove, descending and coming upon Him. He received the Spirit as Man, as sealed of God in the position He had taken. Again, the heavens open to Him that angels may ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. If in the day of rejection He received the Spirit from the Father for Himself; in the day of His ascension He receives, a second time, the Spirit from the Father that He may send Him to others (Acts 2:32, 33). When His Person simply is in view, glory can add nothing to, nor humiliation take aught from it.

Chapter 2

The second chapter is a chapter of signs through-out; the third day; the marriage; the vessels of purification empty; the wine failing; the water turned into wine; the, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"; the casting out of the temple the profaners of His Father's house; and the raising up of the temple of His body.

The first and second days give us in John 1: the ministries, respectively, of John the Baptist, and Christ. John directs to Christ, the Lord gathers to Himself. With the third day, the scene is changed; we are here on resurrection ground. Jesus must come again, as they had seen Him depart. Great events, belonging to that day, are figured here in the marriage in Cana, and the cleansing of the house of God. The marriage of the Jewish bride will then take place, and judgment overtake the profaners of the house of the Lord. "For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come. "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework; upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir" (Psa. 45). We must not confound the description of the heavenly with that of the earthly bride. "Bride of the Lamb," applies to the heavenly assembly, which He presents to Himself all glorious, without spot, morally perfect. The earthly bride, or queen, is also all glorious within, but the "within" seems to refer to the chambers of the King, the nearest relationship to the King. Compare the hundred and forty-four thousand belonging to Judah, who stood with the Lamb on mount Sion (Rev. 14), this was anticipative of the glory coming in. They are, I believe, of Judah, not of Israel (the ten tribes), the latter class had no part in the sufferings of the rejected Messiah. What a privilege to be permitted to share in His rejection! "Ye are they who have continued with me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom." The prophets who wrote after the captivity, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, speak of the Jews and Jerusalem, in connection with Christ and the last day. Water-pots without water will no more be found in that day. "Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord." "The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar" (Zech. 14:20, 21).

But see how He gives! All is from Himself in John — Himself and the Father. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." Verse 7. "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim." That was the measure, blessed word! oft repeated in various connections, but what marvel, from One in whom the fullness itself was pleased to dwell (Col. 1), and who but Himself could administer of this fullness? Draw out now, and bear, another word of power and grace. The servants which drew the water knew. Those who do His will are let into the secret of their Lord's mind.

You will note the order: the water first and then the wine, holiness and joy, separation to God, and then power in the Spirit. To think of wine first would be folly, the denial of the truth. "Fill the waterpots with water," was the word, the obedience of the servants was shown in filling to the brim. The Holy Ghost, the living water, is the power of sanctification. Neither the heavenly nor the

earthly people can be with God without it. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” The way to real joy, to what God calls joy, is through sanctification — the Lord Himself being their righteousness.

Verses 9, 10. There were two mysteries here for the master of the feast: he knew not whence was the wine, nor how it was that the bridegroom had kept the good wine until now. The finger of God was there, nay, God Himself; who but He could have wrought thus? And to keep the good wine until the last, is not man’s way at all, with him all ends with the wine out. Man’s joy very soon passes away. Look at him in his most joyous and religious aspects, where Christ is not, how soon it withers away; because it is only his, not the joy of the Lord, it all runs away from the beginning. “All flesh is as grass, and its glory as the flower of grass.” The grass has withered, and its flower has fallen.

We realize purity by walking in the Spirit, and joy as the fruit of it. The joy that we realize from mere human things, or even God’s providential dealings in our favor, runs out, but He gives the true joy in communion with Himself. We abuse God’s natural gifts, so the wine runs out. The Lord keeps the good wine and He gives it in His own good time. In communion we realize it, we often say, “Thou hast kept the good wine until now.” Practically, we constantly find it thus, in our pathway here.

With regard to verse 4, which we passed by, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” I may remark, that the relationship referred to here, represents that existing between Himself and the Jewish people. “Unto us,” said the prophet, writing by His Spirit, “a child is born, unto us a son is given,” — but what had He to do with them, in accomplishing His Father’s business, or they with Him? “His own received him not.” “He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor”; “When he called, none to answer; When he looked, there was none to help, none to uphold”; and so in the end, when dying for that nation, as well as for others, it is said, “when He had by Himself purged our sins.” Blessed word! who could be with Him there? In His path on earth He had said, “Who is My mother?” but when all was over, and His work done, “Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother.”

To go back a little, I suppose it is clearly understood, that the marriage figured here sets forth His relationship to His earthly people in that day. “Bride of the Lamb,” is the designation of the heavenly bride. It was Jesus who said, “Fill the waterpots with water,” Jesus who turned the water into wine — considered apart from Him, how empty and unreal that festal scene in Galilee! The words of power were, “fill with water,” “draw out,” and “bear.”

Verse 11. “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.” This is His glory in connection with His earthly kingdom, His power to bring in the blessing. It is not like that of the transfiguration, nor that spoken of in the first chapter, the glory of relationship to the Father. In the transfiguration it is the heavenly glory of the kingdom in His Person — His garments shone as no fuller on earth could whiten them. They are very distinct forms of glory (That which moves us most, and is indeed the deepest of all, is His eternal relationship to the Father). Peter says, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” The glory of His Person shone there in heavenly radiance, along with that came the Father’s voice, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight.” How

attractive to the hearts of the saints, the Father's testimonies to His beloved son! Peter "would encourage" them by telling them "that it" was "no cunningly-devised fable," that what he saw was the confirmation of the prophetic word.

In this second chapter also, the contemplation of His glory moves the heart. He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.

Verse 13. "And the Jews passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." He goes up, to Jerusalem, and, finding the temple profaned, drives out the traffickers — this was a sign of judgment to come — and on the Jews asking Him, "What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" He answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This was the sign of death and resurrection, also that God Himself was there. "I will raise it up." This passage intimates also, that, in His mind the house at Jerusalem was already judged. At the end He says, "Your house is left unto you desolate." His own body, then, was the only true temple of God. "He spake of the temple of His body. When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them." Previously we are told that His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." This reminds us of the words of His youth, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? The thoughts of His youth were not different from those of His manhood, as we speak. What concerned the Father — His name — His house — His glory, was ever the first thought of the Son who is in His bosom.

Chapter 3

A man came to Jesus by night. Now we come to the unfolding and application of truth to souls individually — its power over the conscience, and effect in the heart. The glory of His Person, His relationship to the Father, His dwelling in flesh with men, are presented in chapter 1: Henceforth we shall see Him in the midst of sinful men, undefiled and undefilable by the contact, and finally made sin for them (How His essential holiness comes out here! made sin, in no other way could He have to do with it; “made sin” refers to atonement). The Rock that followed them of old, again going after them, in the moral wilderness which their sin had created.” His ways are everlasting, “Himself the Same.” The divine Sower went forth to sow, when the fruit had failed. When the flock are all astray, the Owner goes after the lost ones. When the fold availed no longer, the Shepherd put forth His sheep, and then went before them. Lo, these are parts of Thy ways! The thunder of His power, His righteousness like unto the great mountains, and His judgments to a great deep, will be understood from other passages; but what engages our attention here, is the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Still He is “learned practically,” not so much through summaries of truth, however precious, and they have their own great place in scripture (John 1; Col. 1; Heb. 1), as in hearing the words and beholding the works of Jesus. How in Him the river of God’s grace flowed ever onward, as through a dry and thirsty land, at times overflowing all its banks, but never stopped nor diverted from its course for a single moment!

At the end of John 2 we find two classes of disciples, and two kinds of faith. For true disciples, the Scriptures, and the word which Jesus speaks, are of equal authority. They heard Moses and the prophets, and thus could receive the words of Jesus Himself. They believed when One (Jesus) was risen from the dead (Luke 16:29, 31). This is the faith of God’s elect, these were the true disciples of Christ. The faith of the many who believed, when they saw the miracles, was the faith of man, nothing more, not the gift of God, nor the effect of a word in the heart or conscience. (See Matt. 2:5, 6). And Jesus knew all men, therefore He did not trust Himself to them; thus He writes vanity “upon the first of God’s creatures.

But, in this man of the Pharisees, there was something that was not of man, nor by man either. The work in the conscience (his coming to Jesus by night), the recognition of God, not only His power in the miracles, but that He was with the teacher come from Himself, prove that Nicodemus was not of those whose faith is merely founded on a wonder which they have seen. He knows already, by a divine instinct, that if Jesus is of the day, the Pharisees are not; to compromise his position amongst them is a serious thing for a man in the flesh, so he came by night, but, once in His presence, the Pharisees seem to have been forgotten, they are of no account there. He desires to be taught, not saved; to be taught, it may be, a more excellent way of putting a new patch upon an old garment. That he had wants in his soul is evident, but undefined, perhaps, even to himself. Did he know that he was a lost sinner? But the veil was soon to be drawn aside, and the man of the Pharisees manifested in the light: for the Teacher come from God, was that Light which, coming into the world, sheds its light upon every one. (See New Translation). It had shone upon Nicodemus, how could his real state be any longer a question? Flattering words and

uncertain sounds do not proceed from the lips of Jesus. We have here, not a revelation of the heart of man, as in Mark 7, of what proceeds from within, nor of the future judgment of the secrets of the heart by that man whom God has appointed, "but a word unheard, unuttered before, which sets aside absolutely and forever the race of man itself, viewed in its present condition.

One must be born anew — a new source of life — thus the first word from the divine Teacher, uttered without softening or modification of any kind, announces the exclusion of man from the kingdom of God — he could not even see it. It will be remarked, that neither judgments nor warnings are found in Jesus words in this passage; no reproaches are uttered, nor exhortations given. There was no place, indeed, for promises and exhortations; to whom could they be addressed? From his inmost thought to his most outward act all was over with man; as for the Jews, they are treated as reprobates from the beginning in this gospel (see John 1:11). Afterwards, when grace is brought in — the cross, and God's gift of His only-begotten Son — then indeed judgment is declared, on the ground of unbelief in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, it is grace rejected. (Compare Rev21:6 8 for the same principle.)

Nicodemus is presented to us here in three characters; a ruler of the Jews, the teacher of Israel, and a man of the Pharisees; so that we have clearly before us the foundations of his religious standing before men, highly valued there, no doubt; what indeed could be more desirable, viewed from the side of nature? Was he not one of those who, by profession, rested in the law, and found in it a form of knowledge and truth? But coming to Jesus by night is not the fruit of rest in the law, nor in anything else. It had not brought him out of nature's darkness. Could the form of truth and knowledge in the law satisfy a soul when it thought of God, or found itself in spirit before Him? Had the blood of bulls and goats ever given rest to a single conscience, or the law itself made anything perfect? (Heb. 7). In His reply the Lord ignores, or makes nothing of, his professional standing. Ruler of the Jews, doctor of law or teacher of Israel, and man of the Pharisees, were but religious names and titles, valued by a lifeless orthodoxy. Jesus pierces the strata of profession, and finds at the bottom only a man, and, as such, as incapable of entering the kingdom of God, as Adam was of regaining paradise, from which the judgment of God had excluded him. Surely the teacher of Israel had never heard such truths before, but He who taught him was the Teacher come from God, the Truth itself. And feebly though it may have been, one cannot doubt that Nicodemus was truly exercised in soul; he came to Jesus, even though it were by night. It is true his reasoning shows how faintly the light had penetrated. "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." How different the state of the woman in Luke 7! Was it the beholding of miracles that brought her to the feet of Jesus? There at least one ceases to reason, at a distance from Him it is possible, but who can conceive such a thing as reasoning about His Person while anointing His feet? No, it was the Pharisee who reasoned in that scene, it was only in his heart that he spake, but that voice revealed his rejection of Jesus. The woman's heart spake also, but the voice was heard in her act. How bold was the faith that led her to the house of a Pharisee, because the Lord was there! We may be sure she did not wait to come by night, on such a journey the day was pleasanter than the night; arrived there, the Pharisee of no more account than a publican. A beautiful example of how the faith that leads to Jesus conquers the world. Nicodemus had not got so far, (he was a long way yet from her position!) but, looking at the history of souls, the way to the feet of Jesus seems to be much shorter for a sinner of the city, than for a teacher of theology, when one is only that, God is

high above them all, “but great” are “the difficulties arising from worldly-religious and social position, honor from men, and so on. Advantages in the flesh are but hindrances in that which is born of the Spirit: “what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” Read all that Paul says in that passage, and compare it with the action of this woman, and then say which is the more beautiful. Did ever the heart or mind of man picture to itself such a scene of moral beauty as that in Luke? She spake in her heart, “but her voice was not heard,” she poured out her soul before the Lord. She had by some unrecorded path known the grace of the Lord Jesus; Nicodemus had seen the effect of the “power of the Teacher. How various the secret leadings of the Spirit of God! Still, of the passages which give us the Lord’s intercourse with men, few, if any, are more interesting, and none more important than the chapter we are studying. Sins, and often gross sins, were the common characteristics (I am speaking now of the Jews), but one who could unite in Himself the various characters of Pharisee, theologian, and ruler of the Jews, moved on no ordinary lines. How were they all broken up in a moment, and the illusions in which they had their force dispelled! God is not found at the beginning or end of such lines as these. By the words of Christ, the religious pretensions and assumptions of the flesh are set aside for ever. Underneath them all, He could find only a man, not as God had created him, but as Satan had formed him in his distance and “alienation from the life of God.” This was and is the truth so far, who is he that loves that? But honeyed words of lies find an ever open door to the heart of man; with one of them the course of this present evil world began, and with another it will end. “Ye shall not surely die, “was Satan’s lie in the garden; he was a liar from the beginning. The lawless one will come according to the working of Satan, his last representative, deceiving by wonders of falsehood (2 Thess. 2). Who is a liar but he, the denier of the Father and the Son? This person’s judgment, because of the voice of the great words Dan. 7), his lie against God, against the Father and against the Son, coming in his own name (Christ comes in His Father’s name), closes the course of this present evil world (age). Adam believed the lie of Satan; his fall involved the creature in subjection to vanity. Antichrist’s lie, bringing down his own destruction from the Lord, involves in judgment all who accept the lie, not having received the love of the truth.

Verse 3. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This is the end of man, morally, before God; every attempt to modify the meaning and force of these solemn words comes from the father of lies. The race, as such, is set aside; one must have a new source of being, partake of the divine nature, to enter the kingdom of God, to be with God Himself. To talk of nature being improved, is, to say the least, to talk nonsense; can the divine nature become more divine, the evil nature less evil? It is true that by our deeds, as measured by the law, all the world is guilty before God (Rom. 3), but Romans5 shows that all connected with the first man are in that position, lost. It is in itself a lost race, of which Adam was the head; in the second Man alone is life and salvation, and He came to seek and to save, not merely guilty, but lost sinners. Of all this, Nicodemus, a perfect representative of many since his day — as well in position as in intelligence, knew nothing.

We must distinguish between the kingdom of God and heaven itself. For the moment, the kingdom was comprehended in Himself, it has not come in power yet, this kingdom of God on earth, as foretold by the prophets; it is, in its moral aspect, termed the kingdom of God, in its dispensational bearing, as in Matthew, the kingdom of the heavens. John the Baptist proclaimed it as near at hand. It commences with the establishment of the rejected King at the right hand of the heavenly

throne, and hence its, present mysterious form, so that the unfolding of its history could only be in mysteries (Matt. 13). Wheat and tares growing together until the harvest, was not like a king reigning in righteousness. We are all in the kingdom in this form now, true believers and professors together in the world-field. Church ground could not be taken until the Holy Ghost had come; that ground is holy, not so the field of the world.

But Nicodemus does not know what the new birth means, therefore he cannot understand the Lord's words. The teacher of Israel seems to, have forgotten, or never to have known, that great scripture in Ezekiel 36, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, a new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you." [the Lord had said, "born anew"], and "I will put, My Spirit within you." "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Verse 5. "Born of water and of the Spirit." The application of the Word of God to the heart and conscience of man, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is the source of the new nature: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). What a position! He is going to make all things new, and believers are already first-fruits of the new creation. That which is born of the flesh — the energy of an evil nature is flesh, nothing else, enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither can be (Rom. 8:7); witness its development in the man of sin, who sets himself above God Himself, taking His place. The mind of the flesh is death "(Rom. 8:6).

Man as he is will not, cannot, draw near to God. Alarmed in his conscience, he will heap to himself mediators, in proportion to his ignorance of, and distrust in, the one Mediator between. God and man — "the Man Christ Jesus."

The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice . . . thus is every one that is born of the Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" — the new nature, which is developed by drinking into that from which it proceeds — the word and Spirit of God. We read in the following chapter, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," that is, according to His nature.

It would be difficult, even if one wished it, to pass on quickly when studying this great chapter. One is arrested, almost at each verse, either by some foundation-truth, or fresh revelation. We have seen what the new birth is, a nature which is of the Spirit; nothing more is said about it in this passage, and it is only spoken of in connection with entrance into the earthly part of the kingdom. That in this nature one is capable of enjoying the things of the kingdom, is rightly inferred from the Lord's teaching, but there is nothing beyond this as yet. Heaven, and heavenly things, are not in view here, or referred to, it is a matter of necessity, not grace, here; not so stated, I mean. Man must be born again; this is not the language of grace, but of truth, though the truth be full of grace when man's blessing is contemplated.

But the Lord is passing on, He is about to speak of heavenly things, things new and unheard of before. If the new birth be a necessity for all, far deeper foundations must be laid for those who are to be in relationship with God, in connection with heavenly things and hopes. The second must — the lifting up the Son of Man — is a far deeper thing than the truth we have been considering; the foundation indeed, though hitherto unrevealed, of all relationship with God. The new birth in itself, being subjective, gives no solid ground before God. In itself it neither brings peace to the heart, nor

makes the conscience perfect. It may truly exist apart from the position of sonship, witness the Old Testament saints; and knows nothing of redemption, or of the forgiveness of sins; deliverance and the sealing of the Spirit are not spoken of in connection with it. One may be born again, and not have the Holy Ghost. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," but the disciples believed that, and yet received not the Holy Ghost until the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost was not given in connection with, or as a seal of, the new birth, but with faith in the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Savior. (See Eph. 1:13; Acts 10:43-45).

Regeneration is not a state of liberty or power, what it is in itself, we learn in Romans 7; the regenerate person loves righteousness and hates iniquity; but until the work of Christ is known, and the presence and power of the Spirit, weakness characterizes his position, what he would not, that he does, what he would, he does not. Overthrown in every conflict, his wretchedness deepens as the new nature develops in longings after that which is good. Deliverance and power come through Christ and the Spirit — "Who shall deliver? I thank God through Jesus Christ. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free" (Rom. 8:2).

I have dwelt so long upon this subject because, in so many, the one object and effort seems to be to ascertain whether they are really "born again." Such a state of soul could only be found in a low state of things, where truth is but little known, and deliverance, power, and joy in Christ wholly unknown. How many of God's beloved people are in this state!

Nicodemus did not understand these truths, the promises in connection with the new covenant. How different it was with the Teacher from God! He spoke of what He knew, and testified what He had seen, but they received not His testimony. "If I have told you the earthly things," He says (how alone one could enter the earthly kingdom), "and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you the heavenly things?" The Lord is speaking of the earthly and heavenly parts of the kingdom, and no man had ascended up there so as to tell what he had seen there; the Son of Man had come out of heaven, yet was He the Son of Man who is in heaven (in the divine nature). He alone could tell of what was there; the prophets had spoken of the earthly part, and to that the Lord refers when He says, "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This is the heavenly part of the kingdom. But if Nicodemus did not know that one must be born anew, for entrance into the earthly kingdom, he was equally ignorant of the great truth, that the Son of Man must be lifted up, that the believer in Him should not perish, but have (a deeper blessing than admission to the earthly kingdom) eternal life. But now we have come to a grouping of entirely new truths, the Son of Man speaking on earth, yet, at the same time, in heaven. The heaven, too, which is now first fully brought into view, Himself revealer of things therein. Then the world itself, a Jew being only a part of it now, and God loving it with a love without measure, He gave His only-begotten Son." Eternal life brought to light by the gospel, as presently immortality also, "and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6). The central truth and link of all, is the Son of Man lifted up from the earth. It is of surpassing interest to see how these things are connected, the heavenly things and eternal life, with the cross, which before God was the end and judgment of the old thing, and the way out of it also into the new things, where all is of God. Life and immortality are brought to light — "that condition of eternal life which puts the soul and the body beyond death and its power." At least we have the beginning of this precious revelation here. How every glorious truth finds its interpretation in the knowledge of Him! No man

hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven." He tells of heavenly things. The same remark applies to life, light, and immortality. If God gives eternal life, this life is in the Son, and he that followed Him should have the light of life. Further, it was not possible that He should beholden of death, neither did His flesh see corruption.

But what words are these, "God so loved, "and, "the Son of Man must be lifted up"! In this name He suffers for sin, executes judgment, and receives glory, and a dominion that is everlasting. But He is not thinking of His glory, the time will come for that, but rather of what divine love could give and suffer for sinners perishing in their sins. It is this that Jesus announces — the gospel of God's grace. The ministries of angels and of men had left man, the race, where they found him; but a new period had arrived, the grace that brings salvation was there, "the time of its manifestation" come, "the compelling" of God were now the invitations of grace (compel them to come in), irresistible for the heart that knew what it meant! Already, too, from the days of the Baptist, the precious violence of faith (its energy), was working in the hearts of believers; the violent seized on the kingdom of the heavens. The time for mere profession was gone by; for John had said, Already the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. He that comes after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." But Jesus testimony necessarily went much farther than John's. "Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. This is the judgment. God's witnesses had been rejected from the beginning, His law not kept, His prophets slain; but here was a new thing, God Himself present as light in the world, but darkness preferred, as afterwards we see Him rejected and hated as love. "For My love I had hatred. Now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." God is light, and God is love. This is His nature; and man's? — darkness which did not comprehend the light; enmity, which rejected the love. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone." It is not merely Gentiles walking on in darkness, who are manifested by the shining of this heavenly light, or Jews saying, This is the heir, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Whether they still required a sign, while the Greeks sought after wisdom, it made no difference now; it was the creature, man, who was in view, and there is where the light revealed him — loving darkness after light (the true light), had come into the world. On this state judgment is pronounced. The awakened sinner is delivered from it in the mercy of God, through faith in the Son of Man lifted up on the cross; for there God, who so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, condemned sin in the flesh, and there Christ died, not only for sin, but unto sin, made sin, yet, at the same moment, by the eternal Spirit, offering Himself without spot to God (all that belonged to man's position in the flesh has there been judged), and Christ, the glorious Quickener of the dead, has Himself been quickened out of "death to sin (Rom. 6:10). And here it is, in His quickening, that new creation begins, and God has quickened us with Christ — a new creation in Him. We have died in His death, of which baptism is the symbol, to sin, law, and the world. Thus it is that God views us in His grace; and, quickened by Him with Christ, and raised up, we have life, and that life in an entirely new position — eternal life — Christ Himself being our life. This was the purpose of God, that believers in Him who was lifted up on the cross should receive eternal life. This is much more than the forgiveness of the sins of the old man. This truth of the new creation supposes the old man himself set aside for ever; it was when we were dead in sins that God quickened us with Christ, another aspect of truth altogether.

The new creation commences with God setting the risen Christ at His right hand, as the kingdom of the heavens (in mystery), begins with the presence there of the rejected King. The special responsibility, that dates from the coming of light into the world, in no way affects that which is founded on the giving of the law. A broken law, and grace rejected, give us the moral history of man. The Lord's last words to Nicodemus are more searching than the first. To the general statement, "Man must be born anew," he could make objection, reasoning from its impossibility to man's mind, but when told that men do not come to the light, lest their works should be shown as they are, not wrought in God, his mouth is stopped, he is guilty before God, who, in this way, begins the good work in him. The next time we hear of Nicodemus, he is a sharer in the reproach of the Galilean (John 7:50-52).

We were talking about the effect of light; it is remarkable that every manifestation of God in the responsible creation shows man afar off. If it be His "glory," we have all come short of it, cannot stand before it; if "light, it shines in darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it;" if "grace," it supposes us already lost, for it brings salvation. Yet those things by which God thus manifests Himself (they are all found in their fullness in Christ), become the power of sanctification also, the very means of our becoming like God. "We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). That is the power of the glory in the heart of the believer. Then, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another", "and "the fruit of the "light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." That is the consequence of walking in the "light." Then in Titus, "The grace of God [love to the unlovely] that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly." That is practical sanctification. These manifestations of God, that prove our moral state in nature, are the means of our sanctification as believers — glory, light, love.

Verses 22-24. "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Enon . . . For John was not yet cast into prison." It is very interesting to find here that all this early ministry, as recorded by John, was before the Lord began His public ministry of the gospel of the kingdom. Mark says (ch. 1:14), "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." How blessed it is to search the Scriptures! not merely to read them through for the accomplishment of a sacred duty, but the searching for the treasures that do not lie quite on the surface. The Lord refers to the expiration of the time, the whole course of which, the "man Gabriel" was sent to explain to the greatly beloved." The time for setting up the kingdom was come, if the people had faith to receive it. The King being rejected, it took for the present its mysterious form (Matt. 13). In Matthew 4:12 we read, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison" (vs. 17), "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand." That is, His public ministry in connection with the gospel of the kingdom. In Luke 4 we have the most beautiful presentation of the character of His ministry in relation to the wants of men, as, in Matthew 4, in connection with the gospel of the kingdom. Anointed Himself as man, for the work to which He came as sent, He proclaims that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him (Cp. Isa. 61 with Luke 4). No day of vengeance then, but the acceptable year of the Lord, it was purest grace, in "principle embracing the Gentiles; indeed He refers to them almost immediately, showing that in the days of the greatest prophets in Israel, Elijah and Elisha, it

was not the many widows and lepers in Israel who were ministered to, but poor Gentiles.

They wondered at the gracious words, and were astonished at His doctrine, for His word was with power. Grace, “power and authority characterize His ministry. Returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, victorious over Satan, He teaches in their synagogues, glorified of all. What a companion picture we have here in John, before the Baptist was cast into prison! What a grouping of subjects, Himself the substance of each! For where, outside Himself, could they be found? God’s love, God’s gift — eternal life — and light come into the world! If in Luke all wondered at His gracious words, here there was at least one who could appreciate the glorious Witness Himself, the source, and, at the same time, the fullness of his joy; he was near enough, too, to hear the Bridegroom’s voice. Yet was there one sorrow left (for we are still in this world), “No man receiveth His testimony,” the echo in his heart of “Ye will not come unto Me.” The Lord’s testimony in Matthew 4 was given in accomplishment of prophecy, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, The people which sat in darkness saw a great light.” In Luke 4, He first reads the prophecy and then fulfils it (He came in by the door). His testimony is rendered in evident recognition of the Scriptures, they were they which testified of Him, and, as He Himself tells us, could not be broken. It was the same thing in His conflict with Satan, “It is written, His only weapon. He overcame him by the word of His testimony, and loved not His life unto the death! These words were said of His own, how blessedly they applied to Himself! It was so, on to the end, “What is this then, that is written, The stone that the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?” This carries with it a very blessed thought, of the place the written Word had ever in His spirit, Himself the living Word of the living God (Matt. 4; Luke 24:44-46; John 5:46, 47; Matt. 21:13, 16, 42; 26:31). But here, in John 3, it is not merely as anointed Man on earth, the object and accomplisher of prophecy, that He presents Himself; but as the glorious Son of Man out of heaven, yet at the same time in heaven, the revealer of heavenly things and of eternal life. Such was the commencement of His wondrous ministry, according to John. He performed His service upon earth, guided not only by the words poured morning by morning into His opened ear, for Him the Scriptures, too, revealed the path; and the Spirit of holiness, and of power, that rested upon Him, was in Him the Spirit of obedience and dependence also.

Verse 25. “There was then a reasoning of the disciples of John with a Jew about purification (New Trans.). I suppose the baptism of John gave occasion for this question about purifying. The best fruit, borne by those who went to John’s baptism, was found in their confession that they had nothing but their sins to bring; yet never was confession from the mouth of man so sealed with the approbation of God. Jesus Himself goes into the water with them, He recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit, and is Himself immediately owned by God the Father as His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased.

But, while insisting upon fruits meet for repentance, John knows that it was One mightier than he who alone could purge His floor, and this He would do when he baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, the chaff would be burned up, the wheat gathered into the garner. But there is not a word of redemption, nor even of the need of the new birth in this; to Christian baptism there could be no reference here, a living and not a dead and risen Christ, is the subject of the Baptist’s testimony, addressed exclusively to Jews. Yet it was baptism to Christ, that is, to His death, which alone answered the inquiry for and need of purity. Christ’s death was death to sin, law, the world, all that belonged to, and characterized, the responsible creature, far from God in sin. To all that Christ has

died, but that is the death to which we are baptized — a death to sin. “We, who have died to sin, “says the apostle, and, “he that is dead, is freed [justified] from sin” (Rom. 6). “Having made by Himself the purification of sins [that is, in His atoning death on the cross], He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1 JND). We see now where purification is found, and how the saint, entering into the meaning and value of that death before God, can accept the exhortation, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord.” Here, and here alone, “we get this question about purification fully answered.

It was not until the darkness was passing (1 John 2), that such a question could be answered. See also what Peter says, “The like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us . . . the demand as before God of a good conscience (1 Pet. 3:21, New Trans). It was answered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God.

The doctrine of the new birth reveals also the need of purification; to be with God, one is born of water as well as of the Spirit. “Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth” (James 1:18). We are cleansed by the washing of water by the word. The revelation of the new enables us to judge that which is of the old man, and we are renewed in knowledge, according to God’s revelation of Himself as a Man. Water and blood (cleansing and expiation) came from the dead body of Christ, the true cleansing is in this death. Baptism unto His death, then, is the sign of this regeneration. Faith, in the death and resurrection of Christ, gives a good conscience towards God. The blood of Jesus Christ purifies the conscience to serve the living God (Heb. 9). In baptism, we pass from our own state — dead in sins — into Christ’s state — dead to sin, and alive to God. This is the meaning of Christian baptism, we are not baptized because we had died in His death; baptism is not the sign of this. “Know ye not that so many of us, as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto His death?” Thus the ground of our standing in nature before God is changed. We have died out of it in Christ’s death, and so, also, from another starting point, as quickened with Christ, we have left the old state behind, and entered into one of resurrection.

Verse 26. It seems as though John’s disciples were troubled about what they might have considered the waning reputation of their master. “He to whom thou barest testimony, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.” But their jealousy, if that was their feeling, far from finding a response in the spirit of John, becomes only the occasion of renewed testimony to the deeper glory of His Person. For him, the source, as well as the subject of testimony, is now heavenly. A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven; and He who comes out of heaven is above all, and what He hath seen and heard that He testifieth, and no man receiveth His testimony. And here, I think, we can perceive that these heavenly testimonies have reached his spirit; for the moment, at least, the subject of the kingdom gives place to testimony to the heavenly Witness Himself — the Witness of things above. This is very beautiful, and could only be found in the gospel of John; where, from the beginning, all is regarded as ruined and gone in Israel. Here he can only think of the things above, which he has heard from Him, who, coming out of heaven, speaks of the things which He has seen and heard; and if verses 35-36 belong to the Baptist’s testimony, he would seem to be occupied, for the time at least, with the truths ministered respectively by the apostles John and Paul, the former of whom is occupied mainly with the Person of the Lord; the latter, in addition to the things belonging to the name, dwells much on the things above, on the heavenly calling and relationship of the saints. Nor did the Baptist yield to either of these blessed servants in personal attachment to the Lord. In this matter of devoted love

to His Person, these three holy men, John Baptist, John the Evangelist, and Paul, stand together in the front rank of the noble army of martyrs (witnesses). No one of these servants of God resembled the other in natural character, their lives and fields of service were widely different, in one thing they were wholly one, devotion to Him, whom through grace they served so well. Yet this, too, was from above, as each has been careful to tell us.

How little the disciples of John comprehended their master! in this they resembled the disciples of Jesus. "He to whom thou barest witness; all come unto Him." They knew not that turning from John to Jesus was the crowning of their Master's ministry, they were equally ignorant of the joy of the friend of the Bridegroom. How different was it with that other blessed servant, who was left by all in Asia — but not for Jesus! Like Demas, they loved this present world, the world which Paul's doctrine, manner of life, faith, and purpose united to condemn, as Noah's preparation of the ark was the condemnation of the world that then was. This condemnation, those who are of the world never forgive, it is felt to be their own. The faithful are treated as the filth and offscouring of it, but Christ says of them, "Ye are the light of the world," and the Spirit's testimony is, that the world was not worthy of those who, by their faithfulness, thus condemn it. How different the judgments of the Spirit of God, and the spirit of the world! John, however, does not speak of shame, but of joy; the joy was as peculiar as the voice he heard, the Bridegroom's voice. Neither was Paul ashamed, in his day, his joy and confidence were in the Lord, it was those in Asia who had left him who were ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, and of Paul His prisoner. So, in the passage before us, John says: "No man receives his testimony" — his soul felt it. How similar are the trials of all who seek to walk with God! It is in the path His holy One has trodden that we realize this. In finding His footsteps, we are permitted to share His sorrows, but His victories also. Finally it will be, "to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). Never can the lovers of this world become its overcomers. "This is the victory that overcomes the world — our faith." How gracious and mighty was the power that constrained the foremost man in all the earth in things pertaining to God; one, too, possessing a name and authority with the masses, to take deliberately, rejoicingly, and in the spirit of triumph, not the spoiling of his goods, but what was far deeper "the setting aside of self with all its pretensions, all its reminiscences, all the prestige that attaches to greatness of any kind amongst men; and for what? that which God revealed and faith discovered in the Person of a homeless, houseless, rejected Man! "He shall increase, "was the power in his soul of, I shall decrease." But the increase was not to be in this age, but in that which is to come; in the present the disciple shares his Master's rejection here. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." This service does not lead to honors and preferments here, but if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor. Farther on, we have Paul telling us, that by the cross the world was crucified unto him and he unto it. There it was that one, once known as Saul of Tarsus, disappeared. He had verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, but when he says, "I am crucified with Christ," he is, no longer thinking with himself, but with Christ. It is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me." He had decreased, as John terms it, and wonderfully, so that Christ only appeared. What had become of Paul? One only sees now a man in Christ, but this is conquering, not improving, the world. By what path Paul reached this place of present victory, those who know the truth can tell. Was it not found in forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before? while he pressed on to the mark, for the prize of the calling on high. That path leads out of this world; and in what world is Christ won? Paul was looking at Christ

in glory, the Baptist beheld Him in humiliation; the circumstances how different, the Object the same! The full revelation of God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), forms the glorious circle of light which surrounded the apostle of the Gentiles, he stood before God on the firm ground of His own revealed righteousness; redemption was an accomplished fact, the Spirit's presence here answering to Christ's glory with the Father. The veil was rent, the conscience of the believer perfected, himself sealed with the Holy Spirit, by which he was united to Christ in glory, and became a member of His body on earth. Who could separate from this body? it was Christ's! who separate from Christ's love, who, from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Which, of all these precious truths, formed any part of the ground on which John stood before Christ? These blessed foundation truths in Christianity were, as is said in reference to the Spirit, "not yet, "because Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:39). The divine Person, in whom and through whom they would be laid, he did know, and that depths unknown to man would soon flow forth. Blessed man! he was soon to pass through fiery trials, when it seemed as if he were offended in Jesus. "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" If it were said, "Paul never faltered like that in the hour of trial and conflict," it would be true, but Paul stood in conscious acceptance in a risen and glorified Christ, seated on the Father's throne, united to Him there by the Spirit; John bore testimony to the unknown Son of God (as Son of Man also unknown), the crownless king of an apostate race and nation. For John, all the foundations were, so to speak, in the Person of Christ, and, on the other side, who was so personally appreciated by the Lord as John? The one word of admonition, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me, is followed by such a word of praise, as never was uttered before. Was that a reed shaken in the wilderness? The Lord notices his manner of life, it was not in kings houses that John's sphere of service was found.

Verse 31. John himself being by nature of the earth, having spoken as such (an earthly person), even in his testimony not going beyond that which related to the earthly kingdom of Messiah, (besides this, he bore witness to His personal glory), apprehends, and is evidently deeply moved by, these heavenly testimonies. What eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, He who was from heaven was there to reveal, but no one received them. John's heart is smitten on account of it, and, I think one might say, that here it is the heart of a heavenly man that thus sorrows; for what makes any one heavenly in spirit, but the revelation of things there by Him who is of it? The goodly fruits of that land, the heavenly Witness had brought with Him. From the beginning, John was linked by faith to the divine Person, who, coming out of heaven, is above all, and who, in declaring what He had heard there, speaks the words of God, as the sent One. "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." How could it be otherwise? Moreover, the Spirit was not given now in a limited way, as a Spirit of wisdom, or for the accomplishment of special objects, connected merely with this earth; but without measure. "No bounds of time or space could limit the sphere of His testimony, thus the testimonies of Jesus were the words of God (see Rev 1:2), and spoken in the power of the Spirit, given without measure — yet no man received them. Further on, the Lord says, even to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." They were to wait for the Spirit of truth, when He was come He would guide them into all the truth.

But if God gives the Spirit without measure, and He came thus first upon Jesus, it was according to the same love, that the Father had given all things into the hands of His beloved Son.

Chapter 4

“When therefore the Lord knew,” (vss. 1-3). The history of the “man of the Pharisees,” the “teacher of Israel,” recognizing in Jesus a “teacher come from God,” ashamed to come to Him by day, yet unable to remain away, and then coming by night, interests every heart. But the Pharisees are not interesting as a class — from first to last the persistent adversaries of the Lord (John 11:46-53; 12:19), they represent simply the religion and mind of the flesh, that is enmity against God, relentless enmity, which therefore falls upon Jesus. “The reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me.” God’s grace to man is what the heart of a Pharisee will not endure. His righteous requirements he can recognize, because he flatters himself he can meet them. Look at the earliest and latest records of their thoughts about Jesus. In Matthew 9, when the devil was cast out and the multitudes said, “It was never so seen in Israel,” the Pharisees said, “He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.” Again, in Matthew 12; when the man who had his hand withered was healed, the Pharisees held a council against Him how they might destroy Him. When the devil was driven out of one blind and dumb, and all the people said, “Is not this the Son of David?” the Pharisees said, “It is all done by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.”

Now look at their latest recorded feelings towards the Lord in chapter 11. The Lord’s controversy with, and testimony to, them was all but ended, Lazarus had been raised from the dead, the glory of God had been manifested, and they were not persuaded, though a man had been raised from the dead. What do we? “they say, this man doeth many miracles”— they do not say here, “by Beelzebub,” the mighty deeds are admitted; but “all men,” they say, “will believe on Him,” and then they take counsel to kill Him. This gives us the true history of the Pharisees. They hate God manifest in the flesh, in the Person of Jesus, and stand between God and the people, to hinder the light and truth of what He is from reaching them, attributing to Satan’s power His mighty works in grace. Here (John 4:1) they are evidently jealous of Jesus, and He withdrew for the present, to meet them again when the effect of the progress of the work should have brought them upon the scene.

“Jesus Himself baptized not,” it is said. In the day when He baptized, it would be with the Holy Ghost and with power. The gathering would not be to a Jewish Messiah on earth, but to the glorified Man at God’s right hand, Son of God as well as Son of Man, to whom the saints would be united by the Holy Ghost, but Jesus must first descend into the lower parts of the earth, taking captivity captive, and then ascend up far above all heavens, filling all things, before the baptism of the Holy Ghost could take place. To speak of these things then would have been out of place; the disciples baptized with water to a living Messiah (Acts 19:4), who ought to have been received as such; we, in being baptized to Christ, are baptized to His death.

But when Jesus hears about the Pharisees, He leaves Judaea, and goes into Galilee. He would not strive nor cry, nor should His voice be heard in the streets. It is thus God describes His Elect Servant, His Beloved, in whom His soul was well pleased. The passage from which I make this quotation tells us, that when the Pharisees took counsel to destroy Him, He merely withdrew

Himself, and went on with His gracious work, great multitudes following Him. All the people, we read in the account of the next miracle in that chapter (Matt. 12), said, "Is not this the Son of David?" The Pharisees attribute it to the power of Beelzebub. I refer to these people again because of the really satanic character of their opposition. God was reaching the hearts and consciences of His people by the blessed and only Mediator between God and man. He was there for God, toward man — God was in Christ reconciling, and here were these Pharisees stepping in between God and His people, the real adversaries of each.

On their first appearance in the gospel history, they are associated with infidel Sadducees in seeking the baptism of John, for them doubtless a mere matter of outward profession. But that John was not deceived by them, his terrible reproof clearly proves, "O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" I have spoken of their associations on their first appearance, now look at them in their last, while the light was yet present amongst them. They come with Herodians, "to entangle Him in his talk; but Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites?" Pharisaism is the result of the effort to establish one's own righteousness in ignorance of, or practical contempt for, the righteousness of God. But when the Lord had finished His life-testimony on earth, when the sheep had been reached (to Him the Porter opened, though the number of these adversaries had been legion), these hinderers of the work of God would not escape the two-edged sword that proceeds from His mouth. "Nowhere" is the divinely-given record of human iniquity accompanied by denunciations so awful; no mention of mercy here, they are called on to fill up "the measure of their fathers." Their future history is given in these words, "Ye shall kill, etc., that upon you all the righteous blood shed upon the earth may come, ye serpents, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" They had sought to hinder God's message of love reaching the souls of His people, what iniquity is like that? aggravated by pretensions to piety; they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering those who were entering to go in. Like the doctors of the law, their teachers, they had taken away the key of knowledge. This is a terrible thing! the Dayspring from on high was giving light to them who sat in darkness, and these men would prevent the light from reaching them. The Lord felt it. How terrible to hear from His lips, "Woe unto you — your house is desolate," and "ye shall see me no more." Thus ends His last controversy with the Pharisees.

To return to our chapter. The Lord leaves Judaea, but not His work. He must pass through Samaria, He arrives at Jacob's well, and sits on the well, a wearied Man, just as He was. Yes, to be sure! but Jesus was always, "just as He was," inwardly equal to the position taken, to the heights of glory, as to the depths of humiliation, and to all that lay between. He was always, "just as He was," as well as just what He said. When He died upon the tree, He died "just as He was," "found in fashion as a man he humbled Himself . . . unto death, even the death of the cross"; and when He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, He sat down, "just as He was," a risen victorious Man, though not more perfect there, than in the day of His weariness at the well. Whatever appertained to Him outwardly was answered in perfection from within, and He was conscious of it, but in absolute lowliness. The cross being the path appointed, He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," and with reference to it, "Now is the Son of Man glorified," (morally upon earth). Referring to His position in glory, the throne of the Father, He said, "as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne," just as He was, the glorious Overcomer! He — the Eternal — was a weary, needy, homeless One, when found in fashion as a Man, but thus it

pleased Him to reveal Himself amongst men. His pathway did not lead to kings' houses, but where death and darkness, sorrow and Satan's power, had prevailed, there lay the pathway of the blessed Son of Man. In the synagogue at Nazareth, He "read Himself in," to use a well-known phrase. There could be no second ordination like that, where the Minister and ministry, its source, power, and authority, united in one Person, were equally divine. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," and so forth. Such was His ministry here in this world; I speak not of that which stands for ever alone — His atoning death. Thus, then, weary from His journey, and in the loneliness of rejection ("His own received Him not"), sat the Hope of Israel at Jacob's well, but He had by this path come into a place where He could meet all who were weary on account of their sins. He was not only anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, but He met them in their own path, that of the poor and needy in circumstances (and, if any were such, in spirit), Himself the poorest of them all. People are fond of talking of the force of circumstances. Was it the power of circumstances, or that of the anointing, which led Jesus when He passed by Jacob's well on His way to Galilee? Did He not know the way He took, or was He unprepared to satisfy the need of those He should meet on the way? That very morning He had received freshly from the Lord God, in His place of dependent Man, a word to be spoken in season to the wearied. Well, that was the path He chose, and in it met the woman of Samaria. "For our sakes," it is written, "He became poor," but dwelt among us, "full of grace and truth."

The whole scene is of a character not to be surpassed for interest. The lonely, weary Man is the Lord of glory, the Savior of the world, and the Samaritan woman is a "chief of sinners." They are well met, whatever the Pharisees might have said to the contrary: He, full of grace and truth; she, of sin and misery.

But there are no Pharisees here, nor pretension in the Samaritan woman, she was simply a poor lost sinner, apparently ashamed of her sinful life, coming to the well at that hour, not an unthinking, unreflecting person, nor one hardened against God. No, she did not know Him, and how could she know His gift, life eternal in the power of the Spirit, and who it was that said to her, "Give Me to drink," "the Son of God Himself in deepest grace! No, she knew nothing of all this wondrous truth — God was unknown! That was the unvarnished truth of her state, yet, in that hour, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were working in grace towards the lost one. She had sinned grievously, her life had been one of shame, yet it could be said of her, as another chief "of sinners" said of himself — she had sinned ignorantly and in unbelief. What knew she of the character of God? She had to learn from His own lips that God is a Spirit. "The light of life had never shone into that soul amidst its ruins, all was gloom there, for her the heavens were as dark as the scene surrounding her earthly path. Of God who gives, of Him who said, "Give me to drink," and of the "living water," she was wholly and equally ignorant. God was unknown. The Lord's own words to her show how He understood her special state, darkness brooded over her hapless soul. "If thou knewest," He says, "thou wouldest have asked, and He would have given." And these are the words of the only Mediator, who alone is to be heard on such a subject. How blessed to hear His voice, and to behold the wondrous sight, a new creation arising through the power of His word and Spirit! See how conscience is quickened, how intelligence is awakened, how the affections are brought into exercise: "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" What patient grace in Him, what enjoyment of the fruit of His toil, and delight in doing His Father's will! And when at length she found herself in the presence of Messiah, fully revealed, we are not told

what she said, or how she felt, this we must interpret for ourselves by what she did, or rather the Spirit interprets for us; she went into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" What words from her lips could have equaled in pathos her testimony to Him, before the men of the city? The shame of her former life is all forgotten, and lost sight of in the depths of her newly-found happiness; former things were already passing away. Thus Israel, in the latter day; "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me." Israel will be near the place of her "springs" (Psa. 87:7). So it was with the woman of Samaria, her new-found springs were in Him. She forgot herself, true humility, blessed woman! For my part I do not believe that she said anything, when Jesus said, "I that speak unto thee am He." What visions of blessing and glory must have burst upon her view! Messiah would tell her all things. Already He had been telling her of God the Giver; of a new well of living water; of the Father seeking the love and worship of His poor creatures; but first of God giving, and He Himself had asked her to give Him to drink, and yet knew all about her, her whole life, yet no reproach! Such divine sweetness and attractiveness, holiness and simplicity! above all, such loving interest in herself — "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." If she had been constrained to ask for the reason of a thing so strange, a Jew asking drink from a Samaritan, how stood matters now? The Jew was the Messiah of God, the Samaritan a guilty, lost creature, yet He had come to tell her of a well of living water for her-self, and had accepted the water of the well from her, even from her, the woman of Samaria. What boundless joy must have filled her soul! love, pure and holy, entering with the knowledge of Christ; now she knew who it was that said to her, "Give Me to drink." "I know My sheep and am known of Mine," was realized here. What pure delight to be loved of Him, after He had told her "all that ever she did"! What a secret to carry with her through this weary world! Christ loved her, soon she would be able to add, "and gave Himself for me." There was no outward answer, it is true, to Jesus words, "I that speak unto thee am He. She spake in her heart, only . . . her voice was not heard." In Luke 7, the tears were more eloquent than any voice, as the odor of the ointment in John 12, which filled the house, only the heart spake in that odor! A voice is heard indeed in the wilderness of this world, crying, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" Her heart and voice spake in that cry. We have just glanced at the path which the Lord made for Himself to the heart of a lost sinner; what His heart was saying there, His lips uttered afterwards, in "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." This was the language of Jesus heart when the disciples came and found Him talking with the woman, no man said anything. There He revealed Himself to her, not as Son of God, or Son of the Father, or Son of Man, but as Messiah, and to her alone, I believe, as Messiah. To another woman, the once hapless Mary of Magdala, whom Satan had once claimed as all his own, was first revealed, in her mission to His brethren, the glorious truth that His God was their God, His Father their Father.

The prophets had spoken of the Anointed Man — a wonderful Person coming from God, as Isaiah says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (The Jews looked rather at the human side). In that character, as Messiah, the Lord revealed Himself to her. The woman has got an Object that governs her whole life now, her thoughts and everything. She was more governed by that Object at that moment than the disciples themselves. She had led a life of infamy; how in a moment was its course changed! the source is now from above, it had been from

beneath; now she can say to the men of the city, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did." We Christians even, having known all the grace of the Father, do not like people to know all the things we have been saying and doing; but here is the effect of being really in the presence of Christ, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did." Here we find her conscience exercised in the light of a revelation of grace which lifts her above the shame of former sins, where they abounded she finds a more abounding grace, which causes even the things of ordinary need to be forgotten (vss. 28, 29), for already her shoulder is being removed from the burden (of sin), her hands delivered from the pots! (Psa. 81:6) for, is not He that told her all things that ever she did, the Christ? So Israel, in the liberty of the day that is coming, will make mention of Rahab and Babylon (scenes of her former captivity and shame), to them that know her, for the captive daughter of Zion will have shaken herself from the dust in that day, and He whose birth in her midst is celebrated, is not that the Christ? (Psa. 87:6). There were two sentiments closely united in the heart of a Jew, one national and the other religious. His national polity belonged to his religion, and his religion could not be separated from his politics; Gods law, in Judaism, was their national law. So it was doubly painful to a Jew, the thought of being in subjection to a Gentile nation. But the holy remnant will so glory in their Messiah, that when they get back they will speak of Rahab and Babylon, where they were in captivity. It is just like this, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did." In Daniel, the captivity is an existing fact, the shame and confusion of face a present sorrow. We are in Babylon now, the whole church is in Babylon in a spiritual sense, mixed up with the world, confusion written on her forehead. While that is the case, there are thousands of godly persons, thank God! like Daniel, who, though in it, are not of it. We may be entirely out of the spirit of it. If we are in spirit outside, we shall be all the more taking up the shame and sorrow of those who are in it. She left her waterpot, her earthly concerns. As one has written,

Thither she came, but, oh, her heart,

All filled with earthly care,

Dreamed not of Thee, nor thought to find

The Hope of Israel there.

Renewed in spirit, hardly conscious of it herself, she is already walking in the path of life, serving the Lord. The disciples come, and pray Him to eat. Jesus says, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. We get what the woman was about here, what the disciples were about, what the men of the city were about, and what Christ was about. His was the hidden joy, by man as yet unshared, unknown, of doing the Father's will for that will's sake, as well as of finishing His work. He was looking forward to the joy together, in the fruit gathered unto eternal life, but only the first of these things was His "present portion. The joy together He must wait for, He was ever the lonely One, ever solitary. The deepest sense of loneliness is not connected with place, but with men, when of all who surround you there are none who understand, none who participate in your feelings and tastes, thoughts and aspirations. "Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Ye know not what, spirit ye are of. Lord, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough." It was of no use to explain. But the Lord did not wait for people to share His thoughts, He went on with His work. He was down here, a Man all filled with the glorious thoughts and purposes of God, the Son of Man which is in heaven, looking forward to the results

of God being glorified in Him, but He did not wait for people to enter into His feelings, He went on with His work.

Then there is another passage in John 12:23. "And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," fruit of His work, but of the Father's also, how could they be separated? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." All was from the Father, but all was for Him also, at least in Jesus heart and in His hands. The waters flowed back only gladdened by their channel the heart that was unconscious of a motive not comprehended in its one and supreme Object. How that tells itself out in, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

All before Him, the voices that hailed Him as the Son of David, coming in the name of the Lord, had hardly died away when people of the nations (Gentiles) are announced as seeking to see Jesus. Did the King of nations hear of that unmoved? Yet in all that scene there was none lonely as He, who was to be the center of all it represented; for, of all the thoughts which filled His spirit at that moment, His glory and the path (of suffering) that led to it, who was there who had understanding, to whom could He look for sympathy?

Even His disciples understood not these things at the first, but when Jesus was glorified. Let us mark that. "The Spirit was not" (here) "because Jesus was not yet glorified, "and the crowd understood nothing about Messiah," or "the Son of Man" (vss. 16, 24). But when were His thoughts intelligible to His own? "We cannot tell what He saith." His works were incomprehensible, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." When He prayed, they could not watch with Him, no, not for one hour. If He spoke of the earthly things, they did not believe, how could He then speak of the heavenly things? Thus, without sympathy from man, not in the pride of heroism, but in the sweet gentleness of one who, however, if he entered into battle, would overthrow the lord of this darkness; accepting fully His lowly position amongst men; the blessed Almighty Comforter Himself looking for comforters, and yet finding none, He traveled ever onwards till He reached the place where He could say, "Father, the hour is come," the greatest hour of all time, and, if there were hours in eternity, the greatest of them also. Never did the heart or mind of Christ rest in the things done, or in present effects produced, whether on earth or in heaven. That would be the thought of man's heart. The Father's good pleasure and, glory in that which was presented to Him, was the one undivided object of Christ's spirit. In, "Father, I thank Thee, for so it seemed good in Thy sight," one learns the secret of the rest of heart of God's holy Servant. Who but He could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart," and "ye that are weary," "shall find rest to your souls"?

I well remember a friend once saying that he could understand its being the Lord's pleasure to set one of His servants in a position where his chief service would consist in endeavoring to recall the hearts of the worldly amongst His people to the all but forgotten claims of the Person and glory of their Master. He had come Himself not only to vindicate the heavenly throne, and for the truth of God, to confirm the promises to the fathers, but to reveal Him in the blessedness and deep grace of relationships hitherto unknown, unfolded in such words as these, "My God and your God, My Father and your Father."

for service is the accomplishment of the will of Him that sent Him, as His truth is seen in seeking not His own glory, but that of Him who sent Him; such an One is true, no unrighteousness is in Him. The path terminated in an obedience bounded only by death (Phil. 2).

Verse 35. "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." There are three things referred to in this passage. The wages, the first instalment of which is received in this world, through communion in service with the great Worker Himself. The servants will receive the full recompense of reward in glory, with Him who said, when His work was done, "Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self." How will His presence in their midst, the First and Last in service in every dispensation, enhance the joy of His servants in that day! Then it will be known in power that He was the beginner, sustainer, and end of all true service, uniting in Himself the two characters of sower and reaper. This rejoicing together of sowers and reapers necessarily includes Himself. Rejoice together, "what would that mean apart from Him? Your labor may consist only in sowing, and that is not so pleasant as reaping; but if it be His will, His Spirit in us will say, "Even so, for thus it seemed good in Thy sight," and soon it will be eternal joy together in the rest above. That our work be that which He has given us to do, and done in His name, should be our only care. "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Never is our labor in the Lord in vain!

Verse 38. "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor." In other times, testimony had been borne by the Lord's servants, and the disciples were entering into the fruit of their labors. The prophets had testified of Messiah, and thus it was that this poor Samaritan had heard about Him, not without some exercise of heart. "When he is come," she says, "he will tell us all things."

The reason the wages are put first in the verse seems to be because the laborer himself is immediately before the Lord here. How great would be his reward, in wages, in fruit gathered unto life eternal, in the rejoicing together of sower and reaper! nor could the gathered ones be left out of that scene of joy. Blessed scene of rested workers! fellowship with the Father and the Son in the fruits of labor, for the rest of God will have come, and His people will be there to participate in it (Heb. 4). How great the joy what tongue could ever tell? The wages or reward of faithful service from His own hand, the white stone and new name, is another, though a kindred, thought.

Verse 39. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did." A beautiful instance of how the gospel often spreads in power and blessing through ways unthought of. Could man have told her that which brought conviction of sin to her soul, and at the same time lifted her above the shame which that conviction wrought? The power of God was there, the men of the city felt it. Samaria had known no day like that, and when the sun was setting there were souls in that city upon whom the light of life had just risen. "We have heard Him ourselves," say these poor Samaritans, "and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Here first, and by Samaritans, when rejected by His own, He is recognized by the title, "Savior of the world," glorious title! Salvation was indeed of the Jews, "Israelites," says Paul, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." But salvation was no longer to be confined to them, the boughs of the tree of grace

were already running over the wall. Israel shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, “saved in the Lord,” it is said. Not by works of righteousness, but in the power and grace of Jehovah. In that day they will behold the Man whose name is the Branch, He would build the temple and sit upon His throne, the Sustainer of “the glory”. The counsel of peace would be between them both, there Israel’s blessing begins. But what of the world and its inhabitants? The same prophet who announces Israel’s salvation, in the Lord, immediately adds, “Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it, He hath established it, He created it not empty [or chaotic, Gen. 1] He formed it to be inhabited, I am Jehovah and none else,” and then He says, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; I am God and none else.” And then, when Jehovah Jesus (the Son) dwelt among us, He commenced His ministry with the announcement of God’s love to the world. It is not Jew or Gentile that is before Him, but man as such. The first word about Him is, “Let Us make man in our image and likeness,” and revelation terminates with the announcement, The tabernacle of God is with men. “He so loved the world that He gave!” How sweetly sound in the ears of true pilgrims those blessed words! Yes, He created it not for emptiness; He formed it to be inhabited, His delights were to be with the sons of men, and when all was lost in the hand of His creature, He died for it in love — the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

What divine beauty and wisdom is observable in the order in which He reveals His ways! The presence of Christ was the revelation of God, and, at the same time, of man; in that light a Jew is no better than a Gentile, and so the world comes into view at once; but if it does, it is as in itself a condemned thing. “Now is the judgment of this world”; hence the cross, which knows no distinction, and is the alone path out of it, is everything here. But with the cross comes the revelation of eternal life to the believer. We are far beyond mere dispensational teaching here. The cross, eternal life, and Savior of the world, the great foundation truths, next to that of the glory of His Person, and inseparably connected, are found for the first time, in these chapters, with the announcement of the gift of living water, the spiritual nature of God, and the truth unrevealed before, that the Father in seeking worshipers — a wondrous truth! — accepts alone as worship that which is according to His nature. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” According to this principle, God’s worldly sanctuary was already judged. Jerusalem and Gerizim are alike outside the sphere of these newly revealed ways and thoughts of God. Ritualism as a mode, and Jerusalem as the place, of worship, are equally rejected. Ritualism! what a discordant sound if uttered amid these newly revealed, eternal truths. It accorded well with the shadows, but they were never the truth, that was now present in the Person of Jesus. Ritualistic observances suited well a dispensation that made nothing perfect, and where man, as such, did not draw nigh to God. The high priest alone did so, outwardly, once a year. (Compare Heb. 10:19-22.) When God gave carnal commandments, He gave what was suited to a people in the flesh. Ritualistic worship, so-called, which in its very nature is suited to, and appointed for, the flesh, on the same principle as the institutions directly termed ordinances of the flesh, was in perfect keeping with the establishment of a worldly sanctuary. That worldly people, now as ever, should approve of this system is quite natural; how can people who have not the Spirit worship by the Spirit, or even understand what it means? Now, as in the beginning, there is a turning back to the weak and beggarly elements, after having known God (Gal. 4). The important fact is that Christ, in setting aside the place of ritualistic worship, substitutes for that a worship in spirit and in truth, according to the nature of God Himself, now revealed. I only add, that figures and shadows

are not the truth. Grace and truth subsist by Jesus Christ. He was, He is, the truth, and nothing else is that. The only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father alone revealed the Father, who had never before claimed to be worshiped, never was worshiped, in that name, by which He was unknown to His people. In what heart had the Spirit of the Son, sent forth by God (on the ground of the saints being in the relationship of sons) cried, Abba, Father? What conscience had been made good, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ? (1 Pet. 3) or perfect, by the sprinkling of His precious blood? (Heb. 10). Thus heart and conscience were alike unfit for this spiritual worship. Who could find His way into the holiest? for it was not yet made manifest (Heb. 9:9). Or how could the blood of Jesus give any one boldness to enter by the new and living way, when Jesus had not shed His precious blood? It is clear that ritualistic worship was conducted, as men say (a very proper word according to their thoughts), in and by the flesh. But Paul, writing to Christians, says, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you," and "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." I have said much more than I had intended on this subject, but it is too serious and important to be treated hastily.

Before the veil was rent, who could draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith? For what is it that gives truth of heart towards God? Or what is the object of faith which gives it assurance before Him? It is in His atoning death that the veil is rent. But these thoughts present no obstacle to the flesh, for it never draws nigh, all its worship is afar off; rules and liturgies even now, after the gift of the Holy Ghost by Jesus glorified, are often adopted as a substitute for the presence, power, and leading of the Spirit amongst His people. Paul indeed says, "We . . . who worship God by the Spirit" (Phil. 3:3); was he thinking of the ritual of the temple? "But," some one will say, "you have not yet told us what worship is, in what does it consist?" I quote a passage in which this question, "What is worship?" is answered, not by a definition, which a man might carry away as an addition to his knowledge, but by a picture of its realization, given by the same Spirit which produced it, and was its strength, in that feeble human heart; for though the Spirit was not then given (in the sense of ch. 7 and kindred passages), He ever acted upon souls, according to the will of God.

Worship is not the occupation of a heart still seeking a standing place before God, but rather the overflowing towards Himself of one which has found its all in Him who has already set it there in peace. "And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment" (Luke 7:37-38). Should it be said, "All cannot worship after this pattern," the answer is, the Father does not seek those who cannot. He only seeks true worshipers, Jesus tells us.

"Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman . . . many more believed because of His own word." Thus despised Samaria stretches out her hands to God, and Galilee, the region of darkness and of the shadow of death, receives Him when rejected, by Jerusalem. The light springing up in the place of darkness — rejected elsewhere it might be, but hidden, save in judgment, never. And where was poor Jerusalem? Already Jehovah was covering the daughter of Sion with a cloud, the beauty of Israel was being cast from heaven to earth. Their rejection of Christ was the occasion of fulfilling the prophecy, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not

understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," He tells us Himself, a homeless stranger in the world His hands had made; but the Galileans saw He was a stranger, and took Him in." It will not be forgotten unto them in the day of Jesus Christ. No, their sins and transgressions only will be forgotten in that day. Doubtless they knew that, before His sojourn amongst them was ended. Could the Savior of the world tarry with them two days, and leave them without the knowledge of the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world? The Galileans received Him. What the privileges of receiving such an One might be, John 1:12 tells us: "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to be children of God" (JND). This was the great turning point now for every soul; the Son, the Creator, was present as Savior in a lost world, would they receive Him and what He brought? It is written, "His own received him not!" "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I — but ye would not." The will, the mind, the heart of man were in league against Him! Though often denied with the mouth, yet conscience, in her secret chamber, knoweth that this is true.

Galilee of the Gentiles, hitherto the region of darkness and the shadow of death, becomes the scene of the manifestation of His glory; when that day is come, the manner of keeping the good wine until now will need no explanation. Jesus had the power of life, and arrests that of death in the nobleman's son. The father, whatever others might seek, needed neither sign nor wonder. Synagogue and priest were equally powerless here; for him Jesus sufficed: "Sir, come down ere My child die." "Thy son lives." He believed the word of Jesus, and went his way, it was unto him according to his faith, and Jesus word, "Thy son lives." Does His written word yield in authority to the words of His mouth? "But if ye do not believe Moses writings, how shall ye believe My words?" (John 5:47). Or is it that the gracious words which proceeded from His lips are less intelligible when communicated in writing by inspiration of God? In 1 Corinthians 2 we find two classes of men, natural and spiritual; there is not a word, here at least, about clergy and laity, but about natural and spiritual: the natural man is he who has not the Spirit of God, is unconverted; the spiritual man discerns all things, and is discerned of no man. No, not even if one called himself a priest, but no such class is contemplated in the New Testament. Peter indeed speaks of a holy and royal priesthood, but these terms included the whole company of the faithful, all were priests in the sense of that passage, and there was one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. But men, leaving the word of God for their traditions, tell us that priesthood is the privilege of a few, and that the mediators are many; setting aside, even in detail, the Word of God. In it I learn that He who loves His people has made them priests unto God, "priests unto His God and Father." Admit a second mediator, or another advocate, and the foundations are destroyed. The helpless sinner betakes himself to those who call themselves priests. Temples and altars and ritual fill up the place that God has not in the unbelieving soul. The nobleman was in the presence of Jesus, (what place for an intermediary there?) when he said, "Sir, come down ere my child die." When one goes to Jesus, it is on the ground of His own invitation; my burdens and my weary heart assure me I am the very person He wants. "I will give you rest," He says; can man add to the authority and sweetness of His word for a believing soul? No, it is when His presence is unknown, or at least when one is not in it, that the traditions of a corrupted form of truth have any force. That He loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, is forgotten in such case, even if once truly known. It is remarkable that this passage is never heard from the lips of those who call themselves apostles and priests.

Sir, come down before my child die. "Thy son liveth." So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 commences with a new aspect of man's condition his weakness. All flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass — the grass has withered, and its flower has faded. But an angel of Jehovah, mighty in strength, doing His commandments, had been there; for when had He left Himself without witness of the power and grace that were behind all and above all the ruin man had wrought? After this we have the question of the sabbath, the great theme of Jewish boasting; that is, man without strength and a sabbath without rest, are the two subjects first presented to us, with the answer to both in Jesus, who is "the power of God, "and rest for the weary soul of man. Thirdly, eternal life, and life-giving and resurrection-power in a Man, who says He can do nothing of Himself — the dependent Man and the Son of God are one — and, lastly, the fourfold testimony to His Person.

These are the great subjects of this precious chapter.

"Now there is in Jerusalem, at the sheep-gate, a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of sick, blind, lame, withered, awaiting the moving of the water. For an angel descended at a certain season in the pool and troubled the water. Whoever therefore first went in after the troubling of the water became well, whatever disease he labored under." Yet there was One amongst them whom they knew not, mightier than the angel who troubled the waters, but He was not waited for; His mission, indeed, was not, dependent on the thoughts of men; He had come to minister unto others, and to give His life a ransom for many. "Wilt thou be made whole?" He says to the poor man. The will was indeed present with him, but the impossibility of man was with him also. And there was "no man "to, help. As was said of the poor prodigal, "no man gave unto him. And in the most interesting connection possible, His own Spirit speaks in the prophet, "When I came was there no man." No! there is "no man," whether the need of man demands it, or the call of God waits for an answer. The only Hope of Israel, as of man, was indeed in their midst, but unknown and unrecognized by man. To Him the Lord God had given the tongue of the learned, that He should know how to speak a word in season to him that, is weary. And here was a poor wearied one, listening to the word of the Lord God from the tongue of the learned, from Jesus Himself — "Wilt thou be made whole?"

This is the third aspect in which man's state is viewed in this gospel; here, without strength, even when "to will" was present — power belongs to God, power and grace. In chapter 3 it was man in the flesh, in possession, outwardly, of all the religious privileges of Israel — "a ruler of the Jews," "a teacher of Israel." The Light of life shines, and the privileges are seen to be in the hands of the dead; man must be born anew. In John 15, it was simply the corruption of the flesh. Living water was not there. The life of the flesh differs in nothing from that which is the "sowing of the body in death. The same terms apply equally to each — weakness, corruption, dishonor. In chapter 3 it is the incapacity of the mind, though surrounded with the testimonies of God, to grasp the simplest truth which would lead to life and to God — in John 5, the inability of nature to take a single step towards the healing waters.

You see we are now coming upon great scenes in revelation; amongst these the sabbath holds a remarkable place, presented in the gospels in different connections, and wholly new bearings. The Lord brings it forward Himself, and in each place in ways of surpassing interest. It is no longer viewed in connection with rest from creation toil, the redemption of man in the flesh from fleshly enemies, the national sanctification of Israel; nor do we find it in connection with the true Manna from heaven (Ex. 16) — they would not eat it, though God had given it to them to eat — but with the truth now coming out on every side, that man could not rest because he was a sinner, and that God would not, because He was a Savior, — with failure in the whole creation, and with the unrest of every creature; with the presently to be revealed truth; that its foundation is in the atoning death of Him who, risen, ascended, and glorified, is become the Head of the new creation; that the eighth day (first day of the week, the resurrection-day), and not the seventh, characterizes the Christian position. That the cross is the judgment of the old thing; that neither rest, nor that which is the sign of it, can be connected with that which the death of Christ has judged. All must be new — new covenant for Israel; new birth for man; new song; new creation. Israel was in captivity and sorrow upon the sea of nations — the sea and the waves roaring as ever. Jesus, Creator and Redeemer, in their midst in rejection — was that a time or season to glory in the sign of that which could not be found, save in the person of the rejected One?

God's rest in glory with His creatures, His people's participation in His rest, was the great thought of which the sabbath was the sign. We find it in connection with grace, government (law), and redemption (Ex. 16, 20; Deut. 5); a sign of national sanctification and of the covenant in Ezekiel 20. It was a sign of creation-rest, and a type of that eternal rest that remaineth. The first had passed away through the creature's sin; the second remains, no one has, entered into that. Rest in Jesus, and His finished, work, is another thought — rest of soul in Him. in whom the Father rests, but different from the rest that remaineth. In Exodus 16 we find the first mention of the sabbath as a divine institution for man's observance. In Genesis 2 it is said simply that God rested, having finished the work of creation, and sanctified the day of His rest. In Exodus 16 we find the sabbath in connection with the manna; in Deuteronomy 5, with redemption — that is, with God's work and God's gift; Bread of God that, coming out of heaven, gives life to the world. The Redeemer and the true Bread from heaven are one; the knowledge of this gives the secret of rest. God gives the sabbath in one place, and commands its observance in the other. When the Lord allows the question of the sabbath to be raised in His presence, He so applies it to the conscience as to make it there the sign of the creature's unrest. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let the context be pondered. The application of the truth touching this sign of rest makes man's unrest manifest; as the uncomprehending darkness is revealed by the shining of the perfect Light. These truths are really learned in the conscience only. How blessed, too, the divine order — redemption first — then rest (Ex. 15, 16). They can never be separated since sin has come into the world; these chapters, too, contain the first records of each. (Gen. 2 is God's rest in creation.)

Before passing on, then, let us look for a moment at redemption — not so much in the work done against the enemy (his overthrow was total and complete, "destroyed him that had the power of death"), as in its blessed effects in the hearts of His redeemed, as much His work as the over-throw of the enemy. If He was glorious in His victory, O how happy they who were to participate in its glorious fruits! Strength, song, and gladness are its first fruits in the hearts of the

redeemed; but it is the Lord who is all this to the soul, and therefore the joy is in Himself, and so a pure delight. His glory is appreciated in His triumph, in His power, and in His holiness. He is greater than all that He has wrought. We want Himself now — “He is my God, I will exalt Him,” the ceaseless note! heard again when glory comes, when the hand of Jehovah rests in the holy mount — “O God, Thou art My God, I will exalt Thee” (Isa. 25). “I will prepare him an habitation” -- and He brings to the place that He has made for Himself to dwell in, in the midst of His redeemed people. We joy in Him, and He, seeing of the travail of His soul, is satisfied. We must not forget what comes out in the first burst — “I will exalt Him,” as the apostle expresses it, “that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.” If Exodus 15 gives the first testimony of redemption, and with it the first recorded song on earth, Revelation 5 gives us the heavenly song of redemption:

“Because Thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God by Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue,” and so on; and made them to our God kings and priests.

May we lay hold of this thought — redeemed to God, and made to God, and Who it is who did it.

Again, in Revelation 14 we find those redeemed from the earth, and from men, firstfruits to God and the Lamb — the remnant preserved for earthly blessing “not yet singing, but learning to sing, while they listened to the voice of glory out of heaven — that voice like great waters, “and like harp-singers playing on their harps” (power and praise), and no one could even learn this song but the redeemed. Gladness, then, strength, and salvation, are the fruits of redemption known and enjoyed in the Lord. It is important, too, to notice that God’s holiness is first mentioned in connection with redemption (holiness is not spoken of in Genesis, save the sanctification of the day of His rest). He brings the redeemed to Himself, they must, therefore, resemble Himself in nature; and He is glorious in holiness. His habitation also amongst men is first spoken of when the redeemed are there. He visited Abraham, and even Adam in paradise, but He did not dwell with either. He dwells with His redeemed. His eternal habitation with man is the holy Jerusalem: everything in the earthly house, in the city, and in the land of Judah is stamped with holiness to the Lord (Zech. 14). All in the end responds to His nature. I have spoken thus of redemption, because of its connection with rest.

Verse 10. “The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterward, Jesus findeth him in the temple” and so forth. It was a good place for man to be found in, before it was rendered desolate by the departure of Him whose presence alone gave it a place before God; there men inquired, and beheld His beauty; there the devout soul longed to dwell, because it was His dwelling-place; there He was sought in the time of trouble, and glorified in praises when deliverance came (Psa. 27). Does the last thought explain the presence there of the impotent man? “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth”; and faith and love still clung to it amid all the vicissitudes of their wondrous story. Its former glory had long departed — yea, the glory itself; and the predicted “latter glory” had not yet returned (See Hag. 2, margin). But in the mind of the Spirit the house was one, and viewed as subsisting till filled again with the glory of Him who comes in

the name of the Lord. Could faith forget that the Lord had said, "Mine eyes and my heart shall be there continually"? No, it was still for the heart, amid the wreck of time and downfall of Israel, "our holy and our beautiful house where our fathers praised Thee." Yet Jesus was about to say, "YOUR house is left unto you desolate," refusing to own it as His, being Himself at that moment the temple and dwelling-place of God, and place of rest for the heart of sin-weary man. The soul's present sabbath is found only in Him.

Our thoughts turn instinctively to that other house of which He is at the same time Builder and Chief Corner-stone, which in Him also increases unto a holy temple, a habitation of God in Spirit; Hades gates prevail not against it; as was said of Himself, it "must increase." The desolation of the earthly temple can never be its portion, God's habitation it remains till its completion in heaven; until, in another figure, Christ presents it to Himself glorious, without spot or wrinkle. There is another aspect in connection with responsibility, but it does not, and cannot, affect the blessed truth of Ephesians 2 and 5.

Verse 17. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This passage is, perhaps, the fullest expression of the grace of God which we find anywhere, a blessed and wondrous revelation, that, outside the scene of ruin, the defacement of His own likeness in the moral creation, above the darkness of this world, in the glorious light of His own perfections, superior to all evil, the Father and the Son had been working in patient grace and long-suffering. Not merely as from the high and holy place of His habitation letting His compassions fall, as it were, like rain upon the parched earth; but in all their afflictions, afflicted, while, in the activities of love to His rebellious people, He found motives which they could not supply in Himself, His name, His glory — He "wrought" "for His name's sake. Indeed "hitherto" is a movable term when applied to the ways of God in grace, you cannot fix it until He shall "work" no more. Look for a moment at the beginning of those ways in Israel as He Himself records them.

"In the day when I chose Israel, and made Myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up My hand unto them, saying, I am the Lord your God, in the day when I lifted up My hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt unto a land . . . the glory of all lands . . . I said, Cast away the abominations I am the Lord your God. But they rebelled but I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen . . . in whose sight I had made a Myself known unto them, in bringing them out of the land of Egypt."

Then He brought them into the wilderness, and gave them His statutes, judgments, sabbaths. What was the result? "The house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness, they walked not in My statutes, despised My judgments, polluted My sabbaths; but I wrought for My name's sake." He said He would not bring them into the land, the glory of all lands, but, addressing their children, said, "Walk ye in My statutes," etc., but they also rebelled. He spoke of judging them; but retreated immediately into Himself, saying, "I withdrew My hand, and wrought for My name's sake." Again, He tells them He will scatter them among the nations, and defeat the purpose of their evil heart, of becoming like the nations, and would bring them under the rod; rebellion still was their only answer. So it came out that He that scattered them alone could gather them; accordingly He brings them to His holy mountain, and accepts their sacrifices there. And then, when He had wrought "for His name's sake," in bringing them to His holy mount, when grace had triumphed where evil was, they would know the Lord." It is grace reigning through righteousness, and mercy

rejoicing against judgment, that gives the true knowledge of God — “They shall know the Lord.” And there, in the enjoyment of acceptance, when its righteous ground should have been shown them by the Lord, how grace had reigned through righteousness, would the fruits of grace be manifested in holiness. They hate sin for its own sake, because it is sin, and loathe themselves, because they had been loathsome.

But this is holiness, as in that beautiful Psalm 45: “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.” In the end all answers to the nature of God. “In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 14). And when the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, she is called the “holy city.”

I think the difference between righteousness and holiness will be easily seen from what we have been considering. How blessedly the Spirit of God, in His afflicted servant, uses this plea: “Thy name’s sake”; “The throne of Thy glory”; “Thy covenant with us” (Jer. 14). There was nothing in man to plead with God, all was gone there; but for faith there remained what God was in Himself and His ways. It was sin, then, all the way from the land of Egypt, and Jehovah working; but Father and Son — essential relationship — is also the name of deepest grace.

If Jehovah had wrought in Israel from the days of Egypt onward, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” embraces all time; they were working from the days of paradise itself — “from the day thou eatest thereof.” To know the Father and the Son is eternal life, and they had “wrought hitherto.” Thus we are let into the profoundest secrets of grace. Alas! how little they are sought out by His professing people. It is not until we come to Revelation 21 that we find the “hitherto” fixed, and for ever — His “working” was over. “Behold, I make all things new” — “It is done”; after that there will be no occasion any more to repeat that word, “hitherto.” All things made new — God all in all — His tabernacle with men. Up to that time, even including the millennium, it could be said, in some sense, “hitherto.” But now, He that sits upon the throne says, “It is done”; as Jesus had said upon the cross, “It is finished.” Will He ever need to repeat that work or that word? or He that sits upon the throne to say again, “It is done”? In Revelation 21:3, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,” we see the, fullness and realization of the thought of Exodus 25: “Make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them (His redeemed) — but here men, as such, are the redeemed, and we are to be there His dwelling-place (tabernacle) “with men.” Shall we not participate in His own delight in being “with men,” without losing our own distinctive place, through endless grace, of being His tabernacle, with God but at the same time with men also, in fellowship with God? But, to be “with men,” without restraint or fear! for now, enmity on man’s side, and God’s call on the other (we being, like the remnant, redeemed from the earth and from men), keep us apart. But then what joy it will be to find ourselves — God Himself in our midst — “with men.” Christ’s “delights were with the sons of men,” and His delights will be ours in that day. Become a Man Himself, the angel announced divine delight in men. What fellowship with God this will be! “Let us make man in our image and likeness.” “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. . . . and God Himself shall be with them.” What a wondrous scripture! giving us as the end of God’s counsels and workings — His dwelling “with men.” Jesus Himself — a Man — in this final scene will be the link in these glorious thoughts, God with men, and men forming His; tabernacle, as now He holds the place of only Mediator between God and man. (See 1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Tim. 2:5.)

But to continue the study of this great subject in John 5. Let us mark how Jesus answered them, and presently we shall see how He answers His adversaries on the same subject from another point of view, in Matthew 12. Verse 17 of our chapter, “My Father . . . and I,” the special name of grace. Eternal life is revealed and communicated in this name (John 17). Father and Son had “wrought,” from the days of paradise to that hour. “But that is making yourself equal to God,” they said, and said the truth; the head was right, the heart all wrong; yet out of it are the issues of life! What, then, was their state before Him? But His second answer is as remarkable as the first.

1. “That He had life eternal in Himself, quickening whom He would, even like the Father.
2. “That the hour was present when the dead in sins would hear His voice as Son of God, and live; another hour coming when all that were in their graves should hear His voice, and come forth.
3. “That He had authority to execute judgment as Son of Man; that in result, and as having all judgment given to Him by the Father, He should be honored of all even as the Father was honored.

But what is chiefly remarkable in the Lord’s second answer is, that this power, with the glory connected with it, is spoken of as conferred and emanating from the Father, wielded by One who, in His place of suffering for man, could say; “But I am a worm, and no man.” He who was Himself the eternal life in His own Person tells them it was given Him of the Father to have it in Himself (The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do.) The Creator, He, by whom and for whom all things were created, receives authority to execute judgment. Perfect lowliness and dependence — infinite glory linked to infinite perfection in humanity. “Son of the Father,” “Son of Man,” and “Son of God,” shine forth in the same revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and in answer to these poor Jews.

Now, in turning to Matthew 12, we see that what gave occasion for bringing forward this subject was, the disciples plucking the ears of corn, and eating them on the sabbath-day. It was not lawful, the Pharisees said. They did not know that the letter kills, or were careless about it, provided they could wield it against others. And here, it will be remarked, the Lord does not once refer to the glorious truth of the Father and the Son working from the beginning, as in John. It was necessary here to meet and refute these hypocritical religionists on their own ground — they had read the scriptures. They were of those who rested in the law, and made their boast in God, and knew His will, being instructed out of the law; this was the place they took (Rom. 2). The Lord therefore refers them to the well-known history of the greatest of their kings — the man after God’s own heart; and of God’s priests in Israel. In David’s time, as when the Lord Himself was there, all was in disorder in Israel, the Lord’s anointed cast out and rejected. Which was of most value in God’s sight, the life of His chosen one, or a morsel of the showbread? It was not lawful, it is true; but if they did not know that principle, “The letter killeth,” etc., they did know that, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,” formed part of those oracles in which they boasted — the case of the priests was plain. Having thus met and exposed the hypocrisy of these men on their ground, the letter of scripture, He stands before them upon His own. The rejected Son of David was One greater than the temple, and Lord of the sabbath in which they gloried, the outward sign of their national sanctification. He leaves them in order to accomplish a work of mercy on the same sabbath-day.

Their rage knows no bounds, and can only be appeased by putting Him to death. In recording it, the Holy Ghost bears testimony to Him anew, in giving God's thoughts about Him from Isaiah 42. Jesus had already borne witness to Himself. Thus, in a chapter in which man's enmity is so remarkably displayed we find a testimony to the glory of His Person, and the perfectness of His ways, in which each Person in the Godhead has His part. The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath, and greater than the temple (a divine Person) greater than Solomon, greater than Jonah, Beloved of God, Ruler over the Gentiles, Jehovah's Servant, His chosen: these last words were Jehovah's testimony, now brought forward afresh, by the energy of the Spirit, when man was rising up against God's Beloved, in whom His soul was well pleased. It reminds us of Isaiah 49: "To him whom man despiseth . . . to him whom the nation abhorreth . . . because of the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee."

Verse 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed out of death into life." This is what the apostle calls bringing life to light — a new revelation — like that of the Father and the Son working hitherto; as is also the execution of judgment committed to Jesus because He was Son of Man. The revelation of this great truth of life eternal depended upon the presence of the Son (that eternal life that was with the Father); it appears first in John 3 — "gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might have eternal life." At the end of that chapter it is stated positively and negatively, "He that believeth on the Son has life eternal; he that is not subject to the Son shall not see life." In John 5, the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live. The Father has given to the Son to have life in Himself. He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has life eternal, and is passed out of death into life. Here the word is evidently the word of the Son, and He that sent Him is the Father — the doctrine of John 17. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" — that is, to know the Father and the Son. The knowledge of the Father and the Son, as said before, carried eternal life with it. It is in John that we get this great doctrine first brought to light. How he loves to dwell on it — rather the Spirit by him. Eternal life, living waters, the living Spirit — it is all living when we have to do with Jesus, the Son of the living God — the living Bread from heaven. His eyes had seen, his hands had handled, what his mouth proclaimed, Jesus of Nazareth was that very eternal life that was with the Father. The life eternal possessed by Christians was in the Son. This is bringing life to light by the gospel.

It will be easily seen that the Son receives all from the Father in the place of Servant (sent One), from which He never departed. The identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Son, is as true as the Son's identity in nature with the Father. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." "I and My Father are one." He who could give from heaven the commission to turn from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, could be none other than God's Son — He receives all, then, from the Father, to communicate as Servant, in the lowly place He had taken amongst men, as perfect in that position as in His eternal one as Son. "Behold My servant, Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." "And lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight."

Verse 30. "I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." He gives the moral reason for that — "because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me. If I bear

witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness.” Then He gives a fourfold series of witnesses to His Person, the leading thought; being that He has eternal life to communicate (vss. 26-39). In 1 John 5 you have a threefold testimony that eternal life is in Christ Himself, and that God has given it to us. Thus you get a sevenfold testimony on this subject. The four here are — first, John; second, the Father Himself; third, the scriptures bore witness; and fourth, the works He did. “Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me.” But in 1 John 5 it says, “There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood” (vss. 10, 11). “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” It is very important to read that verse 11 in connection with the three that bear witness. What was it the three bore witness to? What is the testimony?

There is a certain testimony given, and there are three witnesses that bear testimony to it. In the gospel we had that the Son had eternal life to communicate, and there were four witnesses to His Person, and they would not come to Him that they might have life. Here we have the water, the blood, and the Holy Ghost witnessing to this great truth, that eternal life is in the Son, and that God has given it to us. The serious study of these two passages will make us understand what a great revelation it is, and how deep its importance. You cannot get eternal life in the first man. When the Lord raised the question of the sabbath, He set aside for ever the hope of rest for the old creation, that was judged, for the sabbath was its SIGN, and, at the same time, the hope of life for man in nature was extinguished, for that was to be on this principle, “Do, and live,” but the sabbath was the sign of the old covenant, “Do, and live,” also. Thus we have another testimony that life is not to be found in the first Adam. You must look to the last Adam and second Man (what had become of the first?) if it is a question of eternal life. In the passage before us (1 John 5:6) it is, said, He came by water and blood; in that way, not by water only, but in the power of water, and in the power of blood — cleansing and expiation: but the water that cleanses, and the blood that expiates, are found in the dead body of Jesus — in that death which is the judgment of the flesh, and end of all its hopes. God has, in that sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. The very work which is a sacrifice for sin is the everlasting condemnation of sin in the flesh! Then the Holy Ghost, sent down by the ascended Lord, bears witness, “because He is truth,” and gives vitality in the soul to the testimonies of the water and the blood. It is in Jesus, who has died, risen, and ascended, Jesus — the second Man — the Son, that eternal life is found. The testimony is that God has given it to us, and that it is in the Son.

A few words more on this subject of the sabbath. Have you marked the interesting connection between the end of Matthew 11 and beginning of Matthew 12? In the former chapter the rejected Savior turns first in conscious Sonship, to the Father, to thank Him for the present result of His will, Himself unknown on earth, known only of the Father, and then, from out of the depths of that marvelous position, turning to the wearied ones in the world, He presents Himself as the alone sabbath of rest for man, blessed Son of the Father! in His place of rejection on earth. Impossible for any one who understands this wondrous teaching to dream of another sabbath before the rest of God has come. But now let us look again at chapter 12, and listen to the words of our divine Teacher. David, when he was hungry, and ate the showbread, did that which was not lawful, but he explains in the parallel place (Mark 2) that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the

sabbath. How true it is that the letter killeth! Could God have preferred the maintenance of an ordinance made for man to the life of His anointed king, the man after His own heart? But, not to go into the details, He presents Himself in another character of glory — the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath. Who but Himself could speak thus? The Son of Man of chapter 12, Lord of the sabbath, is the sabbath of rest Himself in chapter 11.

In John 3 you get eternal life in connection with the cross (the Son of Man must be lifted up). The new birth is in connection with the kingdom. The water and the blood, the means of sanctification and expiation for sin, are both found in a dead Christ. Water is a figure of death, and death the way of holy liberty, as we get in Romans 6 — “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Death is the means of sanctification, the Holy Ghost its power. Christ died to sin; we are counted as having died in Him, and so dead to sin. Thus, in a dead, risen, and ascended Christ, we get everything. In the gospel we have the four witnesses that Christ has eternal life; in the Epistle three witnesses to the blessed fact that we have got it, and this being in the Son, we can never lose it (so all the promises of God are in Him, and have in Him their Amen. And so, too, grace and truth subsist by Jesus Christ (see New Translation), full of grace and truth, and of His fullness have all we received). Then it ends with a threefold “we know.” By the Spirit of God he writes these things, that we may know that we have eternal life; and then we come in with our “we know (1 John 5:13, 18-20); we have the witness in ourselves. Then he adds, “we are in him that is true”; it is thus that we realize the knowledge of Him in the truth of His nature, in that we are in Him that is true.

In John 17 we realize the Father’s love, in that the Son Himself is in us, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6:1. There are two parts quite distinct in chapter 6. In the first we have the Lord shadowed forth in His glories, in connection with the earthly people, as Prophet, Priest, and King. Psalm 132 is often referred to in connection with this: "I will abundantly bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread" (vss. 26, 27). Here we have the people in their unbelief. Jesus answered them, and said, "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. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." So in John 5:39-40: "Ye search the scriptures,"; yet "ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Then He goes on in the fullness of His grace. As in Matthew 11, where the rejected One speaks out of the depths of His personal and moral glories, ("No one knows the Son but the Father." "I am meek, and lowly in heart.") "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here (John 5:40) He says, "I have eternal life for you, and a fourfold testimony to the truth, and you will not come!" What comes out next? Having refused Him as the Light and Life, they add to it their rejection of Him as the Jehovah of Israel. Do not you feel the need of the Holy Ghost to lead our souls to the full appreciation of a grace that yields to no rejection, until all has been tried in vain? They saw this great sign, and said that He was a prophet. Then they wanted to make Him a king. All these things are in connection with Israel, though His priestly place extends beyond Israel (as His atoning death), And not for that nation only, etc.

Verses 15-21. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain Himself alone." While He is praying on the mount, a figure of His heavenly place of intercession (a reality, of course), they are on the sea — it is a figure of the remnant. It is a beautiful picture of intercession in heaven. In Matthew 14 you get this scene developed. Why not here? I believe the reason is, because John's object is always to bring out the personal glory and greatness of Christ. "It is I"; that was enough to still every fear, for God Himself was in that. They see Him walking on the sea. Who but God could do that? That is the thought of the Spirit here. It is a divine Person. The act reveals the Person. "Who is able to remit sins except God alone?" they say, in Mark 2: "But that ye may know that the Son of Man has power on the earth to remit sins," he says to the paralytic, "To thee I say, Arise, take up thy couch, and go to thine house. And he was raised up straightway, and, having taken up his couch, went out before them all; so that all were amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw it thus." His words, we may add, equally revealed the Person who was there — He was morally that which He uttered (John 8:25). With Him thoughts, words, and acts had their common source in the infinite depths of the divine nature. John is always bringing in a divine Person. The Holy Ghost, as far as we have gone, knows no other object than His Person. As Jehovah He fed the multitude. He does not say, "I am Jehovah"; but who else could feed five thousand men out of a few loaves and fishes? Who but God could walk upon the waters? Jehovah is a name of relationship. You do not say it is Jehovah that walked on the water — you say it is God.

There is a wonderful fullness in that scripture, Matthew 14:23-33: "When the evening was come he was there alone, but the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary," and so forth. Those that were toiling in rowing represent the remnant, but Peter walking on the water represents Christians coming out of Judaism. It is a question of faith. Just like the one leper that came back to give glory to God, though there were ten cleansed, and the Lord had told them to show themselves to the priests, according to the prescribed order in Leviticus. One only saw beyond this, or had spiritual instinct to lead him to the feet of Jesus, giving God thanks. And he was a Samaritan stranger. He goes to Jesus, and the Lord sends him on his way in the liberty of salvation. He is, as to the spirit of that passage, in Christian position. The poor Samaritan stranger had found God in One poorer than Himself. What are priests and temples for such an one? This, too, is what Paul did, and the Jews that came out of Judaism — like Peter, they left the boat, as it were, to go to Jesus; their path was over troubled waters, but they never sank. He who drew them to Himself sustained them. Faith alone can travel by such a path; and there is none other, if one would follow Jesus. The Holy Ghost is bringing in a living Person — Christ — to supersede all these old things that were passing away. You get this in the history of the leper.

"Lord, if it be Thou" — (compare John 6:68 — "Thou hast the words of eternal life"). You cannot get on at all unless you have Christ before your soul. That is the greatest proof to me that we are on divine ground, the confusion we get into when the eye is off Christ. We have left the boat. We have Christ, and the Spirit, and the word, but no boat, the port in view, if not gone to sleep. We have nothing but Christ. If our eye is off Christ, we cannot walk at all. When the Lord went into the ship, that is a figure of what it will be when the Lord joins the earthly people — all their troubles will be over. They worship Him as Son of God. But in the meantime what a perfect picture it is of our present position! We cannot get on unless our eyes are fixed on Christ, an evident proof that the place we are in is a divinely ordered one. It is the right place to get your feet upon the water, but you cannot get on if your eye is off Christ. Without Me, He teaches us, you can do nothing; yet, when we think of the activities of the Christian world, how few of all the things that are done in Jesus name are really done with Him. "Lord, if it be Thou," said Peter, bid me come unto Thee" — his only Hope and Object. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" said the same disciple, upon another occasion; "Thou hast the words of eternal life" — "There is none beside Thee."

Verses 26, 27. "Jesus answered them and said, 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. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for Him hath God the Father sealed."

Now we come to the second part, to the great foundation, Jesus presenting Himself in incarnation, in death, and pointing on to ascension. What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?

(vs. 62). He has become actual Man. It is not Christ occupying or filling an official relationship, but taking the place of Man to meet the need of man — not of Jews alone, or of Gentiles, but of the fallen creation, that had no resources in itself. It is the Son of Man giving meat that endures unto ever-lasting life, and sealed by God the Father. Remark this word "sealed." God never sealed the first man, it is the second Man who is before us now. Him hath God not only sealed, but sanctified, sent, justified, accepted, and "glorified." That is the Mighty One on whom help has been laid. There

is Isaiah 42 also, “My servant whom I have chosen.” All these expressions (seven in number) refer to Him in His place of Manhood.

But this sealing by the Father, even God, when the Holy Ghost descended upon Him, is a very deep and precious truth, and has important bearings, besides its intrinsic sweetness and blessedness, as revealing at that moment the mutual relations of the divine Persons. It was when Jesus was praying (Luke 3) that the heavens opened to Him, the Spirit of God came upon Him, and in the voice out of the heavens the Father was heard proclaiming, “Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I have found My delight.” It was not sufficient to announce Him to others, the voice must reach Himself personally also. It is thus the Father calls attention to Him on the ground of His delight in Him in His personal relationship — His blessed ways before Him giving immediate occasion (so to speak) for this voice from the heavens which accompanied the sealing. The next time this voice was heard, it proceeded from the glory in the cloud, with the added word, “Hear Him.” It seems as though the Lord desired to invest His present testimony to them with all the authority of God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — (the Son sealed of the Father by the Spirit), knowing its unspeakable importance to man, whose state for time and eternity depended upon the way in which he treated it, — “Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” It was man’s side here — would he eat of the Bread out of heaven?

This solemn truth would have authority in their consciences as spoken by Him whom the Father had sealed. God — Father, Son, and Spirit — was revealed in that blessed and solemn scene. In John 5 the mighty sanction of this testimony was not the sealing, but that the Father had given to the Son, in His position amongst men, to have life in Himself, and so He quickened whom He would — (the dead heard the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard lived) — authority also to execute judgment (which was eternal in its results), because He was Son of Man. The conscience is exercised according to the manner in which Christ is presented to it. To Nicodemus He was a man come from God, and as such had authority in his conscience — he must “hear him,” even though he came by night for that purpose. The woman of Samaria thinks of Messiah, who, in His day, would tell them all things. The wonderful Stranger before her had already made His voice to be heard in her conscience; this brought forth fruit presently in, “Come, see a man who told me all things that I had ever done: is not this the Christ?” Her conscience had first been reached, then mind and heart, when the Father, seeking worshipers, is proclaimed. “I know that Messiah is coming,” and “He will tell us all things.” She learns that Jesus is Messiah, and bears testimony to Him, according to the power of His word in her conscience, a powerful testimony, as the word shows us.

In John 5, He was giving divine life — He gave it as Son of God, but still in the place of Man; but here, as Son of Man, He is giving His flesh through death, to be fed on for the life of the world. The Father sealed, marked Him off. These are His great credentials. He is a divine Person, Bread of God out of heaven, giving life to the world, presenting Himself as the only Hope and only Object for man. It is thus, too, the Father ever presents Him: “Behold My servant, whom I have chosen,” etc., is heard again in, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight; hear Him!” This is the voice from the glory-cloud. Moses and Elias must retire (see Luke 9) when Jesus, the Son, is there. The law and the prophets were until John, but not, even the greatest of those born of women can be heard when Jesus fills the scene. They depart, and Jesus is left alone; they see no one but Jesus only with themselves. He had just been manifested in the heavenly glory of the

kingdom His face shone as the sun, and His garments were white as the light; but deeper truths than this are disclosed in this great scene — He receives honor and glory from the Father in that which the voice brought to Him from the excellent glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight.” Jesus was the Son of the Father, Object of His delight, and He was now alone — alone for them, they saw no one save Jesus with them — they saw no one else. May the Holy Spirit apply the bearing of all this to our souls!

In Matthew 12 how different was the scene! His face did not shine like the sun, nor did He stand in garments white as the light; no glorified men were His companions there, but poor sinners in their misery; and when they told it out to God, He was with them — alone for them also. Grace was poured into His lips, the fragrance of His garments was what came out here — it reached the courts above, even within the veil (so to speak), and brought the Father out. His voice from the opened heavens reveals the lowly One, the Friend of publicans and sinners, as His beloved Son, in whom He found His delight. The heavenly glory of the kingdom adds nothing to, nor does the lowliness of His place on earth take from or affect the glory and blessedness of His relationship to the Father — He is His beloved Son, the infinite All to Him. It is well to remember that His grace has given us, even now, to belong to that place where Christ is All and in all.

Chapter 7

The seventh and eighth chapters are of profound and especial interest, from the very full way in which the moral glory of Christ, linked as it was with a lowliness of spirit, deeper, if possible, than the humiliation of His outward position, and never for a moment abandoned, is brought out in them.

This glory was independent of the testimony of man, or even of miracles, it was its own witness for every opened eye. The Witness and His testimony were one (John 8:25, JND). Nothing like this had ever been known upon earth.

By its own pure light, we can see what the heart of man had failed to perceive, how God, lost for the heart, was replaced in the conscience of His professing people by His own ordinances, their zeal for which was the measure of their departure from the living God. "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples" (Hos. 8:14).

The same principles have been largely developed in the history of Christendom, with the same results, and are rife in our day, a sure token that judgment is at the door — it begins, we are told, at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). You find the same thing in the history of the judgment of the nations. It begins with the judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, then follows that of the Assyrians, Babylon, Moab, Egypt, and Tyre.

An attentive study of the chapters before us, will show the state of ripened iniquity of the Jews. In the Lord's mind, both the people and the Jewish system were already judged. In the tenth chapter He leads the sheep out of the ancient fold, henceforth "there shall be one flock, one shepherd." The desolation of the house and the dispersion of the people soon followed.

But to proceed with chapter 7: "The Jews feast of tabernacles was at hand" (vs. 2). The preceding chapter commenced with the announcement of the approach of the Passover. In the mind of the Spirit, they were now simply feasts of the Jews, when instituted, they were divinely-named feasts of Jehovah; here, on the same authority, termed feasts of the Jews, in the sense conveyed by the words, soon to be heard from Jesus Himself, "Your house (house of the Jews now) is left unto you desolate." The heart of Judah, more desolate still, clung to the shadows, and cast the glorious substance away.

Their moral state is laid bare, in a wonderful way, in these chapters; for nothing could be hid from the Light that was shining in their midst. Yet there was nothing new in this state, save that it had reached its last development: in Matthew 13 we find the judicial blinding of an impenitent people. It was, morally, the same generation addressed by Isaiah, in the word of the Lord. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord . . . when ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me, . . . your appointed feasts My soul hateth." In its alienation from God, the heart had given itself up to all the forms of piety. Religious hypocrisy characterized the people at both epochs; this was what the Lord could not "away with"; even the "solemn meeting" was iniquity

(Isa. 1:11-14).

This state is the precursor of judgment; it is not one of weakness, ignorance, or ordinary failure; but of rebellion, when, having chosen their own ways, God chooses their delusions (Isa. 66). “Therefore, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts . . . Ah, I will ease Me of Mine adversaries, and avenge Me of Mine enemies” (Isa. 1:24). Of sacrifices, oblations, offerings of incense, Sabbaths, assemblies, appointed feasts, there was no end. “Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,” is all that the Spirit of Christ can say to these rulers of Sodom, this people of Gomorrah, “these enemies and adversaries of the Lord.

Thus it is most plainly evident, that no stronger expression of man’s enmity against God can be found, than the piety of the flesh. The identity of the state unfolded here, with that which we find in the chapters before us (John 7 and 8) is very remarkable.

In Isaiah 1, it is the judgment of the Spirit of Christ, through the prophet, who calls heaven and earth to hear the word of the Lord about His rebellious people; but in Isaiah 6, a new departure is taken, the reproofs and the threatenings of Jehovah are no longer heard.

His throne is set up, the time of judgment has come, at first only moral, according to His ways in government; but the glory of God is necessarily intolerant of evil, and judges all that is contrary to itself. The apostle expresses it thus: “and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.” This glory, when manifested, is found to be the measure and judgment of evil.

It was given to Isaiah to see the Lord of hosts in the glory of the coming day of His power, when the whole earth will be filled with His glory. His throne was high and lifted up, and above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, their reverence was profound; with twain he covered his feet; their ways were perfect, yet they refused to look at them; one only Object absorbed their attention. His holiness and His glory were the angels theme; but man’s voice was not heard in this celebration, it was seraphim who cried one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.”

The voice of judgment sounded from it now, but by-and-by the healing, life-giving waters will flow from this throne of the Lord in “Jehovah Shammah” (The Lord is there. Ezek. 48). With the praise of seraphim man’s voice was not heard. The tongue of him whose name is “Praise” (Judah), was silent there; could he stand in the presence of the glory of God?

Praise does not flow even from the prophet’s lips, nor aught but the sorrowful cry of, “Woe is me, for I am undone, . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” In the presence of the glory of God, he discerns by its brightness his own moral state, and that of the people in the midst of which he dwells. One makes no mistakes there, the truth is learned at last — we are undone! no one can stand there, all have sinned, and are outside the glory of God.

In John 8, where it is a question of the moral glory of the Son of Man, we see the same thing. In the beginning of the chapter, they go out one by one, commencing with the eldest, no one could stand there: at the end, when He announced Himself as Jehovah, they betake themselves to the last resource of moral weakness, they take up stones to cast at Him. The flesh cannot live in His presence.

Having learned in his vision of the glory of God, the truth of his own state as a sinful man, his iniquity being taken away, the prophet is fitted to be the bearer of the sentence of judgment: "Make the heart of this people fat," and so on. The sentence was to be in force until the land was utterly desolate, the city without inhabitant, the houses without man.

But I have tarried much longer than I intended over the earlier history of the people, with whom, in His patient grace, He "reasoned together," having been much struck with the similarity of their state at each epoch. The moral part of the Lord's judgment began to take effect, doubtless, from the time it was declared; and for seven hundred years was, in the course of accomplishment. The spirit of discernment lost, as in their turning to idolatry — "a deceived heart hath turned him aside."

But we find in Matthew 13, a most interesting truth in connection with this; that during this long period of seven hundred years, this judgment was never completed. It could not be "filled up" (New Trans). until the rejection of Christ Himself.

It is hardly needful to add, that the Lord of glory, who sat upon the throne high and lifted up, was Jesus — Messiah, who, sitting in a little ship on the sea of Galilee, addressed the people in parables — the proof of the filling up of the prophecy, as He explained to His disciples. What long-suffering on His part, what love unwearied! The rejected Messiah begins His work anew, in the very scene of His utter rejection. In an energy all divine, He rose above His personal sorrows, He would not remember the past, His labor in vain and strength spent for nought, are forgotten in a love that no thought can reach, no tongue can teach. No seraphim with voice of praise were there; no human smiles to cheer.

In scorn, neglect, reviling,

Thy patient grace stood fast;

Man's malice unavailing,

To move Thy heart to haste.

O'er all, Thy perfect goodness,

Rose, blessedly divine.

The secret of such a path as this, Himself alone could tell, the living Father who had sent Him was the source and strength. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live on account of the Father." (By reason of what the Father is, and His living.) May we henceforth, even at this eleventh hour, realize in our souls experience, the latter part of that scripture, "he also who eats Me shall live also on account of Me."

Nothing can be more evident than the fact, that they were morally under judgment and set aside, as is implied in His own words, "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." The wise and prudent were already judged, His Father, Lord of heaven and earth, having, hid these things from them. Elsewhere, we read, that Satan blinds the thoughts of the unbelieving, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (See New Trans). The contemplation of His mighty works, when present among men, had produced no effect, and

now their moral import is hidden from them. The gospel of grace, when fully proclaimed, in the other case, had been rejected, and now the light of the gospel of His glory cannot reach them, their thoughts are blinded.

How striking and solemn is all this, what a word for the conscience of man, God hiding the import of His divine ways, and Satan blinding the thoughts of the rejecters! So, when predicting the overthrow of the city, He wept over it, He declared that the things which were for their peace were now hid from them, they knew not the time of their visitation.

How dim and dark appear the shadows of the law, as they retire before the brightness of the Light now shining in the midst of Israel! What, was the Passover to the truth set forth in John 6:54, 58? In the shadow, God, regarded as a Judge, was righteously kept out, they escaped the sword of judgment (deliverance was at the Red Sea), but there was no drawing near to God, no song, neither triumph nor joy, the accompaniment of deliverance (Ex. 15).

Now listen to Him, before whose presence the shadows were fleeing away. "I am the bread of life, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down out of heaven: if any one shall have eaten of this bread he shall live for ever; but the bread withal which I shall give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Read also, verses 53, 58.

One is conscious at once, that the place of images and shadows (in the Lord's mind) is, abandoned: the co-existence of shadow and substance was impossible. The Man out of heaven, who alone could tell of heavenly things, is here the living bread, come down out of heaven, to be eaten, if one is to live for ever; but this goes on necessarily to death, the flesh of the Son of Man must be eaten, His blood drunk, otherwise eternal life is not in us. Here, if anywhere, we are out of the region of shadows. "My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink." Could such language be used of divinely appointed sacrifices under the law? Food indeed, drink indeed! Or, will any one say that this had reference to the sacrament? though it be true that the sacrament looks back to this. Here, neither the wisdom nor the reasoning of man avails anything: the faith that appropriates its Object, spiritually discerning and entering into the meaning, as before God, of the death of Christ, bears away the glorious prize — life for ever — eternal life. Was this discoverable amidst the shadows of the law, or not rather brought to light by the gospel?

And mark the kindred truths, as they stand together in the same all-blessed revelation. "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells [abides] in Me and I in him." This characterizes the believer (he is an eater of the flesh). And thirdly, "As the living Father has sent Me, and I live on account of the Father" (by reason of what the Father is, and his living, the Father owned as source of life to Him as Man), "he also who eats Me shall live also on account of Me"; realizes, in feeding on Him, and communion with Him, in His walk down here, Christ as source of life. May our divine Teacher and His precious doctrine, have an ever deepening place in the hearts of His own.

In John 7, the Tabernacles, a feast of the Jews, was near. The Passover and Tabernacles, were the first and last respectively of the feasts of Jehovah, unfolding His ways in relation to His people. Could it now be said of any one of them that it was other than a feast of the Jews? The Tabernacles shadowed forth the rest to come, but it was also a memorial feast On the 15th day of the 7th month, when the harvest and vintage [symbols of judgment] were ended, the people were

to go forth and gather the branches and boughs of goodly trees to form booths to dwell in during the feast, "That their generations might know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

But this feast alone, had an added eighth day, first day of the week [resurrection-day]; this seems to bring in the heavenly saints. It looked forward to millennial times, the rest of God in connection with His creatures; the joy of those who shall have entered into His rest will be intensified by the remembrance of former sorrows, then for ever past.

With regard to its celebration in the land, two things are particularly specified; it should be in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all the work of thy hand, "therefore thou shalt surely rejoice." This was part of that word of truth that cannot be broken, it will have its accomplishment in the highest way, when Jerusalem shall be called Hephzibah, and her land Beulah.

But her unfaithfulness had earned for her other, and far different titles. The day was near at hand when she would be openly known amongst the nations as the "Forsaken One," and her land "Desolate." The fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, was rampant in Emmanuel's land; some were even anticipating that the Romans would come and take away their place and nation. Now, if the Lord had chosen Jerusalem, how came the Idumean king to be sitting on the throne of the Lord, or what had the Roman governor to do in the city of the great King? What, too, was the meaning of the cry, "We have no king but Ceasar"? Even the temple in its present state was built by one who, had it been in the days when the children of the captivity were building a temple unto the Lord God of Israel, would have been told, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves will build unto the Lord God of Israel."

In a word, the moral ruin, degradation, and humiliation of the people (their vine was the vine of Sodom, their grapes, grapes of gall,) was total and complete, the little remnant alone excepted. Yet ecclesiastically, as we speak, all was in order, the "worldly sanctuary" retained much of the ancient splendor; the blood of bulls and goats flowed daily; the golden and brazen altars were in constant use; the incense was offered as in former days; the priest stood daily offering the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins; the feasts of the Lord were duly observed, even the Tabernacles, in which the former deliverance was recalled, when Jehovah, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, made them to dwell in booths.

Never did fairer seeming deck a more dread reality. It seems as if the depths of human degradation, in conjunction with the filling up of all the forms of piety, could only be reached when Emmanuel, Jehovah-Jesus, stood a rejected outcast in their midst. A horrible union surely, the working of which, in principle, had often been seen before, but never in completeness until now.

The same thing we see in Christendom all through its history, a form of piety, united with the denial of its power, but especially characteristic of the last days. In Israel it will be realized, (presented in Matthew) under the figure of a house empty, swept and garnished, a habitation made ready — but for whom? Then he (the unclean spirit) 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 shall it be to this wicked generation also." The generation was there already, morally one with those who will be there at the end. How fair it will seem in man's eyes! Empty, swept,

garnished, "how beautiful the piety! How wise in their own eyes the sweepers and garnishers! Satan at least will appreciate all this at its true value.

We have seen that they went up to the feast, but could one eat of the paschal lamb while the living Lamb of God was present, despised and rejected in their midst? Bitter herbs and bread of affliction, expressive of what their state should be, were surely not eaten at the feast now; of course I mean spiritually! Could any one in communion with the Lord's mind at that moment think, save with anguish, of Jerusalem as the place the Lord had chosen to place His name there? He had once done so, and would choose her again; but now the Lord was going to cast down from heaven unto the earth, the beauty of Israel. In a very little while all that passed by would clap the hands and wag the head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, "Is this the city that men call, The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?"

Think of any one proposing to do His will in going up there, on the ground that He had chosen it. He Himself being rejected! In His mind it was already judged. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children . . . but ye would not." The things that were for her peace were hidden from her henceforth she was to be known as the Forsaken, not chosen, One. Yet He "shall choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:12).

Again, if it was to commemorate the Lord's bringing them out of the land of Egypt, would it be possible for a people in bondage, to a far more formidable power than that of the Egyptians, to think, except with humiliation of spirit, of the deliverance from the Egyptians? The result of all past deliverances being present subjection to the Roman yoke.

In fact, if the mind of God in the ordinance be in question, there was not a single element in it with which they were, or could be, in communion. The same remark may be made in reference to the "Tabernacles." Think of a people, in the state just described, "surely" rejoicing, "because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands"!

But what did the cursing of the fig-tree mean, on which the Lord found no fruit, but leaves only? Was not that Israel under the law? And His telling them also that the kingdom of God should be taken from them, and pronouncing the desolation of the temple, together with the overthrow of their city. In the mind of Christ, everything was already judged. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" "Thou, Capernaum!" "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"

But what did all this signify to a people themselves under judgment? The ordinances of the flesh "(Greek), the worldly sanctuary, the temple ritual, were still there, might they not glory in these? They did so! and at the same time denied the holy One and the Just, killed the Prince of life, and desired a murderer to be given unto them. Thus they themselves showed, of themselves, unwittingly we may be sure, their true character. The mask of carnal piety, in which they sought to hide, it may be from themselves, their real character, fallen to the ground, they stand exposed before the ages as true children of the murderer and the liar.

It is a marvelous history, a great and serious lesson, which 1800 years have not sufficed but for a small part of Christendom to learn, the compatibility of fleshly piety with hatred of the true God. That indeed is the mind of the flesh (Rom. 8:7), the pretensions and assumption of men notwithstanding. In fact God's mind in the ordinances being lost (together with God Himself, for heart and conscience), they hid themselves, as it were, from God behind His own ordinances, as

Adam, in the garden, sought to hide himself behind the trees which God had given him as good for food, and as pleasant to the eyes. Indeed, to fill up the measure of the evil state of that adulterous generation, but one thing was wanting, the presence of the overflowing power of Satan, when the unclean Spirit shall take seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and the last state shall be worse than the first.

But of all that met the eyes and smote the heart, of the blessed Son of Man, nothing appeared to awaken His holy indignation so much as the deep hypocrisy displayed in the maintenance of the forms of fleshly piety by that adulterous generation. It was not possible that He, who was holy and true, should be regarded by them save with feelings of hatred and fear: "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Me" (Zech. 11). "Ye serpents! ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

The persecuting, murderous spirit would continue to manifest itself in putting to death those whom He would send unto them. "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation" (Matt. 23:34-36). This has fully repeated itself in the history of Christendom. (Compare Rev. 17:21-24.)

Such was the scene into which the Lord of glory descended. We see Him, found in fashion as a man, identified in thought, purpose, and object, with Him from whom He had come; while God Himself found His rest in, glorified and delighted with, what a human heart brought forth, a heart consecrated with all its fruits of love and devotedness unto His service, praise, and glory. But having thus unmasked and set in their true place that hypocritical generation, the holy sorrow of His own heart is expressed in the lamentation over Jerusalem.

But all is different in John. Here he speaks as from moral heights out-topping all dispensation. It is not characteristically the Man of sorrows we find here, but the conqueror of the world, in its divine Savior — not the Son of David or of Abraham (inheritor, as such, of the promises); but Son of God and of the Father. There is no proclamation of a coming kingdom nor expectation of fruit from fig-tree or vine; all was gone, failure from the beginning; the world that was made by Him knew Him not; by His own rejected. Outside Himself — the shining Light — all was uncomprehending darkness. The scene once more is that of a fallen world, where life and light were wanting; therefore He is presented at once as the Life and the Light. The application of creative power was what was wanted, and moral light, the child of Adam must be born anew, "child of Abraham" had lost its significance with the loss of Abraham's faith.

Then we have the cross, its necessity. The Son of Man must be lifted up (not man putting Him there), and God's gift of His Son, that man believing might have life eternal; all is anew from God, Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

If man had sinned from the beginning, the Father and the Son had wrought "from the beginning." "For His name's sake," too!

The Son quickens even as the Father. He would give Himself even unto death, that believers, apprehending its meaning before God, might have eternal life.

What ordinance or vessel in Israel could hold such truths as these? "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. "Living water," and "never thirst again"! The present portion of faith. Was a human channel of communication indispensable for these living waters? The thought is not found in "thou wouldest have asked," and "He would have given." Is it not simple? yes, the simplicity of God! Where is man's? At least, what should be his answer to this word of grace? A basis indeed for all this out-flowing love divine, that it might be righteous, pure, and holy, was necessary. In the mind of God, it existed already, provided in the Lamb of God, foreordained before the world's foundation, and soon the precious blood would be shed, that these living waters might flow forth.

It would be easily understood, that from the moment those blessed words were uttered, "If thou knewest, thou wouldest have asked," the time of shadows was virtually ended; for God Himself was there. God in Christ was reconciling the world — His lost creatures — to Himself; He wanted them for Himself. The Jewish altar had lost its meaning when these words were heard; and henceforth the ministry of an earthly priesthood was but the ministration of a sordid priestcraft.

He had commenced to unfold these blessed truths in John 3, with the statement that one must be born anew; but this was the same thing as being born of God, our beginning here is wholly from a divine source; from God Himself; "of water and of the Spirit" — the word in cleansing power, as applied by the Holy Spirit. Man is looked at, here, as the recipient, not channel, the beginning of life is from Himself: His word and Spirit the means.

Again, the woman of Samaria, with newly awakened interest, inquires concerning the true place of worship. The beginning here also is from God, true worship must be according to what God is. The answer was a revelation of the mind of Christ at that moment, an entirely new truth.

Is it not a precious privilege to know the thoughts of that mind, while the dispensation is hastening to its doom — the execution of judgment by "His stretched out hand"? What an expression of the favor and acceptance in which the faithful stand individually, what deep blessedness is communion with that mind, when His testimonies have been rejected, and all that was entrusted to man has slipped away from his feeble hands.

Did not the apostle know, that the precious truths he was communicating, would for the most part be neglected, forgotten, lost? How many in our day, in two-thirds of Christendom, have retained or ever possessed the blessed foundation truths of the righteousness of God, justification by faith, or of what he calls "my gospel"?

Did he not know that the church, looked at as the public professing body, (not in its aspect as the body of Christ,) would be cut off, not having continued in the goodness of God? (Rom. 1). See what he says of the latter times and last days (1 and 2 Tim., and in 2 Thess.)

Whence then and how did he gather strength for labor, apparently fruitless? My answer would be, he had learned from the Lord, before the crisis referred to arrived, His ways in dispensation; His counsels in Christ; in a word, the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2). It was in this sphere, where failure

could not come, that he lived in his inner life of communion; his soul nourished by the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

As I have referred to Romans 11, see the effect on the heart of the apostle of the solemn and wondrous truth it unfolds; the setting aside of dispensations in judgment, that God might show mercy to all, how it comes out in that glorious outburst of praise and worship from a heart filled till it overflows with delight and wonder, in the contemplation of divine ways — “O depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! . . . For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen.”

With this we may compare the outflow of Christ's Spirit, in the day of His rejection. The portion of Tyre, and of Sidon, and of Sodom, in the day of judgment, would be more tolerable than that of those who had witnessed His mighty works, and had not repented. “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight, All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father.”

Had aught of the counsels of the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, failed, or the brightness of the glory of the Person of the Son been dimmed in His presence through man's rejection — the Son whom no one knew but the Father!

Did He not know already, in the day of His rejection, what the crisis, which must come, would bring, when the King of kings and Lord of lords would show Him — the glorified Son of Man — to the world, entrusted with and the executor of all judgment, because He is the Son of Man? (John 5). “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth”; “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” Blessed triumphant joy filled the heart of the divine Master, as of His servant also. The scene was this poor world amid the wreck of dispensations, and the ruin of everything committed to the feeble hands of man! What “comfort of the scriptures” is here for His suffering people in these last and evil days.

But to return to chapter 6. “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers, shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father seeketh such to worship Jerusalem is as Gerizim, and Gerizim as Jerusalem. The hour is come when the true; worshipers must worship God according to His nature, (He is a Spirit,) in spirit and in truth, the Father sought such. Let us mark the connection of these words, true worshipers, and worship in truth. Are they not connected in His mind with the new hour coming or come? (Compare also the expression in chapter 6: “My flesh is truly meat, My blood truly drink.”)

The teaching of this passage as to worship is most important, and as lucid as its importance, demands. The divine Teacher alone at that moment knew, or could know, the full import of His words, they involved the judgment of the whole earthly Jewish system.

According to the divinely established order of that system, the yearly feasts could only be kept in the place which Jehovah should choose to place His name there. (See Deut. 12:5, 11) “Then there shall be a place, which the Lord your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices,” and so on (See also Deut. 16.)

In 2 Chronicles 6:5-6, we read, "I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build an house in, that My name might be there: . . . but I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there." (See also vss. 20, 40). For an Israelite to have chosen another place to keep the feasts of Jehovah, and to bring his offerings, would have been apostasy, the sin of presumption, for which there was no forgiveness; but when Jehovah-Jesus, He who had chosen Jerusalem, places the fallen city on the same ground with Gerizim, revealing at the same time, the spiritual nature of God, and that spiritual worship alone could be pleasing to Him, it is plain that the earthly system, of which the city and the house were the center, is set aside. See the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the two-systems are in contrast from the beginning to the end of the Epistle.

A spiritual mind, in one that trembles at His word, would, without doubt, learn from Matthew 17 where the Lord places His name now, (how great the blessing of knowing it!) But the worldly mind will have it that the Lord still places His name in the "worldly sanctuary," that Jerusalem is not as "this of perdition sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 4).

A worldly sanctuary then, ordinances of the flesh, ritual and ritualistic worship, so called, and holy places, are not of "the hour that now is"; but of that which is past. Who will deny that, in the Lord's mind, the only holy places now that His Spirit owns, are in heaven? where also is the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8).

But to whom were these great truths revealed? Of a truth, O Lord, Thou hast "chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise, and hast chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are!"

Now who, of the men of Jerusalem, of all the priests, doctors, lawyers, and Pharisees, would or could have received such a truth as this? Who, but God, could reveal God? He was there, indeed, in the person of the Son, the eternal Life, divine Light, and Love: yet the veil remained upon their hearts. Had any one eyes to see, it would have been perceived that in the institutions of the law no link of life between their own souls and Him could be found.

In fact, that which was provisional belonged to the hour now virtually past, the hour of probation: that which was eternal, to the hour now setting in. The law could not give life, nor consequently, righteousness for God: made nothing perfect: was not faultless, found fault with by Him who gave it; took away no sin; perfected no conscience; came in only by the way; was added for the sake of transgressions; (not to produce sin, but to bring into evidence the sin already there), had grown old; as such, was ready to vanish away. But this was of the hour then passing away. With the hour coming in (now come) is associated, not the probation of man (that terminated at the cross); but the full revelation of God. All takes its departure from Christ at the right hand of God, Head of the new creation. The Second Man is in the glory of God, all believers are in Him. The cross is the judgment and setting aside of the first man, as such; eternal life to him that believes. The life, the light, the glory and the love, revealed in Him, characterize the hour that "now is."

We shall find that in John all flows simply and immediately from Himself, from what He is, thinks, and does, (all belongs to the new hour,) indeed, what He thinks and does is what He is. (John 8:25, JND.)

But what were His people, the Jews at Jerusalem, thinking, what His brethren with Him in Galilee? The former were seeking to kill Him; the latter taunted Him, in their unbelief, with doing these things in secret, yet fearing to show Himself to the world; it proved at least where their hearts were — their true moral state. The world could not hate them! Surely such words were never uttered before in proof and condemnation of an evil moral state. The word of faith, the spirit of testimony, were wholly wanting; it had been written of old, “Ye are My witnesses”: these brethren of the Lord were not in the place of witness. Nevertheless, they were all found at the feast. Their time was always ready. Terrible words from His lips! To present themselves there before God, formed no part of the purpose of their heart.

If His brethren spoke, it was as of the world, “(1 John 4:5, JND) and doubtless the world heard them. “Go ye up,” said the Lord; there was no reason why they should not go, it was simply a matter of Jews going to a feast of the Jews; why not keep it, in the letter? The letter kills, it is true, while the Spirit quickens. But what knew they of this principle, or, I may add, cared to know? “The world cannot hate you, but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil.” They wanted Him to show Himself to the world; now this is what He will do, but not according to their thoughts. “The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,” will show, in its own time, the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Tim. 6) spoken of in Titus as the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

His day, the day of glory, will have come then — the time of the true feast of Tabernacles. Jesus was thinking of that day, I believe, when He said, “My time is not yet come,” “My time is not fully come” (vss. 8-10). “Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet full come. When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee. But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it, were in secret.”

He goes to the feast. Was there a single element in the whole scene with which His spirit could have fellowship? How strange His whole action must have appeared to them! His teaching in the temple, how connect that with the spirit of the feast? His knowledge of letters, from whence obtained? as he had never learned, they said.

Of a source beyond that which was natural and human, they had not a thought. True and righteous was such an One, true and righteous His judgments also. His own presence in it was the Light which made His pathway luminous; outside that path all was darkness, uncertainty, confusion, and enmity.

His blessed doctrine and ways, beyond the reach of the carnal mind, united in rendering His Person and Presence amongst them an impenetrable mystery. The Father must plant, the Father draw, or no one comes to Jesus. Intellectual activity (with the absence of faith) invests the whole scene with the character of deepest unrest and perplexity. They know Him, and yet they know Him not.

We are reminded of the words of the apostle, “as unknown, and well known.”

In the midst of all this agitation and clamor, Jesus alone remained unembarrassed. In the light, certainty, and security of the path in which He trod, He alone knew whence He had come, and whither He went. Obedience, lowliness, and dependence, left no place for the distractions of poor fallen humanity: these His blessed spirit never knew. To choose between good and evil, to decide

between right and wrong, His Father's will and man's will, never needed a moment's deliberation. Who could understand such a character as this, or who had been in the school where His doctrine was learned? "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."

Oh what a Teacher was this! Did He seek the glory of knowing letters, or what was "the will" that wrought in this service? Was it not to make His Father's glory known? When we hear Him, we put to our seal that He is true, and no unrighteousness in Him.

In another scripture, He tells us, in spirit, that it was God who had given Him His doctrine; "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the earner." There never was such a Teacher as Jesus, because there never was such a Learner before, and never was Teacher glorified in the taught, as when God was the Teacher, the Son of Man the Learner.

But mark, how He teaches as He learned: "If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine." Was anything like this ever heard from the lips of the children of men? A Teacher proclaiming that His doctrine was not His own, and seeking the glory of Him that sent Him, "in the path of self-renunciation the most absolute and complete! Not in this way is doctrine acquired in the schools of men, not after this pattern communicated to others. In the school of God, the things of God are made known, learned and communicated by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:10-14).

It is interesting to compare with this, the way in which Paul speaks of what he sometimes calls, "my gospel." He says virtually, "It is not my gospel," as the Lord said, "My doctrine is not mine." It was not after man, he tells us (Gal. 1:12). "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." God's revelation of His Son in Him was the end of conferring with man.

If any man will do His will. I remember the remark of a famous philosopher, who lived centuries ago, that man's incompetence to judge of the character of God consisted in this, that his will was wrong, being opposed to God. It is remarkable that the only Man who ever sought to hide Himself, that the glory of Him, whom He had come to serve, might shine forth, should be the most known, most celebrated, (as man would say) and even most revered in natural sentiment and feeling, of all that ever lived upon this earth. When the Light of the world was no longer here, then the men who had rejected it, could venture to say what they really thought. Christ present in the world is despised and rejected of men; when turned out of the world, a Christ flattered and commended by men. Philosophers, students, and poets thought they saw in Jesus of Nazareth a hero, a reformer, a martyr; and could admire Him as such. When no longer tormented by the searching power of His words, these dwellers upon earth merged the glory of His divinity in the exaltation of a man like themselves, giving Him a first place, perhaps, as such, and then seeking to exalt themselves in following the ideal of their own minds. This is Rationalism.

Verse 28, "Then cried Jesus in the temple as He taught, saying, Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not." This knowledge was (at the most) solely external, they knew Him, and yet they knew Him not. They had seen His miracles, and, unable to deny them, had attributed the mighty power that wrought in them to Beelzebub. The words of grace that flowed from His lips, and the authority with which He spake,

had filled them with wonder; but that they knew Him not spiritually and truly is evident from the Lord's words at the end of the verse, "but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not." They did not know God, how could they know Him whom He had sent? Compare with this the beginning of Matthew 2. Herod and all Jerusalem with him, being troubled at the birth of Him who was born King of the Jews, having gathered all the chief priests and scribes together, demanded of them where Christ should be born. "And they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, land of Juda, art in no wise the least among the governors of Juda; for out of thee shall go forth a leader, who shall shepherd My people Israel." (New Trans.)

In the former case, though they knew Him outwardly, as a Judas might, they did not know God, as Jesus tells them, "whom ye know not": in them it was mere external knowledge, in which neither heart, nor conscience, nor the Holy Ghost had any part whatever. In the latter case, the whole company of the orthodox at Jerusalem betrayed, as far as in them lay, the Holy One to the knew scripture as Satan might know it; these betrayers of Jesus! — heads of the Jews religion at Jerusalem.

These two passages, were there no corroborative testimony from other scriptures, show us to what an extent a godless profession may survive the loss of faith, and of every true link between the soul and the living God. The presence of Christ is always the occasion for the manifestation of the thoughts of man's heart; where that presence is not known, the wit and devices of man serve but to deepen the surrounding darkness, howbeit, he thinketh not so! It cannot be too often repeated, that God, the living God, is the want of the renewed soul, as His creature, man, is the want of God's heart in its outgoing of grace and love.

When the Pharisees heard that the crowds were enquiring about Jesus, they, with the chief priests, sent officers to take Him. The crowd seems to have been interested; for the religious leaders that was sufficient to draw out their enmity: to send and take Jesus was for them the end of all controversy — the final resort of spiritual impotency.

Verse 35. "Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will He go, that we shall not find Him? will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" The Jews, who are to be distinguished from the crowd, here seemed to have shared their perplexity about the Lord. When it is a question of His Person and claims, the religious leaders head the forces of the enemy.

But we come now to Jesus answer to all the thoughts of these variously exercised human hearts. The great day of the feast had arrived, it did not belong to the seven days; but was the eighth day, or the first day of the week, the beginning of a new period. The meaning of this has been already, I think, referred to. When the day pointed to has really come, Jesus will show Himself to the world, but Pentecost must come before the Tabernacles; and so, in place of His manifestation to the world, we have what touches the heart yet more deeply. The rejected Messiah, having waited for the great day, announces Himself as the source of living waters for every one that thirsteth.

It was only to go to Him, blessed need that leads there! and drink too, for oneself; but thus we become channels of refreshment for others. This spake He of the Holy Ghost, not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Of Himself — as the Rock, smitten that the divine waters might flow forth, One whom Jehovah would bring into the dust of death, a reproach of men and despised of the people, a worm and no man — never a word. His heart must first indeed be

smitten and withered like grass, but out of the belly of the believer would flow living waters.

Going up secretly in the middle of the feast, He went, not into the booths, there is no mention of them here, but, into the temple, and taught. If any one wished to do His will, he should know of His doctrine. Again, on the "great day," His word was, "If any one thirst, let him come to Me and drink." Let us remember these two words, "If any one wishes to do His will," and, "If any one thirst."

It is apparent that He is outside the whole spirit of the feast. It was written, "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast." The presence of the meek and Holy One, the true and only Hope of Israel, would only spoil their carnal joy, of which, however, there is little trace here. Perplexity rather, and unrest, and enmity, take its place. His teaching in the temple, and His address on the great day of the feast, unite in giving us a perfect revelation of His mind at that time.

What was the ordinance of the Tabernacles thenceforward, to one who could have apprehended that mind, any more than the Passover, to him who understood Jesus words, "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Thus was life and immortality brought to light. Was truth like this to be found in the ordinance of the Passover, or indeed, in any other? For one who eats the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of Man, while out of his belly flow the living waters, legal ordinances and ceremonies are but the rejected things of a darksome past, to which he, child of the day, no longer belongs.

The ordinances could not be set aside, until all was accomplished in the atoning work of Christ. But what was their value, when He, to whom in various forms they pointed, stood in their midst rejected as Messiah, unknown as Son of Man, the blessed Son of the Father, who was "both seen and hated by His earthly people!"

What I have dwelt upon so much, and what has so greatly interested me, is the unfolding of His mind while the time of shadows was still running its course, but drawing quickly to an end. What an unspeakable privilege it would have been, the conscious possession, however feeble, of the thoughts of that mind! Would they not have raised one in spirit above the dark scenes of approaching judgment, and been a foretaste in the soul of the coming blessings; when, with opened understanding, and endowed with power from on high, (the promise of the Father come) the treasures of that mind, the unsearchable riches of the Christ, would be fully known. To be entrusted with such glad tidings for the nations, was a "grace" to the apostle, which brought into view his own littleness, and was enhanced by the thought of it (Eph. 3:8).

It is true that the church would be but a repetition of the same dark story as that of Israel, that there would come an open apostasy, culminating in the revelation of the man of sin, whom the Lord would consume with the spirit of His, mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming. A judgment, similar to that which was fulfilled in the Jews, in the privation of all moral perception, (Lest they should understand with their heart,) would overtake the apostates in Christendom also. Strong delusion would be sent them, that they should believe a lie, who had not received the love of the truth that they might be saved, that all who believed not the truth might be judged.

It will be instructive to compare the apostle's teaching relative to the apostasy in Christendom, and its doom, with the Lord's unfolding of the history of the wicked generation in Israel; which: will fall in the day that is coming, wholly under the power of Satan. You will find the same or similar features in both these classes. The cleansing of the outside together with the sweeping and

garnishing which will characterize the wicked generation, finds its exact counterpart amongst professing Christians. The same attachment to ordinances, and ritual, and worldly sanctuary, and so on, with the same result in each. Corrupted by their religion, conscience towards God lost, religiously bad, and judicially blinded, the false professors in Christendom will fall a ready prey into the hands of him who will come in his own name, according to the energy of Satan.

In the meantime, and on the way to this consummation, while as yet the moral elements and principles are only partially developed, how great the privilege of the faithful, who cleave to Christ and His word! The strong delusion from God in judgment will never be their portion, the power, signs, and lying wonders of him who comes after the working of Satan will not deceive them. The secret of the Lord will be theirs. The revelations of His counsels in Christ, and the manner of their accomplishment, the unsearchable riches of Christ Himself, the knowledge of His mind all through the prevailing darkness will be the food of their souls (We must not forget that the first resurrection may take place at any moment.)

Those who occupy themselves with shadows, dark as midnight, will have come short of what was Paul's boast and glory to communicate — the knowledge of the counsels of God, and the unsearchable riches of Christ.

When the apostle says, "We have the mind (you?) of Christ," he uses a word which expresses the intelligent faculty with its thoughts, which is realized in their having the Holy Spirit, (their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost.)

I quite believe that these, with other kindred truths, will be wholly lost. They were never found in ordinances, which men are seeking to revive or to well-known and beloved Mr. Simeon who said, referring to the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Christ is the great ordinance of God for man."

Chapter 8

To see nature carried lengths, unknown before, in hypocrisy and hardness of heart, one has only to read the opening verses of this chapter.

Of sense of shame, or of the guilt of sin, or of sorrow for the poor erring one, there is no trace amongst these religiously bad men; for we must remember it was a religious matter, a question of morality, the morality of scribes and Pharisees. Their holiness, of which they made great show, was founded on hatred, even unto the death, of God's Holy One, and carried out in an effort to convict Him publicly, as He taught the people in the temple, of allowing the sin which the law of Moses condemned. Having made void the word of God by their traditions, their corrupted religion, as if in judgment from God, had corrupted themselves. There was no lack of wisdom, either, in their selection of the temple as the scene of their operations; this wisdom did not descend from above, it is true; nor is any argument needed to show that it was "earthly, sensual, devilish."

But what a triumph for Satan would be the accomplishment of his thought! to discredit forever, even in His Father's house, the blessed Teacher and His doctrines in the eyes of all the people; for if He demanded the application of the law of Moses, the grace that came by Jesus Christ was no more, gone forever, with the salvation that it came to bring. If mercy, yielding of its boundless store, spared the sinner, then Moses and the authority of the law were denied; in either case, His adversaries trusted to succeed, because of the divorcement of authority from testimony.

For what is testimony without authority, but form without power? Now the form of Jesus testimony (the grace and authority with which it was rendered) was its power, and as true and real as the testimony itself; inseparably united with it, and equally divine: commending itself to the people even in spite of themselves. They "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His lips." What a word is this! they say, "for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4).

Alas! the divine Witness, and all His gracious words, were alike rejected; for the precious seed had fallen upon rocky places, where they had not much earth, and immediately they sprang up out of the ground, because of not having any depth of earth, but when the sun rose, they were burnt up, and because of not having any root, were dried up." (New Trans.)

Verse 5. "Moses commanded," say they, "but what sayest Thou?" Never was wickedness so vile expressed in fewer words. A simple statement, and an equally simple question. Could the authority of Moses be set aside? Could Christ deny Himself?

The grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ could not be denied, any more than the law that was given by Moses. These wretched men were the agents, but who was the author of this scheme to tempt Him, who was over God's house in all the authority and glory of Son, to impugn the authority of the servant, who, as such, was faithful in all that house? This would have been to "break the word of God"; to set aside, not only the authority of Moses testimony, but of all divine testimony on earth.

Did not He that sitteth in the heavens laugh? Will devices like this hinder the accomplishment of His purpose? "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion." The Lord will have them in derision.

In the thoughts of these men, there was no escape from the snares which they had woven around their looked-for victim. The contrast between deepest darkness and brightest light, was never, perhaps, so defined in any moral picture before. The poor woman stood in their midst in the corruption of nature, but the Pharisees were the willing instruments of Satan's enmity against Jesus Himself. Therefore no expression of indignation, of anger, or of reproof, proceeded from His lips; He writes on the ground, His only answer! until their persistence draws forth the word, "Let the sinless one cast the first stone."

Nowhere is the moral grandeur of Christ's character more conspicuous. In a few quiet words, He puts every one, and everything, in its own place. The accusers depart, self-condemned, so that He needed not to utter a word. The woman remains silent before Him, till asked, "Hath no man condemned thee?" then she hears those blessed words, "Neither do I — go in peace — sin no more."

The poor sinner is pardoned in grace; the righteous claims of the law are admitted; to administer its judgments, none were competent: Some one has remarked, that the law is like a two edged sword without a handle, you cannot, use it against another without wounding yourself; the sin, it never could reach, the sinner, it could never spare! "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7).

We have also the mind of Christ with respect, to the relative bearing of law and grace at that moment. It could not then be said, "Ye are not under law, but under grace"; yet in the way of divinest wisdom, grace finds a way for its blessed outflow, teaching that against which there is no law (Gal. 5:23). How graceful and simple are the actings of divine power! Holding in His hands the keys of all God's dispensations, He is Himself for us, through the knowledge of Him, the key to all God's ways.

Verse 12. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is His Person everywhere, that must mainly occupy us, blessed necessity! In the beginning of chapter 6, we have seen that Jesus, accomplishing what was written of Jehovah (He abundantly supplied her poor with bread) is thus identified with Jehovah Himself. But in verse 27, the Jewish field is left, and a new departure taken, in which the world itself comes into view, as the scene of a new revelation of the glory and of the grace of Him, who coming out of heaven, gives life to a once lost world. "Giveth" is the word here, yes, giveth according to the fullness of the thought, as it existed in the heart and mind and counsels of God.

This was the glorious thought filling, yea, feeding the divine mind now: the best thing that earth could yield, was now but as food that perisheth: the Son of Man, as One sealed by the Father, would give eternal life. The thoughts were all new, and as glorious as they were new. By the name of Father, God had not been known to His earthly people. God Almighty was the name of relationship to the patriarchs, Jehovah His covenant name in relation with the people of Israel. The revelation of "Father" came in with that of eternal life. Eternal life, we must remember, was brought to light by the gospel.

In John 7, He stands at the head, as it were, of the river of life. Whoso came to Him and drank, out of his belly should flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Holy Ghost.

But here He presents Himself, not as the Bread, but as the Light of life. Nothing can be more important, nothing more beautiful, than these revelations, and the order in which they are given. They embrace, as their subject-matter, eternal life, with the manner of its reception; the power of that life (the Holy Ghost, sent by Jesus glorified, from the Father); and the light of life, of which He Himself is the radiant center.

It is neither union, nor justification, nor forgiveness, but life with its power and guidance.

The enjoyment of this light is the fruit of individual faith. Jesus, then, was the Light of the world, and the Light of life in His Person and ways.

But the Pharisees, who did not like to follow Jesus, nor yet to be told that, if they did not, they should lack the light of life, contend that He bore testimony to Himself. The subject of their controversy now, is the truth of His Person and testimony, united in "light of the world," and "light of life"; they could not be separated. In the beginning of the chapter, their enmity was shown in the endeavor to place Jesus in opposition to Moses, so as to destroy His testimony to the people; here, they seek to invalidate it, by alleging that He bore witness to Himself. It is plain that His Person, who He is, is the subject of controversy now; they cannot, here at least, be charged with hypocrisy, and Jesus does not write on the ground.

In His answer, He, first of all, takes ground new and strange to man. He knew whence He came, and whither He went. Who, of the children of men, had ever solved the (to them) dark and impenetrable mystery of whence one comes and whither one goes? The key to which was never more earnestly sought after than in this our day; the professors of wisdom have here, more than anywhere, made their folly apparent. The truth is, it is not one for the creature to solve. For the Eternal it is no question at all, simply the truth, Jesus is the Eternal. The wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world, where is he, or whence? Ask him, he cannot tell. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world, that He may put to shame the wise. To the poor blind man of the following chapter, it was simply a wonder that they did not know whence Jesus was, and "yet He hath opened mine eyes!" Wisdom is justified of her children, was he not one of them?

Verses 13-20. The character and authority of His testimony. God had had many servants amongst men, but One only was called "His holy servant Jesus." Some amongst them He visited from time to time in special grace, but there was One only, who, during His service on earth, had a Son's place in the Father's bosom; His witness was unique. "Even if I bear witness of myself," He says, "My witness is true, because I know whence I come and whither I go." The faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, alone could speak thus; but His judgment also was true, and for a reason equally outside the range of the creature's thoughts or experience; "If also I judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father who has sent Me."

His witness and His judgment alike proved that His Person and mission were divine.

Further, what was written in their law, that the testimony of two persons was true, was supremely true here also. "I am one who bear witness concerning Myself, and the Father who has sent Me bears witness concerning Me"; presently He tells them that if they had known Him, they would

have known the Father also.

No such language or thought was ever found in the heart or mind of man. Nor did the law, taken in its most extended sense, pretend to embrace in its subject-matter, the revelation of the Father. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and He alone hath declared Him.

Every word uttered, every position taken, bears witness to the divinity of Him, who both in word and deed, was the manifestation of the Father, as also to His true humanity, even in saying, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Moreover, amid all God's testimonies concerning His servants there was one only which included a Father's testimony concerning His Son, the supreme Object of His Father's affections, counsels, promises "His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased."

Could the Father leave Him alone, who did always the things that pleased Him? His ways on earth, like His words, were but the expression of Himself. How lonely had been the path of the Man of sorrows in a world like this, save for that divine presence. His thoughts none could enter into, with His feelings therefore none could sympathize, this is to be alone!

I was just thinking of the beginning, or at least the first revelation; of those things in which He always pleased the Father. It is found in Matthew 3, where we read of the heavens opening to Him, their wondrous and only Object; of the Holy Ghost descending and coming upon Him, and of the Father's voice in testimony concerning Him: "This is My beloved Son." In Luke it is directly to Him, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I have found My delight.

Had ever the heavens been in such relation to earth before? No! not even when the morning stars sang together. Had the Holy Ghost ever left the heavens to come (and abide, as stated, chapter 1) upon a son of man, or the Father's voice been heard in such testimony before? Had any event taken place on earth, so as to be an occasion for the manifestation, at the same moment, of the thoughts and affections of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

A lowly man was praying on the banks of Jordan; it is thus the wondrous story begins; a more blessed one had never been traced by the pen of the ready writer Himself. He had gone up from the baptism of John, where the Holy One had associated Himself with a company of poor sinners confessing their sins.

How little did they apprehend that God Himself was with them in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, or that where the sense of sin had led them, He had gone in the fulfilment of all righteousness. By this action, more eloquent than language could convey, they would discover that none were so near them as He against whom they had sinned. Never had there been before such an expression of sympathy as this. Traced up to heavenly springs, it was His Father's heart that Jesus had been telling out in the waters of Jordan.

The distinguishing feature in His service was not its extent; the sphere could hardly be more contracted — Galilee of the Gentiles, Jerusalem, Samaria: while its effects embrace the heavens, and the earth, and all creation. But the great feature of it, as remarked, was that He did always the things that pleased the Father. On coming into the world, His first thought is, Lo! I come to do Thy will"; on leaving it, His word is, "I come to, Thee," preceded by, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." He would not leave His place with the

Father, save to do His will, could not return to it without having accomplished that will. It never was a question with Him of doing great or little things, (this distinction is hardly, divine), but those things that pleased the Father. If anyone wishes to do His will, he shall know whether Christ in His doctrine can be apart from God. Have those who take the place of teachers in the church of God weighed the import of these words?

Think of Him, in His blessed ways, as Servant, Man, and Teacher; the perfect Servant sought not His own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him; the Man, who was perfect as such, could do nothing of Himself; and the Teacher, come from God, refused to own His doctrine as His own. Everywhere infinite dependence, obedience, and love, with moral glories of every kind, power displaying itself in weakness, weakness swallowed up of power. This union of power and weakness, who can understand? "The Son can do nothing of Himself"; yet, "what things soever He [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." How constantly we are reminded of His own words: "No one knows the Son, but the Father"!

For forming a just judgment, or discerning the doctrine which is of God, there was but one way — to do His will, and but one Teacher of that way, He who, coming into the world, said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will." He will own no judgment, no power, no place of service as His own, apart from the Father, by whom He lives (His life as Man down here). If He judged, His judgment was true, for He was not alone, but, "I, and the Father who has sent Me." And thus, too, was the requirement of the law met, the testimony of two was true. Then they changed the ground of attack, asking, "Where is Thy Father?" By this question they showed that they knew neither Jesus nor the Father.

These words were spoken in the treasury. After this, the Lord's controversy with them deepens in solemnity — their true moral state is brought fully to light, the sources of it uncovered.

Verse 21. "I go away, and ye shall seek Me," (yet should not find Him, the day of grace gone for them, the door shut,) "and shall die in your sin; where I go, ye cannot come." It is all dark to them. "Will He kill himself?" is all they can say or think.

Then their moral origin is unfolded as in no other scripture that I can remember: "ye are from beneath"; "ye are of this world"; "ye are of your father the devil"; the murderer and liar from the beginning. From beneath "(hell)"; this world and the devil, its prince, are seen to be, thus, connected in the mind of Christ; thus to be "of this world," and to be "from beneath," is the same thing in Christ's mind. It seems as if this solemn truth was all but obliterated from the minds of many orthodox professors. Is there not a danger for such of forgetting that He "gave, Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father"?

Verse 24. The argument now turns more simply than before on His Person, no special glory or quality is referred to: "Unless ye shall believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." They say, "Who art thou? His Person is the pivot upon which everything turns. His answer thereupon, in its real depth of meaning, brings out the wondrous truth that God manifest in the flesh, and none other, is He who says, "I am altogether that which I say unto you."

Not more perfectly did the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, bear witness to the holiness of the throne in which it had its source, than the words of Jesus presented Himself. A little further on, He says, "The prince of this world comes, and finds nothing in Me"; nothing, from His inmost

thought to the expression of that thought in outward deed, inconsistent with a life lived by or on account of the Father. In Psalm 17, He says, "Let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal." The fine flour of the meat-offering expressed the equality of the perfections of Jesus. What grace was predominant where all was perfection in the consistency of goodness Itself? He says in spirit, "Thou hast tried Me, and shalt find nothing"; nothing that was not of, and for, God. All that the fine flour, mingled and anointed with oil, (born of and anointed with the Holy Ghost) with the frankincense put thereon, signified, had its accomplishment in a Man, Who, as such, could present Himself to God, according to the holiness; of a nature, that in Him could not be separated; from the Holy Ghost, and all the sweetness of ineffable grace. "Because of the savor of Thy good ointments; Thy name is as ointment poured I forth." This was man before God! When He speaks of Himself as a Light come into the world; it was as from God, a Light in which God was shining before man. Had he eyes to see? Alas! the god of this world was there, too, blinding the eyes of them that believe not.

In the passage before us (vs. 25), it is important to note, that it is not any relative position of Christ, which engages our attention here, it is not whence He came or whither He went, or His conscious knowledge of that, which indeed proved Him to be a divine Person, but man on earth, bearing witness for God in a testimony which was identified with the Witness. Himself, a new thing, and without parallel in the history of man! It was very Man, and yet One greater than man who was there. Through these communications, which flowed forth pure as the waters of the river of life, it might have been perceived Who was there, had there been eyes to see, what human eyes had never seen before; "the Life" manifested, moving onward in the path which divine counsels and wisdom had marked out for it; and telling itself out in language and spirit peculiar to itself. "Let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal; Thou hast proved Mine heart; Thou hast visited Me in the night: Thou hast tried Me, and shalt find nothing." Could other than Himself thus address God?

When standing before men, His word was, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" The footsteps were human; yet it was God who walked in them, God was manifest in the flesh. The path led, straight as an arrow, to the throne and right hand of God. No path of the destroyer received the print of His footsteps; but in the thoughts by the way, and the exercises of that holy heart, the saints find light and nourishment for their souls — "Light of the world," and "Bread of heaven!"

There was this peculiarity, also, as to the path, that His footsteps alone could make it; it was a path not found, but made, and even as to Himself, the path of life had been shown by Jehovah, so He shows His own path to His people for them the only one, as one has lately sung,

There is but that one in the waste,

Which His footsteps have marked as His own.

The temptings of the adversary, by the way, were answered in a power that displayed itself in obedience that was perfect, with a simple, "Thus it is written." The enemy was foiled, for the weapon was divine!

Opposition from man, and indignities of every kind, were endured in sorrowing love, or met with "Father, forgive them." In anyone else, wounded self-love would have clamored for vengeance, the maintenance of rights and place; but in that holy heart the self-consciousness that stirred, at the sound of anger and reproach, was full of glory and of grace. "The Father loveth the Son," (was not

that an answer to it all?) “and hath given all things into His hands.” “Father, I thank Thee!” Could the spirit of vengeance mingle itself with affections thus divinely satisfied? But His own, seeing no beauty in Him that He should be desired, could even ask, “Who art Thou?” Alas! for them, as for many in our day, there was no unction in the oil, the incense had no fragrance. They had even asked Him for a sign. How offensive to the spirit of Christ was this request for a sign from heaven; what grossness of heart, that had failed to recognize the greatest of all signs in “Emanuel” (God with us). It was indeed an evil and adulterous generation. A sign, indeed, would be given them; but not that which they looked for, the desire of their hearts answered in being permitted to kill the “Prince of life,” in whose grave however, lay the death of all their hopes. Howbeit, they thought not so!

Surely the soul of Jesus was sorrowful! Aforetime the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas; a Gentile queen had come from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: but a greater than either Jonas or Solomon was present amongst them, His wisdom accounted folly, His Person rejected! His sorrow was the sorrow of love rejected; He would find consolation in replacing the links now broken with Israel in the flesh, by new and personal relationships, not founded on any former connection with His earthly people.

Mark their character, and say if, in the history of man, whether from a divine or human source, anything like it had ever been heard before; whosoever did the will of His Father in heaven, the same was His brother and sister and mother. The voice of the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father was heard in these words. I have referred to the demand for a sign in Matthew 12, as that passage gives us, in the most touching way, the thoughts and feelings of Christ of which it was the occasion. What can vie in interest, and profit too, for His people, with the unfolding of those thoughts and affections?

Before we proceed with our chapter, look for a moment at John 6, where a sign is also requested. In Matthew 12, it is the scribes and Pharisees, of whom, apparently, “the evil generation who asked for a sign” is composed. Self-deceived by the forms of piety, which they adopted and loved so well, they seemed to have assumed that the form included the power. Everywhere the adversaries of Christ, the height of their profession may be taken as a measure of the depth of their hypocrisy. “Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” Thus He, who knew what was in man, describes them; but in chapter 6, it is the crowd who asked for a sign; the poor unbelieving people had really come, not because of the miracles; but, as Jesus tells them, on account of the loaves.

They were not found in the ranks of the deliberate adversaries of the Lord; but were an ordinary sample of poor “lost sinners, for whose salvation He had come. Therefore the doom of the evil generation,” whom even the Ninevites and queen of the south would condemn in the judgment, is not once alluded to. Eternal life is His blessed theme with them, and food, such as Moses never gave. His Father would give them the true Bread; Bread of God, of heaven and of life.

In verse 26, we have a characteristic word in the gospel of John — the word World, I speak unto the world those things which I have heard of him. The world is before His spirit from the beginning, even when speaking to the Jews, “God so loved the world.” “The bread of God is he who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world.” “The bread withal which I shall give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world.” “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” “I am the light of the world.” We must not forget that at the same time He was a minister of the

circumcision for, the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers. (But this is rather in Matthew). There had been promises to the fathers; there were mercies for the Gentiles; afterwards when the Holy Ghost had come, eternal counsels were revealed which embraced the church, through which the all-various wisdom of God is made known to the heavenly powers. We find man everywhere in view, those who were, dispensationally, nigh, the far off ones and those who, as yet, only existed in the purposes and counsels of God, and finally the Tabernacle of God with men. But in John it is simply the world, God loving it and Christ giving life to it. An examination of the passages where the word world occurs would help one much in apprehending the true character and scope of these blessed scriptures.

In the first chapter the world is viewed as an apostate system, it knew not its Creator; and the favored people, whom alone He had “known of all the families of the earth,” would not receive Him.

Their moral state in nature is perfectly described in the words of verse 13, “Born of blood,” natural descent with its outward religious privileges: “the will of man” and the “will of the flesh.” Now these three things include all that appertains to man, as such, I might add conscience, but a bad one, characterizing the race. The blood of Christ alone can purge it. We have seen what was found in man, what alone he could call his own, in other words, sin; but that in Christ was life and that life the light of man: whoever received Christ was born of God.

In the mind of the Spirit, Jews and Gentiles were equally component parts of that world, which God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believed might have eternal life, never revealed until now. And here is another characteristic word in this gospel, “life,” eternal life! And this along with yet another kindred word, almost peculiar to John — light. The life was the light of men. “The light of life” was found in the thoughts, energies, motives, and objects of that life, for it was “manifested and we have seen it,” says the apostle. Had man ever walked by such light as that? It was not possible: for until Jesus came it was not here, but with the Father. God was manifested in the flesh. Could one talk in that way of the law? Was God, in His nature manifest in a system of commandments and ordinances imposed on sinful man, on Israel in the flesh?

It was holy, just, and good, it is true, and His creatures ought to have obeyed it; but were they able to do so? Take the two first commandments, who has kept them, what creature I mean? But is holy, just, and good what God is in Himself? Why, they are only attributes, in the highest thought of them, and learned through His dealings with sinful, yet responsible man. Some one was guilty of the amazing folly of saying that they expressed Himself! In reality, the law, even if perfectly kept, would have been only man’s righteousness, what the apostle calls, “my own righteousness, which is by the law.” The righteousness of God is altogether another thought, see the early chapters of Romans: but Light is what God is in His nature.

But I come now to another of those beautiful words, which give special character to this gospel; the reader has surely anticipated me when I write the word love. Is that an attribute? or not rather like light, what God is in Himself. It is most true that the law demanded the creature’s love, but was powerless to produce it. It will be perceived that we are on wholly new ground from the beginning in John. God had never been seen at any time, nor declared according to His being and nature, until the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father was here to “declare” Him? Can one say in the face of this scripture that the law in any sense “declared” Him? Grace and truth, we are told, “subsist through Jesus Christ.” Not having actually been in being before [that is, in the world]

now begin to be so. "It follows that the law could not be a revelation, even of the grace and truth of God, which have their being in this world, only through Jesus Christ; it is as simple as it is deep and important. Two systems are in contrast here, the law given by Moses, grace and truth subsisting in the world through Jesus Christ.

Moreover the law is not faith; (not on that principle) but the man that doeth them, shall live in them; but the just shall live by faith, (on that principle) and here we have another word largely used by John, and contributing to stamp his writings with their own peculiar character, this word is faith. It is in his writings that we read that God is light and God is love. He is not speaking of qualities and attributes, but of what He is in Himself.

In the law, then, we have that which is holy, just and good; but the revelation of God as light and love is not found in it; nor the grace and truth which subsist through Jesus Christ. Now, I think we can see the lines upon which the Spirit of Christ was moving all through this wonderful gospel.

All around and from the beginning with brief intervals of intervention on God's part, in mercy and goodness, the world lay prostrate in moral ruin, into the midst of this, into the very focus of evil upon earth, (the corruption of that which He had set up) God enters in the Person of Christ, full of grace and truth: in the love and light of His being. All this was entirely new, there was also the revelation of the Father.

With regard to the words already referred to, as so constantly occurring in John, and characterizing the gospel by him, it is interesting to see the number of times they are used by each of the evangelists.

Verse 31. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him," (for some had professed to believe) "if ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The many who had believed, had abandoned the ground of adversaries and therefore the Lord changes His voice in addressing them. It is no longer unless ye shall "believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins"; but "if ye abide in My word, ye are truly My disciples." It is a question of continuance in His word. These things would follow and be the proof of their continuance in His word, they would be His disciples indeed, should know the truth, and the truth should make them free. It would be found in the knowledge of Himself. The test applied, their state is at once made manifest, haughtiness of the flesh and ignorance of the truth characterize it. All that these poor slaves of sin, Satan, and the Romans can say, is, we were never in bondage to any man, "We are Abraham's seed."

They did not know, in their pride of heart, that sin was their master; that the servant does not abide in the house for ever; but that the Son abides ever, and that whosoever is made free by Him, is free indeed, were truths they had never known.

The Jews were in the house, but only servants (slaves); the Son was over the house for ever, in all the authority and rights and glory of Son. (See Heb. 3). The house was really God's house, over which Christ was as Son. The Lord does not explain to them the character of this freedom; nor the manner of its accomplishment. His servant Paul was used afterwards, when the Holy Ghost had come to develop its blessed meaning. To be under the law was the same thing as to be under sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace." Christ, in dying for sin, died also unto sin, we having been baptized unto His death are become identified with Him

in the likeness of His death. "In that He has died, He has died to sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives to God. So also ye reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

In this part of Romans 6, the doctrine is developed, he that has died is free, (cleared, justified from sin) believers are called to reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. It is not a matter of experience, nor dependent upon feelings, though the truth, when known produces blessed feelings and experiences; but a position given us — Christ's resurrection-state beyond sin and death, the power of Satan and the judgment of God. But until Christ had died, was risen, and glorified, these truths could not be communicated, the ground for them not being yet laid. The Lord simply announces Himself, His Person, the Son makes free indeed. They were Abraham's seed; Christ's word had no place in them, therefore they sought to kill Him — the true Son of Abraham.

The real point here was not their descent from Abraham, important as that was in connection with Jewish privilege; but this, that the word of Christ had no place in them; they had heard it, outwardly, and could even reason about it; but it had no place in them. A solemn word for conscience always. But though Abraham's seed, they were not in the moral sense, Abraham's children, if they were they would do the works of Abraham. As little title had they to their boast of having God for their Father, if God were their Father they would have loved Jesus. They could not understand His speech because they could not hear His word, it was not the mind but the heart that was all wrong. "Lest they should understand with the heart," the Lord says, when He is pronouncing their judgment, (Matt. 13) it had become gross; even Nicodemus could not understand what the new birth meant, therefore he could not understand the Lord's speech. They could neither hear His word, nor had it any place in them. This is what the "Light" made manifest, the real truth as before God, touching the state of a people boasting that they were the children of Abraham and of God. At last He tells them plainly who their father was; they were morally, the children of the murderer and the liar; to such an extent under his influence, that the reason of their not believing was, because the Lord told them the truth. The reason why they did not hear God's word was, that they were not "of God." In the epistle (1 John 4) it is written, "he who is not of God does not hear us" (the apostles); the principle is the same. In their minds He was but a Samaritan or a Galilean, Jesus of Nazareth. While in His own wondrous mind going lower than their hearts could conceive, that God might be glorified in man, "But I am a worm and no man," He says; see the glorious results in the latter part of that Psalm (22), and for what was personal to Himself Philippians 2, high exaltation and a name above every name; but before all, for His heart, the glory was from Him, whom through sufferings and love that had no measure, He had glorified on earth. It was a gift and at the same time the reward of service such as He alone could render. It was to God the Father's glory that every tongue should confess Him in the position given Him. Thus the Father glorified Himself in glorifying Jesus of Nazareth. The best thing, nay, the only good thing that ever came out of this earth was that which came out of Nazareth!

But one knows not how to speak or even to think, where to linger or where to end, when Jesus, His sufferings and His glories are before us: but the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness (New Trans.). Thus the weak heart is comforted and encouraged.

Verses 54-58. "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom ye say, He is our God. And ye know Him not; but I know Him: but if I said I know Him not, I should be like you, a liar. But I know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham exulted in that he should

see My day, and he saw and rejoiced. The Jews therefore said to him, Thou hast not yet fifty years, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you Before Abraham was, I am." The Eternal! The "coverture" is rent! and Jesus of Nazareth is Jehovah, "I am!" Then took they up stones to cast at him.

Before we go on to chapter 9, it may be well to gather up what we have been considering. The main subject of the chapter commences at verse 12. "I am the light of the world," as the second part of chapter 6 with the subject of life. Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto life eternal, which the Son of Man shall give to you: for him has the Father sealed, even God. "For the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world." Read with these two passages John 8:12. "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." What a glorious ministry they announce! one of Life and of Light! of which His presence amongst them was the expression. Compare the ministry of righteousness and the Spirit as committed to the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 3), and mark the difference; he was not that which he ministered, his sufficiency for it was of God, he could not go beyond that.

Sealed of the Father and in the enjoyment of His abiding presence, Jesus proceeds in His service of testimony, in the strength and joy of the authority which the Father's abiding presence with Him afforded.

Everywhere lowly, dependent, obedient, He lived, indeed, by the Father. Could there have been a moment when Jesus was without the blessedness of that presence, when He ceased to do the things that pleased Him? Ever a moment when the Father could not say, "This is My beloved Son in whom I have found My delight"? It is in His service as Sent, Taught and Sealed by the Father, that He shines as the light of the world, the light of men, and the light of life; always in Himself, and absolutely, both the Light and the Life. How solemnly now Isaiah's words sound in our ears, and how verified in the chapter before us. "He is despised and rejected of men." "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him!" As in apostate Christendom they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved — such is man!

And here I call to remembrance the words of a beloved servant of the Lord who has lately finished his course.

It is impossible to read John's or any of the gospels where what He was, His Person, specially shines forth, without meeting, at every moment, this blessed fragrance of loving obedience and self-renouncement. It is not a history — it is Himself, whom one cannot avoid seeing — and also the wickedness of man, which violently forced its way through the coverture and holy hiding-place which love had wrought around Him who was clothed with humility — the divine Person that passed in meekness through the world that rejected Him: but it was only to give all its force and blessedness to the self-abasement, which never faltered, even when forced to confess His divinity. It was I am, "but in the lowliness and loneliness, of the most perfect and self-abased obedience, no secret desire to hold His place in His humiliation; and by His humiliation: — His Father's glory was the perfect desire of His heart. It was, indeed, I am that was there, but in the perfectness of human obedience. This reveals itself everywhere. The divine in John, displayed in man, specially comes out. Hence his gospel attracts the heart, while it offends infidelity "(Lev. in Synopsis).

One feels that the chapter before us might have afforded occasion for these beautiful remarks. Is it not everywhere the wickedness of man forcing into view Him who was clothed with humility and making manifest that He, who so clothed Himself, was a divine Person — the Son of the Father — the Eternal!

He knew whence He came (could a mere man say that?) and whither He went; why, this is the problem which the intellect of man has ever sought to solve, only to find it to be a rock upon which it went to pieces. Jesus alone, of men, knew this, and so manifested that He was a divine Person.

Again, His challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" remains unanswered, we well know why: but a man without sin in a fallen world is a divine Person. "He, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

If His judgment was in question, He could say, "My judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father who has sent Me"; as in John 5: "My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My will, but the will of Him that has sent Me." His Father's presence, and His own perfections alike warranted the truth and justice of His judgment. Had any one ever pretended to know the Father? could a mere child of man thus associate Himself with the Father, without a thought of sin or offering for sin? No, He who thus speaks, though very Man is greater than man. When it is a question of testimony to His Person remark His answer. "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, because I know whence I came and whither I go." Again in Matthew 3 and 17, the Father's testimony is, "My beloved Son." When they say, "Where is Thy Father?" He answers, "If ye had known Me, ye would have known also My Father." It is needless to remark that the Revealer of the Father could alone be the only-begotten Son who is in His bosom. See the effect of man's wickedness and Satan's enmity! the holy coverture being rent, the divine Person shines forth!

Then comes the great solemn unfolding of their state and His own in a contrast, terrible for them but glorious for Him. He was from above and not of this world, they were from beneath, of this world, and of the devil, their father, whose lusts they would do. He did the will of His Father in positions created by that will, as Sent, Taught, and Sealed by Him. The coverture how lowly! He receives everything from the Father; but who amongst the mighty had brought to God an offering like His? He gave Himself a sacrifice, an offering of sweet smelling savor.

At length the controversy draws to an end, when they ask Him directly, "Whom makest Thou Thyself?" Already they had said, "Who art Thou?" It terminates with the rending of the coverture and holy hiding-place which love had wrought round Him. Man's wickedness forces into view the "I am -- the Eternal. "Before Abraham was, I am."

Chapter 9

With John 8, the great controversy between light and darkness is all but closed. Jesus of Nazareth is despised and rejected of men. When He announces Himself as “I am,” and again in John 10, where He declares His oneness with the Father, they take up stones to kill the “Prince of Life.”

In Matthew, they gather in classes against Him: chief priests and elders, Pharisees and scribes, Sadducees and Herodians; to be refuted, indeed, and denounced; but how different from the solemn scene before us (ch. 5 - 9), where all the sources of good and evil are revealed, and everything traced up to its own source: light and darkness; the Father and the world; heaven and hell; Christ and Satan; truth and falsehood; bondage and freedom.

In John's first epistle, the Father and the world are in immediate contrast. Under the law His name as Father was not made known; nor was the moral judgment of the world pronounced, as in Jesus words, “now is the judgment of this world” (John 12).

Chapter 8 begins with the effort of the scribes and Pharisees to put the Lord in a place of apparent opposition to Moses, and thus to destroy the authority of His word amongst the people, it ends with their taking up stones to cast at Him. Hatred from first to last — already it was true that they had both seen and hated both Himself and His Father (John 15:24).

It is interesting to note that the great subjects treated of in these chapters (5 - 9) are preceded by the history of the impotent man, and followed by that of the blind man, illustrating a great principle of divine action amongst men: My strength is made perfect in weakness.

We learn from 1 Corinthians 1, that “not many powerful, wise, or noble, are called; but that God has chosen the weak things of the world, that He may put to shame the strong things; and things that are not, that He may annul things that are; so that no flesh should boast before God.” The lines on which the world moves have neither starting-point nor goal in Him, as that passage very fully teaches; but God in the midst of it choosing, is a word of grace, and one that humbles all pride. Even in revealing the wondrous truth that the chosen ones are “of God,” man is regarded simply as an object of divine mercy and love. It is in Christ Jesus that the position is given to them.

It will be noticed that the healing, in each case, was on the sabbath day, to the deep offence of religious flesh. To touch that which was the sign of rest, and all that they possessed of it, was unpardonable. Of the import of the blessed truth contained in, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work,” they knew as little as many in our day.

What was God doing on those sabbath days, and what did this mean, God Himself present in the Person of Jesus, in the fullness of grace, amidst the ripened iniquity of perishing sinners? Where, then, but in Jesus alone, could the rest and sanctuary of God have been found on earth? And where, now, is rest in spirit realized by His people, save in Himself, at the right hand of God?

Verse 2. The disciples were thinking of God's ways in government, in which He visited the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hated

Him; but the Lord interprets it as a case serving to illustrate God's ways in grace rather than in government. "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifested in him." It always comes to this (if man is to be happy before Him) — to the works of God — the great atoning work of the cross for him, the work of the Spirit of God in him. Let us hold fast the word of verse 3: The works of God "manifested in him." It is no question here of mere profession, much less of man's works, but of God's, wrought and manifested in man. "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day" (Phil. 1). Saved by grace, through faith that is God's gift, His workmanship. In John 9 we have the Lord's word and testimony, He was Himself in principle what He said — the true Witness. But in chapter 9 we have His works. In chapter 8, He is the light of the world absolutely, here He says, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." It was moral glory — that light that shone in the marred visage of Jehovah's Servant, and by its brightness, even now, the saints are guided: yet not by that alone, for in the unveiled face of the Servant highly exalted, "the light of God's glory changes the beholder into the same image. Outside that light, all is darkness and chaos, as every one will find in the end.

In chapter 8, He tells them His word has no place in them; and again, "Ye cannot hear My word." See what the consequence was in each case, and what He says of their condition in John 5, they had not the Father's word abiding in them, had neither heard His voice, nor seen His shape; Himself, as the Sent of the Father, they believed not. Not to have the Father's word abiding in them, was to know Him not. It is evident that they did not believe in the Son, that is, that they had neither the Father nor the Son, and, consequently, had not eternal life abiding in them: "for this is the eternal life, that they should know Thee, [the Father], the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

What was wanting, in John 9, was eyes to see the Light: in chapter 8, it was ears to hear the divine word; so that, even to see, a work of God must be wrought (1 Cor. 2). "Take up thy couch and walk," was not more directly from God, with accompanying power, than "Go to Siloam and wash." But, surely, one will say, "We must see if the light is before us." Then we are not blind spiritually, by nature, and do not want eye salve that we may see; it was a mistake too, to say that power belongs to God. Yet David says, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." And what do the following texts teach? No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him. "Every one that has heard from the Father Himself, and has learned of Him comes to me." And, again, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up."

The believer learns that his sufficiency is of God only. It is the very sense of our own estate ("without strength" and sinful), that makes the power and grace of God so precious to him that believeth.

But the Father drawing, the Father teaching, the Father planting, words of divine power and grace, are necessary of those works which endure unto eternity. Here alone there is no rooting up, no one plucks from that hand, nor in that drawing does any one fail to reach in spirit the Person of the Savior.

Verses 4-7. "I must work the works of Him that has sent Me, while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Having said these

things, He spat on the ground and made mud of the spittle, and put the mud, as ointment, on his eyes. And he said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent.” This is the great subject of this chapter, Christ, in the power of God, communicating sight to the blind.

Nothing more glorious than Christ as light, but what is light to a sightless man? It has been explained, and I believe rightly, that the clay, mixed with that which came out of His mouth, signified the humanity of Christ, with the virtue of that which came from Himself. His presence in flesh can no man understand, even as He said Himself, “No man knows the Son but the Father.”

The energy of the Holy Ghost makes one understand that Jesus was the Sent One of the Father. Siloam means Sent. In His personal relationship to the Father, in the divine nature, and in His wondrous position in humanity, as the Sent One, He was equally outside the sphere and range of mere natural intelligence; but many have forgotten, or never learned, that the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God.

In John 10 we read, “Do ye say of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am Son of God?” But this in reply to their heartless cavilings, here in the divine power of grace, and truly in the grace of that power, it is, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.”

The Spirit of God causes it to be seen that Christ in humiliation is the Sent One. The Lord uses these three terms to express His relation to the Father in His path of service as Man; sent and sealed; taught. No words could more perfectly describe the obedient, dependent Man. It was in these relations that He shone as Light of the world, Light of life, and Light of man.

Let us mark the connection between the life of obedience and dependence, and the witness of light. The life and the testimony were one and inseparable, in this lay the true pathway of power also; but an unfrequented one. Of all the ways of Sion, none so little known as this, for it cannot be traversed, save in the spirit of Him whose footsteps first revealed it, and the burden of His testimony, His personal testimony, one may say, was ever, “the Son can do nothing of Himself”: for Him all was from the Father (He lived on account of, or by the Father). But to this was joined what no creature could utter or think: whatsoever He [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19). A new and wondrous aspect of humanity; and one that had no counterpart in any previous history of man. Dependence and devotion the most absolute, to a supreme Object, realized in the enjoyment of a Son’s place with the Father, where His own will was never found; absorbed in that of the Father. But these perfections were seen in Man upon earth (a new thing there), the second Man out of heaven. Presently the glory of God would be seen in the face of Man in heaven, new truths also, and equally wondrous, for who had ever seen man in heaven, and the glory of the Lord Himself shining in the unveiled face? (2 Cor. 4). Created man as first presented to us in the garden of Eden, was not thus characterized, the glory of God never shone from the face of the first man, holiness and righteousness had no application to him, he stood before his Creator in the innocence of a creature unconscious of evil. Yet his position was a wondrous one, the image and likeness of God, head and center of the earthly system, a glorious position certainly; but how different from that of the Second Man, who, when Satan and the world had been overcome and sin put away, was set down at the right hand of God in the heavenlies, above every principality and authority and power, all things put under His feet, Head over all things to the church, His body, as much a Man in all that scene of exaltation, as in the day when he, whose eyes had been opened,

gave his simple testimony: "A man that is called Jesus [Jehovah the Savior] made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight."

As to the work wrought in him being a work of God, no argument or reasoning was needed; neither the knowledge nor the wit of man could add anything to this, "I went and washed, and I received sight." Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. "In the language of the epistle (1 John 4) he had "the witness in himself," he saw. The action of the Spirit is shown in the way the Man who had opened his eyes is connected in his thoughts with God, there was no place nor occasion for any uncertainty.

First, in reply to their query, "What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet." Now a prophet is one who has the mind of God, an interpreter of His thoughts to man. The once blind cannot think of Him apart from thinking of God. Then next, Jesus is for him a holy person — a worshiper of God, a doer of His will. Such an one God hears. He must be of God, for otherwise He could do nothing.

There is something like this in John 4. The woman of Samaria takes Him for a Jew; after-wards she says, "I perceive that Thou art a prophet." The light dawns. "I know that Messias cometh, he will tell us all things." The morn is near. "I that speak unto thee am He." It is daylight; the Light of the world is there. And we have a similar scene here, light breaking in on a dark soul. It was a marvelous thing to him, that they knew not whence He was who had opened his eyes. Such was the reasoning of faith, which for simplicity and truth has, one cannot but think, rarely been surpassed, whether amongst Jews or Greeks. We are reminded of it in Nicodemus, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him."

How true was his simple teaching, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." But truth and simplicity have no attraction for the heart of man. This is especially manifested, when found connected with any true recognition of God. Already enjoying the effect of divine goodness, he is quickly called to share the Savior's position in the world. "They cast him out." It was but fellowship with the "despised and rejected of men," whom he is now to know, not merely as a man called Jesus, or as a prophet of God: Jesus "said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" His heart is evidently prepared to receive what the prophet of God, who had opened the eyes of one who was born blind, had to say to him. All that was needed was to be pointed to the Person, and then there is no delay; "Lord, I believe. And he worshiped Him."

It was a bright and blessed scene, the revelation of the Son of God in His own Person, by the Shepherd of Israel, to this once lost sheep, but an unspeakably solemn one for those who refused to hear the Shepherd's voice.

We shall have more about the Shepherd and the sheep, the flock and the fold, in the next chapter.

Chapter 10

We now come to the beautiful doctrine of the Shepherd and the sheep. The grace and blessedness of the truth before us, cause the anger and opposition of the Pharisees to be all forgotten; the voice of the Shepherd alone is heard, even the sheep are silent here.

We shall hear for the first time of the flock which was to be gathered out from the Jewish fold, of the other sheep from the Gentiles to be added to them, so that in result there should be one flock (not fold), one Shepherd.

In the first chapter, He is presented in the fullness and glory of His divine Person." In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There also we read of His visiting the fold, the Jewish people, who, though called His own, yet knew Him not.

But these relations with a people in the flesh were outward, those only amongst them whom He calls His sheep are "His own," by spiritual links which cannot be broken.

In John 15, He is the true Vine, in place of Israel, now only a degenerate plant of a strange vine. But vine is an earthly designation; even the true Vine is only viewed in His life down here. Branches in this Vine (in Me) might be found, who had never partaken of the vital sap — mere professors.

In John 20, the relationship is vital, and for eternity, the corn of wheat is no longer alone, it had died (John 12:24), and here, already, was some of the "much fruit." He does not say there, "My sheep," but "My brethren," which He calls them for the first time, and gives them His own position before His God and Father — "My God and your God, My Father and your Father" and breathes into them a breath of that life in which He was risen (sin, Satan, and death being overcome); saying at the same time, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Blessed brethren! blessed sheep! He calls you His own! The sheep know Him, and hear His voice, the brethren call His Father their Father, His God their God. Their everlasting blessing and security is founded on His atoning death. The Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, then comes the risen life, with God for its object; our state now (Rom. 6:10, 11). See the converse in Revelation 21:3, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God." Thus, the day of eternity come, man will be God's object, His "delights with the children of men" will be unhindered, and forever. How long He has waited for it!

He does not call Himself either the "chief", or the "great," but the good "Shepherd, as laying down His life for the sheep" (1 Pet. 5; Heb. 13). The time was not yet come for the application of titles like these, nor is He thinking of the glories that pertain to the "Shepherd of Israel," when He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. The sheep will then wander no more, "they shall abide," for at that time shall He be great unto the ends of the earth, and be the peace when the Assyrian comes into their land (Mic. 5).

Yet this was He whom they had once smitten with a rod upon the cheek — the glorious Judge of Israel! The place from whence He was to -come forth to be ruler in Israel was little among the thousands of Judah, and of all those thousands, there was none so lowly as He, whose goings forth had been from everlasting.

But there are scenes where littleness and greatness exchange their signification. There was once in this world a Man, self-emptied, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; but the world knew Him not.

It was not, however, to Him as the Great One feeding or shepherding with the majesty of the lord His God, that the porter opened, not to Him in that character. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,” characterized His service now. “I am no prophet, man possessed Me as a servant from My youth.” This passage from Zechariah is more in harmony with the scriptures . . . that speak of His lowly position amongst men. How well it became Him, blessed Son of the Highest! None but Himself could have taken it (I am in the midst of you as the one that serves). And, how the Lord of Hosts hastened to interpret, as none but God could, the divine secret of those wounds. “Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” The kings and judges of the earth were confederate against Him: the spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies, the “lords of this darkness,” were against Him; but the secret of the Lord is ever with those that fear Him; He takes the saints behind all the scenes of human and Satanic wickedness, for Satan originates nothing, and man is only his slave.

It was Jehovah who had first counseled the uniting of the Man who was His fellow. (See also Job 1). God, not Satan, ordering all. This is all-important for His people, they have nothing to do with second causes, the world refuses to own the First. In due time the hosts of the high ones would be punished on high, and the kings of the earth, on the earth.

It is to the Shepherd of the Lord of hosts that the Porter opens. What and where is man, when the Spirit of the Lord opens to His Shepherd? When He arises, prison walls confine their captives no more, for the legal system of carnal ordinances was virtually ended when the sheep were withdrawn from the fold, it was with them that the mind and spirit of Christ were occupied. These were the “excellent of the earth,” in whom was all His delight.

It will be clearly seen that the subject here is not the responsibility of man, as such; nor that of the lost ones of the fold; but first His title to the name and place of Shepherd, and then His visit to the fold for the purpose of leading the sheep out of the ancient enclosure, the fallen Jewish system, already set aside in the mind of God. “He that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.” The door was the way appointed of God, all the predicted circumstances relative to His first advent up to that moment were accomplished, the rest were about to be fulfilled.

The “Door” included the doctrine of His Person and character; see for example Isaiah 11:2, where His character is described in connection with the Spirit which rested upon Him in seven-fold perfection. “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord”; and this is given in connection with His government: “with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth” (vs. 4). See also, Isaiah 61, which He read in the synagogue of

Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to preach to captives deliverance, to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." The Lord declares, "Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." He does not go beyond "the acceptable year of the Lord," in quoting from Isaiah; for the day of vengeance belongs to the second advent. See further, Isaiah 1, where He says, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I might know how to speak . . . to him that is weary."

All has been foretold — His incarnation, His descent from David according to the flesh; root and rod of Jesse; the place of His birth; His sorrows and rejection; "face more marred than any man"; in a word, the sufferings of Jesus, and the glories that should follow. There could be no mistake that was not willful as to the door (the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way), and Jesus entered by that door, and then approved Himself to be the Shepherd of the sheep. All others were but thieves and robbers and hirelings; by their ways they are known.

Then He became the Door Himself. We have seen that the Porter and the sheep are in relationship with the Shepherd; the Porter opens to Him, the sheep hear His voice; now, He who came in by the door becomes the Door Himself. The sheep are to be led out of that which is already ripe for judgment. But what of the powers already established? What of the Herods and their men of war, the Roman governors and their legionaries? Will He stand up against them? It is written, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." In the sphere itself of their rule, they are as though they were not. As was said of old, "Speak the word, and it shall not stand, for Emmanuel." So here, it would be a sufficient answer, "To him the porter openeth." For the chief priests, Pharisees, and doctors, this movement was connected with questions which they would consider of the last moment to themselves. However, the Lord does not even allude to them here, for Him they are as though they were not.

A scene of power and of blessedness, but of a new order, opens before us, the Shepherd of Israel leading out of the fold of Judaism. "When He has put forth all His own, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know His voice" (New Trans.). "To Him the porter openeth." The power of the Spirit of God was ever present, waiting, so to speak, on, each movement of the heart and mind of Jesus. "Justified in the Spirit," was ever true of Him. The seal of the Spirit's presence was stamped on all that Jesus did. Elsewhere, in another character, "holy and true," and addressing another remnant, He Himself opens the door for those who had kept His word, and not denied His name.

While He puts forth all , He calls each sheep by name — to each distinctly revealing His own name — as He said to the man who had been blind, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee."

Yet, with regard to the sheep themselves, weakness characterized them; where were they to find strength to break with all that religious man held to be venerable and sacred? The religion of their fathers, their holy and beautiful house where "our fathers praised Thee"; the great names of Moses, and of David, of Samuel, and the prophets; the devout warriors who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises; the noble army of martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy; the beautiful ritual; the ordinances established by Jehovah Himself; the holy

places, Jerusalem and the temple; these thoughts, inseparably united in the mind of every earnest Jew, seemed to sanction the system here called the fold: they constituted his religion, and were the foundation of his patriotism. For this feeling also was divinely sanctioned, and indeed formed part of his religion.

The term “fold” is merely another name for the earthly Jewish system, in and by which the Jews were separated from the nations.

Now the most powerful motives that can influence the heart of the “first man,” are connected with his love of his religion, “his country,” “his righteousness,” simply because he counts them his own; for the truth of this remark, especially with regard to righteousness, see the Book of Job. The righteousness of God is a truth not yet possessed by many truly Christian people, and how many ungodly men, blasphemers of that holy name, have exposed themselves to danger, and even to death, for what they called their holy religion or their church; so that it is really an interesting and important consideration, by what power, or process of reasoning, these sheep were delivered from the fold.

One would have thought, that every motive suggested by outward circumstances, would have combined with those drawn from the inward feelings of religious nature, the authority of the priests, besides the working of the power of darkness, to keep them still within the fold. But, in the first place, they were not on the ground of men in nature before God; though, as yet, neither delivered in conscience, nor having the Holy Spirit, knowing little or nothing of the cross. They were simply born of water and of the Spirit, the application of the word by the Spirit; but knew the Shepherd, knew Him personally, livingly. The mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and of the sheep was of the most intimate character, founded in the new nature, “Even as I know the Father and the Father knows Me,” says the Lord.

What, then, were the means and way of their deliverance from the darkness and bondage of the carnal system? I use the language of the Spirit of God, who speaks of carnal ordinances, and a worldly sanctuary, rejecting both.

We have seen what the hindrances must have been from a mere human point of view, call it religious, if you please; with what eloquence the example of famous and devoted men of former generations might be pleaded for remaining where they were; but all this would be wholly irrelevant, for it was not a question of prophets and martyrs, but the intervention of God in the Person of Him who calls Himself the Shepherd of the sheep, who was in their midst, with a revelation as new and wondrous as the grace in which it was given; establishing thus, in a Christian way, His authority in the hearts and consciences of His own. This authority rested on a basis hitherto unknown, at least in its fullness, and as characterizing His dealings with men. It was the grace of God bringing salvation where law wrought condemnation and death, the salvation-bringing grace of God: glorious words, precious thoughts!

It is a teacher, also, instructing, as in itself a sweet and holy and efficacious principle from God, to deny the lusts which the law provokes: “For I had not had conscience also of lust, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust; but sin, getting a point of attack by the commandment, wrought in me every lust; for without law sin was dead . . . but the commandment having come, sin revived, but I died” (Rom. 8:7-10, JND.).

Verses 3-5. He knows every individual sheep by name, as the names of the children of Israel were engraved on the two stones put upon the shoulders of the ephod. When He had put forth all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice. Thus, when they were leaving Egypt, none could be left behind. "It came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12). "Of their cattle, even, there shall not an hoof be left behind." They knew the voice of the Shepherd, this is what characterizes the sheep. In this the true servants of the Lord are always to be distinguished from mere professors; from deceivers and their ways, they are preserved by the instincts, one might say, of a new nature, they knew not the voice of strangers. This is preservative, simple indeed, but divinely simple! A beautiful characteristic of the "poor of the flock." Like Abraham, who, when he was called, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went, so the sheep, little knowing the purpose of the Shepherd's heart concerning them, nor of the large and wealthy place into which He was guiding them, knowing only His voice, followed Him.

It is remarkable, that of all that surrounded them in the present and in the past, no principle or authority, no institution, no command or name, is referred to; the Shepherd's voice is all. The voice of antiquity could hardly be appealed to by Him who is the Ancient of days, as Revelation 1 proves. Christian writers seem sometimes to forget, in appealing to antiquity, that the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, whose voice the sheep hear, is the Eternal Himself. Abraham obeyed the call and went out, not knowing whither he went. The sheep follow the Shepherd, because they know His voice, but He who called Abraham was the Lord of glory, and the Shepherd was Jehovah's fellow. The scoffer knows Him in neither character.

In verse 9, He describes the place to which He alone was the Door of entrance; one sees that it was entirely spiritual. The first thought is salvation. The Savior announces it without qualification of any kind, of all who enter by Him. The law addressed itself to responsible man thus: "Do and live." "The commandment, which was for life, was found, as to me, itself to be unto death," is the Spirit's commentary by the apostle (Rom. 7:10, JND.)

Verse 9. "And shall go in and shall go out." Christianity would be the sphere of liberty in holiness. Blessed thought! Free to love with all the heart, free to obey and follow Him whose voice we know — life also, and, when fully known as in the Son, life eternal. Life more abundant, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit would be the power of it. Such was the wondrous place to which the Door opens, what had it in common with Judaism?

"Find pasture" nothing characterizes the new place more than this. The Father was to be made known. "Shew us the Father," said Philip, "and, speaking on behalf of all, "it sufficeth us." From Him alone they heard the blessed doctrine of the Father, of the Father's house, of the Father's kingdom, of the Father's glory, and of the Father's bosom — the Son's blest dwelling-place; of the connection of life eternal with the knowledge of the Father (and of the Son), this carried, as one has remarked, eternal life with it. It was not thus with the names of Almighty and Jehovah; by the first of these names, He was in relationship with the patriarchs; by the second, with the children of Israel; by the name of Father, with us. The revelation of the Father waited for the advent of the Son, and was unknown to the Jews, save as a general expression (Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us.) It is not once found in the Book of Psalms. Man had never fed on this pasture before. This revelation of the Father is also found in the roll of the sheep's blessing.

Life eternal, redemption being accomplished, inseparably connected with the knowledge of the Father and the Son (John 17), would be theirs, their place as a Jewish remnant merged in that of the assembly for heaven — the church — but that is going beyond our chapter.

It is remarkable, that in this passage the Lord never once hints at difficulties turning any back, or at slowness of heart when the voice reached them. The secret of power on their part would be found in the single eye, and Christ alone before it: it is then that the heart fills; then, outside Himself, nothing is sought or desired.

In verses 14-15, He again declares He is the good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep, with the additional truth that He knew them individually, and they individually knew Him. “I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep and am known of Mine, as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep.” Even as the Father and the Son knew each other, the highest form of communion. And mark the testimony and character of this mutual knowledge, even “as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father.” I will refer to one or two examples of this personal knowledge of Him, given in the Scriptures. There is but little of this in our day. The grace of God is greater than the attractions of nature a thousand, thousandfold; but one is born blind, and must wash in the pool of Siloam, before one can see.

Look at the scene in Simon’s house (Luke 7). Was not Simon the Pharisee a respectable man, and a good judge of morality? But to recognize the Holy One, or that which is of Him, he needed the eye salve which the Lord alone can provide. Well, we know what he thought within himself; but look at the woman, as the Spirit of God describes her. We see what her sin’s had made her, even before the world — a woman of the city. But would “This do and live,” an answer to the requirement of the law, have brought her nearer to Jesus? Alas, for any who think so! They have not, as yet, learned what sin in the flesh means; to such, the grace of God that brings salvation is necessarily a strange and incomprehensible thought. If they will only ponder her history, the truth may more than dawn upon their souls. Her sins had not deprived her of salvation, and faith, not love, had saved her. She was now a sheep, whatever Simon might speak with himself.

Is it conceivable that the things which influence the world, its pleasures, riches, honors, the favor of its great ones, pouring in upon her from every quarter, were He the source and Giver of them all, could have effected the state described? They would have shut out God from her soul more than all her sins. It was simply the grace of God, which it had been given her to discern in Jesus, that had made her conscious of her state by a path unknown to law, and at the same time had given her, in her inmost soul, the conviction that she should not be condemned, because it was the grace of God in truth, which she had found in Jesus. It was the grace and truth which, inseparably united, subsist by Him, were not in the world until He was there, which turned her from darkness to light.

And see where it led her: standing at His feet behind Him weeping, she began to wash His feet with tears. A Pharisee’s house, too, the scene of all this self-abasement! Such an one is not more than the least of God’s creatures, for one to whom those blessed feet were more precious than all the world beside. She had already heard His voice, and, conquering nature — an easy task now because of the grace transcending — not waiting for an outward call (He was known by His sheep, and by whom more than this one?) — had followed Him, even to the last place on earth at which one, who had been a sinner of the city, would like to be present.

And what the gentle dew from heaven are to the parched places of the wilderness, were the words of that voice which she heard in the house of the Pharisee. Yet it was not praise, but what was deeper and sweeter far than any praise; for in those words, not addressed to her but to her condemner, she found that not an expression of her soul's deep devotion to Himself, and conscious lowliness, had failed of the fullest appreciation on His part. – “Seest thou this woman?” (See Luke 7:44-50.)

I have thus far referred to this woman's history, because it teaches with matchless simplicity and beauty what knowing Jesus is. To her inmost soul she is penetrated by the grace that, by some as yet undiscovered path, would bring salvation; taking sides with the holiness which could not but condemn the principles and manner of her life.

“Am known of Mine,” He said. Of no class of saints were such words ever used before; nor was it possible before His manifestation. The sweet and precious fruits of knowledge like this make us feel how great a thing it is. How profound was the knowledge in some, of the depths of the divine nature! The love, deep grace, and holiness of His nature, her whole attitude in His presence declares. “That I may know him,” was the highest aspiration of the blessed apostle. “We beheld His glory,” said another, “a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father.” What knowledge was that? Never was glory associated in the mind with a sweeter thought than that of an only-begotten with a father!

It is not difficult to discover the connection between, “I know My sheep and am known of Mine,” and, “My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me.” One could hardly say that the sheep are thus characterized in this our day. The Bridegroom tarrying, all grew heavy and slept; but in the middle of the night there was a cry, “Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet Him.”

Verse 16. “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd.” The other sheep were from the Gentiles, and there would be one flock, not fold, which last term is appropriate to a system defined by ordinances. “These also I must bring,” blessed must for us! The name “flock” would be merged in that of “assembly” or “church,” spoken of for the first time in Matthew 16. Hades gates should not prevail against it. Never was building like this, which had one and the same Person for its Foundation and Builder. But the church here is regarded as exclusively the work of the divine Builder, not as in 1 Cor. 3:9, 11. “Upon this rock I will build My church” — Himself the Son of the “living God. How could Hades gates prevail against that? Neither, if regarded as a flock, could one sheep perish. For (ver. 28) “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” There is another figure employed to set forth the security of His own: membership of a body. “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5). “No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” These three passages give distinct grounds for the eternal security of His own. The great leading characteristic of the sheep is found here again: “They shall hear My voice.”

Verses 17-18. “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 of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.” Here the figures of shepherd and door are dropped, and, standing, as it were, upon holy ground, we are permitted to learn, in the mutual relations of the divine Persons, even the manner of the love in which they

eternally subsist. That beautiful word in chapter 1: might well prepare us for it, “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” “Therefore doth My Father love me, because I lay down My life.” And yet He was the object of the Father’s love before the foundation of the world. Like the glory He had with Him before the world was, the love also, it was eternal.

But to afford new motives for that love in His lowly position in humanity, He, the Sanctified and Sent One of the Father, rejected as such, His witness despised and His person hated, perfected His testimony in love, in the midst of all opposition, by laying down His life.

The Originator of life, He gave up life! Could heaven, with all its glories, present an occasion for anything like this? He that contemplated it all from His heavenly place is true, saying to Him who dwells in unapproachable light, “I delight to do Thy will, O God.” For what in spirit He purposed, in the brightness of that light, He accomplished, in the body prepared for Him, amid the agonies and darkness of the cross, when the cry of anguish arose, which none but Himself could utter. For who had been forsaken of Him of whom He could truly say, “He is My God”? Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. But I am a worm and no man.” Or what creature could say, “Thou hast brought me into the dust of death,” as He was brought, and live again?

But love was love still, though the billows touched the skies. The Son loves the Father, and Jesus is the Son. The ruler of the world came and had nothing in Him; the world was there, and might learn that He loved the Father; for as the Father had given Him commandment, so He did.

In Him obedience was perfect liberty, for it was the obedience of love itself. It is remarkable that with laying down His life ever before Him, for it bounded for Him the horizon of every view in this world, He still proceeds in the path of service marked out for Him. He saw the gathering clouds, and knew that it was around His own devoted head they were collecting; that all His path of testimony and of sorrow led to the place and hour where He should stand alone — the Man of sorrows, in all the infinite meaning of that designation as applied to Him.

How should we proceed in the path of service marked out for us, if we knew that all must terminate, here, in a death of utter shame, the culminating point in which should be the apparent disowning of our names, by Him whose favor and whose glory had been our being’s end and aim? We are thinking now only of the human side of the sufferings — what came from the hand of man. Reproaches and insults multiplied at what they deemed the unheeded cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” God apparently siding with His adversaries. Think of what that means if you can, and from the lips of Jesus. “one!” Alone in the world His own hands had made — alone amongst the people He had formed for Himself. No service of angels, whose highest privilege and glory it had been to minister to Him; nor voice as from them, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb!” And above all and before all, alone in reference to God, and though it was, comparatively, but for a moment, all its bitterness must be tasted. He must change His own voice, and the sweet words, “My Father hath not left Me alone,” give place to the most sorrowful cry ever uttered, in this or any world, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

In verse 11, I think, the Lord is speaking of His death, not exactly in the view of its atoning value, but as the measure and proof of His love to the sheep — no love like that! His loving care would indeed be tried to the utmost, “If ye seek Me, let these go away,” but in that death was atonement also,

But here, vss. 17, 18, His laying down His life is not contemplated in its effects for the sheep, but as a matter affecting only His Father and Himself — it was the last expression of devotedness to His Father, when found on earth “in fashion as a man,” in its own nature attracting His Father’s love. Already we have heard Him saying He did always the things that pleased the Father, so that He was never without that Father’s companionship, but this last great act of His life, this laying it down that He might take it again, had its own special, infinite attractiveness for His Father’s heart. See the manner of it, what a blending of perfections in the accomplishment of it! Divine liberty, love, obedience, power; was there ever offering like that!

Verse 19. “There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.” Here the controversy is renewed on the part of the Jews, the words of Jesus produce division. “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.” Yet it is written of Him, “He hath made peace,” and, “He is our peace.” All the taught of God know well that there is no inconsistency in these statements.

In verse 27, we hear of the voice of the Shepherd again. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” If the people did not believe the testimony of His works, it was because they were not of His sheep; that was the true reason, and put an end to all controversy on such a subject. Similarly the apostle decides the question at once, they were blinded — “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” In John 8, He had revealed the real cause of their unbelief in God’s words (His own testimonies), “they were not of God,” here He declares they were not His sheep, because they believed not His words.

Verses 28-30. “And 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. I and My Father are one.” These verses give us, not merely the salvation and life more abundant of the sheep, but eternal life their portion, their security the hand of the Son, and then the Father’s hand. Who is able to pluck His people thence? And then, “I and My Father are one.” “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” Mark the cause of this enmity even unto death, because, as they said, “He made Himself Son of God.” See also chapter 8, where He says, “Before Abraham was, I am” — the Eternal. “Then took they up stones to cast at Him.” And also John 5, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” This was the rejection of God manifest in the flesh — His word and works already rejected and despised. “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me . . . according to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day,” was the word of the Lord to Samuel in ancient days. It was morally the same generation, the heart unchanged. The foremost, in this unconcealed enmity to Jesus, were those outwardly nearest to God, the priests and Pharisees. We have the latter from the beginning (John 4) to the end, one may say, of His public ministry, in the place of adversaries.

Verses 32-36. “Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from My Father, for which of those works do ye stone Me? The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Here He appeals once more, as in John 5, to the scriptures, and to His works. In their law, they to whom the word of God came, were called gods, as representing God in the place of authority and government; but here was One sanctified and sent by the Father Himself — was it blasphemy in such an one to say, "I am the Son of God"? Then as to His works, even in what they would deem their highest character, they were acknowledged — "For this man doeth many miracles." But of what avail for the heart of a Pharisee these miracles of Jesus? For him the precious doctrine of the relation of the Father and the Son could possess no interest. For them those wondrous works were wrought by the power of the prince of devils. Their foolish heart was darkened. They were the adversaries of Jesus. "Therefore they sought again to take Him, but He escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized, and there He abode."

All was really over now, the mighty controversy ended in His rejection. He departs to the other side of Jordan, the type of death, to the place for Him of blissful and glorious reminiscences. There had sounded out the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" There He had recognized the Spirit's work in the hearts of the poor of the flock, when He was baptized with them in Jordan; and there the heavens had opened unto Him, as He went up straightway out of the water, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon Him. "And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This had been the starting-place of His ministry; how well it was accomplished eternity will reveal! "And there He abode." Sweet tarrying-place it must have been for Jesus! Escaped for the moment from the murderous hands of man — His life of public service ended — He had reached the place of sealing, and of the Father's voice: "My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight." No place on earth like this for the spirit of Jesus.

And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true. "And many believed on Him there." John, though dead, yet spake unto them, and the words of Jesus, still with them, were heard and believed.

Mark these tarrying-places of Jesus, before the final hour was come; beyond Jordan; Bethany; and the city called Ephraim, near the desert. In each, He was surrounded by His own — "He sojourned with his disciples."

Chapter 11

We have seen, all through in John, that no power of Satan could hinder the manifestation of the Person of Christ. He met with incessant opposition and undying hatred, the result, however, being that glory succeeds glory in manifestation, and God was fully revealed in Jesus. That was His purpose, and who could hinder its accomplishment? "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Man's rage against Christ, only served as an occasion for the manifestation of His glory.

Here the Son of God is glorified; we get the glory of God answering to the rejection of the Person of Christ in the preceding chapters. The key to the chapter is verse 4: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." That is a magnificent word. That was God's purpose. If we look at outward things, sorrows and trials, apart from the divine object in sending them, we come short of God's thoughts about us, and our connection with His glory. In this chapter we find the glory of the Son inseparably united to the glory of God Himself. "For the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." It is the Son of God, as such, glorified upon earth, and, in John 8, the Son of Man, as such. God took care, before Christ left the world, that He should be glorified in these two characters.

In the previous chapters, we have been remarking how His rejection was connected with His manifestation as a divine Person. In John 5, when He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," it brought out their enmity, and they wanted to kill Him. In chapter 8, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad . . . Before Abraham was, I am." There is His divine Person. That means He is Jehovah. Then they want to kill Him again. In John 10:30, when He says, "I and My Father are one"; they seek a third time to kill Him. You see in those three passages, the immediate occasion of the outburst of their enmity was His presenting Himself as a divine Person. They rejected Him in His words, works, and Person. No one could be rejected more than that. "Before Abraham was, I am." "I and the Father are one." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." A person can only display himself in what he does and what he says.

Chapter 11 is the glorious answer on God's part to this rejection. We believe that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and in divinely ordered connection. When we enter into that, our interest in scripture is intensified. We delight to discover the channels in which God's thoughts are flowing — His manifestations of Himself; His holy nature and His ways; as well as His estimate of the thoughts and ways of men. In John 11, 12 and 13, you see that God is bringing out, in opposition to the enmity, hatred, and darkness of man, the personal glories of Christ. They said, "We do not believe that He is one with the Father"; and here, before the glory is reached, God shows the humbled Christ, Jesus in all His humiliation and lowliness, to be His own Son (vss. 4, 40, 41). In these three chapters we see Him as Son of God, Son of David, and Son of Man, and yet outwardly He is in humiliation.

Verse 1. "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." When the Spirit of God speaks of places down here, we see what it is which gives

them their importance. Now Bethany was the town of Mary and Martha, and Lazarus, whom Jesus loved. Thus places upon earth become interesting; some whom Jesus loves are dwelling there. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her." In John 10 we were reading of the Shepherd and of His sheep, and here we have three of them. But we are in presence of deeper truths in chapter 11: Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, revealed, as such, on earth, His outward place unchanged, and at the same moment His glory as God's Son: and this not apart from the lowliness of dependence which belonged to the place He had taken as Man. "I knew that Thou hearest Me always." It is not merely the good Shepherd caring for the sheep, giving His life for them; but a revelation of His glory as God's Son, quickening the dead: in His own Person the Resurrection and the Life.

In verse 2, Mary is singled out for commendation, and yet Martha is put first in verse 5. She was the weakest. The Lord never forgets them, man may; but God never (1 Cor. 1:27). Mary was a more spiritually-minded person. The Spirit of God distinguishes her for her devotedness to the Lord. "It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick" (vs. 2). I do not suppose that will be forgotten in the glory. It will never be forgotten here, while there is a saint of God on earth, unattractive alone to those who are of this world, even as they who belong to it saw no beauty in Him to whom the homage of her heart was offered. Thousands have gone to be with Christ who have left no such record. In Matthew it says, she anointed His head. "Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:6-13). It seems no great thing to the worldly heart, and Judas was a good exponent of the mind of this world — the price of the ointment might have been given to the poor, and man could appreciate that. It is all easily understood by His people; He was despised and rejected of men. The difference between anointing His head and His feet, I am not sure about. The parts of the human body least in honor are the feet. It looks like a deeper expression of lowliness and measureless devotedness.

From verse 6 to verse 10, is a part by itself, giving us the principles of the life of Christ on earth, lowliness, dependence, and obedience. "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (vs. 9). That is, the Lord Jesus walked in the light, and waited for the light to guide Him. He was always in communion with His Father, and in the secret of His Father's purposes. None knew like Him, that the Son of God could not be glorified on earth apart from the Father's glory and counsels. He had no word to move onward, and therefore He did not move. It was necessary for this object of glorifying God, that Lazarus should die and be put in the grave, and this involved the deep sorrow of heart of the whole family. He loved them, but the love, if human, was also divine. Could that prevent His walking by the guidance of Him who is Love itself?

So we get the whole principle of His life there. His Father's will was heavenly light to Him. That His heart was full of sweet and blessed human affections, who can doubt? But they flow onward inseparably united in the same channel with those which are divine. We must remember that if God be Love, He is Light also, and thus the movements of love were ever the shinings of light in Him, and so Jesus abode two days still in the same place where He was: "He that believeth shall

not make haste.” It is a beautiful revelation of Christ, unfolding the principles of His walk down here. He uses the figure of light from the sun. He meant a deeper thing, of course, walking before and for the eye of Him, who is Light, as well as Love.

These passages, in the gospels, which give us the Lord’s ways, thoughts, feelings, and relationships, always remind me of the oases in the desert. See the beautiful termination of Matthew 11, where we have the mutual relations of the Father and the Son. The outcome and outlook of everything was what man would call adverse. His royal dignity; the mount Zion that He loved the Gentiles rejoicing with His people: where were they? Himself despised and rejected of men! How was it with Him in those inmost thoughts, which, when clothed with words, tell truly what and where one is? At that time Jesus said, “I thank Thee, O Father.” The homeless Stranger is thanking the Lord of heaven and earth (which His own hands had made), as His Son, to whom all things are delivered. Could He think of the weary ones at such a time as that? Then how restful Himself! Heir of the Lord of heaven and earth, yet less sheltered from the elements than the animals in the field! “Never man spake like this man!” Yet to babes alone were the things revealed — for Him everything found its goal in, “I thank Thee.” Sweet, quiet words, uttered in a weary world — how they tell of love, and peace, and rest, in the spirit of Him who uttered them! Is not this power, and the most perfect expression of it in Man, in its highest spiritual form? Blessed revelation, too, of the character of His Spirit’s communion with His Father, in that secret place of undisclosed delight. In Luke it is, “rejoiced in spirit.” In John 10:17, 18, we have the same kind of truth. “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 of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.” Power, obedience, and love, all blended together. Man does not come into this scene any more than into the one just referred to; but endless blessings are the fruit, for him, of what is revealed through the deeper knowledge of Himself. All through the gospels we find green places like these, where the Spirit rests on Jesus; of course He always rests on Him, but in these places He is especially occupied with the Lord.

Why is it that we enter so coldly into these blessed things? It seems as if there was no end of outward activities, and but little fruit of communion, in that secret place of spiritual manifestation, where only He is really known and enjoyed.

What a setting aside of will, the discovery that all our springs must be sought in Christ! But when He is better known, we rejoice in saying, “all my springs are in Thee!” And if we dwell in Him, why then we are at the head-springs of power and love, and, I may add, of perfect and holy liberty. Love can never be separated from power, for God is there — “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.” Again, “Hath given us the spirit of power and love,” they go together. God’s indwelling displaces self, as far as it is realized. The desire that His will should be done, in circumstances apparently, or to mere nature, adverse, cannot be separated from peace, joy, and rest, it is indeed fellowship with Christ. We joy, then, not in the circumstances, surely, but in God Himself — blessed fruit of communion with Himself.

Verse 10. “But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” A man must have light to guide him. If he walks on without light from heaven, he is sure to stumble. Christ walked in the day. We see what that means, realized in all perfection in Him. That is how the Shepherd goes before the Sheep! He walks in heavenly light. He teaches us to walk in the same

path, but He walks in it first Himself.

Verse 11. "These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." But first He sets forth the principles of His own practical position.

Verse 12. "Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." They do not understand it. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him." If there was lack of intelligence here, the heart was yielding its best fruits, devotedness to His Person.

In contrast to this, compare in John 7:1-5, the way His brethren speak to Him. "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him . . . His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence and go into Judaea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest . . . If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him." Does not that look very heartless? There was no heart and no faith. "Go and show yourself," they say to Him, "you are doing miracles here in secret." Yet the Lord Himself would not walk there, because they sought to kill Him.

Verse 16. "Then said Thomas" — poor Thomas, unbelieving Thomas — "which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him." However he might have been stumbled, we see how attached his heart was to Christ. He says, "Let us go up in order that we may die with Him." There was a fine devoted heart! But he ought to have known better, he ought to have counted on it that Christ could not die unless He gave Himself up. In John 14:5, he says, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" He is all darkness there, as well as here, where he thinks that man can take away Christ's life; but he is devoted to the One he believes in. How interesting the history of each individual saint, when given by the Spirit; and what will it be when the results come out in the day of Christ? The disciples leave us far behind in some things. They have a great deal more of what the Lord commends in Mary, personal devotedness to Himself.

Verse 20. "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary sat still in the house." In Luke 10 we are first introduced to these sisters, and in a very beautiful way. Jesus had entered a village, and a certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house. How it brings Him before us in His daily life of poverty and simplicity, the houseless, homeless Son of Man! Well, Martha received the homeless One into her home. Here we come upon the difficulties, not of scripture, but of incredulity. Who can fully grasp the reality? The One who inhabits eternity indebted for a day's lodging, to the faith and love of a poor woman named Martha. What a privilege for her! But her sister Mary's position was still more blessed; it was well to receive Him into the house, and minister to His outward need; but to sit at His feet, to hear His word, and thus be ministered unto by Him, was far more blessed. She "hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her," that is, to hear "the word of the Lord that endures for ever." This appreciation of His word is above everything; by it alone, divinely given knowledge of Him is communicated to the soul; with that mighty word of His, He comes Himself, and takes up His abode in the heart. "If a man love Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). Blessed was

the mother who bare Him, but still more blessed the one who keeps His word; in doing this we have His presence, and realize practical conformity in thoughts and ways. Thus Mary sitting in the house when Jesus was coming, reminds us of Jesus Himself remaining two days in the place where He was, when He heard that Lazarus was sick. His word, "Himself reflecting, "abiding in us, produces likeness to Himself. When told that the Teacher had come and called for her, she (the true disciple), rose up quickly, and came unto Him. And when she came where Jesus was, she "fell at His feet," Mary's place always (Luke 10; John 11, 12), but Martha's never. Distracted with much serving, like many in our own time, she had not yet learned that one thing was needful. Still, if Mary placed herself at His feet to hear His word, Martha received Him into her house — dear and blessed sisters they were.

Verse 21. "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." That was quite true, but it does not show she had very great thoughts of the personal glory of Christ.

Verse 25. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life." Now we get the glory of Christ culminating. This is the highest point. This is not what He does, but what He is in Himself. "I am the resurrection and the life." He had all the power of it. In John 8 we read, "Before Abraham was, I am"; that gives us His Person as Jehovah, the Eternal. But here it is God able (Almighty) to meet and break the power of death which Satan had brought into the world. He says, "I have the power inherent in Myself." He puts, "the resurrection" first, because there was the poor body stinking in the grave. She says, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." That was orthodox faith. "Jesus said unto her, 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." If any one dies now, yet shall he live, but when the Lord puts forth His resurrection power, whoever is there alive will never die. But if a man were to die, Christ has the power of resurrection and of life. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." He is talking here about believing.

Verse 27. "She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." This was no answer to Christ's question. That Christ should in His own Person have the power of life and resurrection, were truths too high for her, as yet, and beyond her grasp, she needed the opened understanding and help of the Spirit. "And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." She knows very well that Mary has more of the mind of Christ. It was not an untruth morally. She meant that Mary knew more of the mind of the Lord.

Verses 32-35. "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." People generally think that it was mere sympathy with the family. But it was much, much deeper than that, a touching expression of sorrow, deep sorrow on the part of Christ. "He troubled Himself" (New Trans.). He saw the power of death resting on those human hearts. It was a very deep thing. The Lord was feeling for those people in whose hearts the power of death was resting. He knew He was just going to raise him from the dead. But He sees the state they are

in here. They are not in the secret. "He troubled Himself." He had the power to remove it all, out the weight and dark shadow of death was resting upon human souls, upon those He loved, and He felt it.

This expression, "He was troubled," is used three times. In John 12: 27, He says, "Now is My soul troubled." He had just been speaking of the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, that is, His own death, and feels it too, in its own solemn character, and was troubled – "And what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Then, in John 13:18, when He had said, "He that eateth bread with Me, hath lifted up his heel against Me, "He "was troubled in spirit." In each of those passages, it was soul-trouble in Christ, and in each passage, glory from God is the answer. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him — Son of Man here. "If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him."

He enters into the state of man, takes up both it and its consequences (as far as this world is in view), in His spirit before God. Oh how precious to Him were those groans of Jesus! His groans were according to God, and in sympathy with man. He enters into these various states. He troubled Himself, and said, "Where have ye laid him?" "Jesus wept." The people, talking from their point of view, say, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" It is all a mystery to them. They do not say, "Could He not have raised this man? but, Could He not have caused that this man should not have died?"

Verses 38-40. "Jesus therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" That is in connection with verse 4. How interesting and blessed, this answer from the Father, to all the dishonor that man was putting on Him, connecting Jesus with the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby! What rich reward there ever is in waiting for Him! It was a divine thought, that the Son of God should be glorified upon earth, and that without leaving His place at all. He is still the rejected Jesus, and what comes out? The Son of God glorified.

Verse 41. "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always." He was not surprised that the Father heard Him. His confidence in His Father was perfect.

Verses 42-44. "But because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me. And when He thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin." This is the answer. There was the Son of God glorified. He says, "Come forth -- he comes forth. Divine power was there. Yet He does it in dependence, that belongs to His perfection as Son of Man. "Loose him, and let him go." Resurrection life can never harmonize with bondage, but with perfect and holy liberty. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of liberty and holiness.

Verses 45-48. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." The Pharisees owned the miracles, but that was all, their hearts and consciences were not affected. Some think it a wonderful thing when they have demonstrated, as they suppose, the truth of the miracles of Christ; but mere conviction as to miraculous power, does not lead the soul to God. They owned them here, but it has no effect whatever. Nothing could be more terrible than their state.

Then Caiaphas prophesies. It was just like Balaam of old. There is an instance of the Holy Ghost using a man that was no better than the dumb ass, as to his relation to Christ. There we see the difference between a man being sealed by the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost using him as an instrument.

Verse 48. "If we let Him thus alone, all will believe on Him, and the Romans will come and will take away both our place and our nation." They were all under the power of the Romans, but were allowed privileges, as all the nations conquered by the Romans were. They were sometimes allowed great privileges, and they were afraid that the Romans would take them away.

Verses 53, 54. The result of the Pharisees council was, that "from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews: but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples." Ephraim, a town near the desert; and Bethany, a mountain village on the far side of the mount of Olives, on the slope descending towards the Jordan, are the last tarrying-places on earth of the Man of sorrows.

This is a very wonderful chapter, containing such a blessed revelation of His Person, in answer to all that they had been doing. This at the end, after all the rejection and hatred, and while Christ is on earth, and all His outward place unchanged. The man was there, stinking in the grave. Christ has only to say to him, "Come forth," and he comes forth.

We find the same in the other passages, where He is seen as Son of David and Son of Man.

Chapter 12

The Lord was not at home, evidently, in Jerusalem. It must have been a dreadful place to Jesus, at the end of His earthly mission, when every one and every thing was stamped with its true character. Its past glory, and present captivity and shame, its place in God's counsels as the center of His earthly dominion, were all known to Him. The throne of God had been there, the glory itself had dwelt in the midst of it. All its wondrous history, one cannot doubt, was before the Lord's mind, and He, its glorious King, where was He? The Idumean was sitting upon His throne, the Romans were in power in Emmanuel's land.

How unceasingly all the beautiful feelings of His holy soul, all quick and delicate as they ever were, not as in others, blunted or perverted by sin, must have been outraged in witnessing its degradation, and thinking of its downfall! She came down wonderfully (Lam. 1:9). What exquisite pain to know and feel that now there was no hope! If thou hadst known, even thou, [the Sodom and Egypt of cities] at least in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes . . . because thou knewest not the season of thy visitation." Its holy places, even, were in the power of the enemy, on what single thing there could the eyes and heart of Jesus now rest? Yet Jehovah Himself had once said, "Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually" (2 Chron. 7:16).

He spake little of His own sorrows, but much of those of others. When He saw the city, He wept over it; but He taught in the temple, His feelings perfect, His zeal unbroken, His love unwearied. In Luke 21, speaking of the same time, it says, "In the daytime He was teaching in the temple; and at night, He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives, and all the people came early in the morning to Him in the temple for to hear Him" (vss. 37-38). The "Hope of Israel" was now, indeed, as a stranger in the land, and a wayfaring man, that turned aside, that He might not tarry in the beloved city, even for a night.

At the end of John 11, it says, He had gone away to a city called Ephraim near the desert, and now He is come to Bethany, a little mountain village, on the mount of Olives — there prepare Him a supper. The Bethany family was there, but it was not in their house; this, however, did not hinder Martha from serving, and this time she needed no one to help her; neither did the company keep Mary from His feet, and Lazarus was at the table with Him, the heart of each governed by His presence. What a blessed scene this supper, at Bethany — Jesus was there, and His friends; what a contrast to the former scenes! All is reverential love and interest in Him, which knew no bounds; was He not there?

The supper was made for Him, and then there was the sweet odor filling the house, and Lazarus; the trophy of His power over death, and witness of the manifestation of the glory of God, was at table with Him.

But one was present whose whole moral being was out of harmony with all before him, his sympathies and tastes had never been formed by the teaching and power of Jesus (a spot in that

feast of love); he was near Him, saw Him, heard His word, but remained a stranger to the truth of His nature and character. Seared in conscience and hard of heart, he was the first and fittest to give expression to the piety of a worldly religionist — “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” To give to the poor would ensure a rich harvest of praise, even though the gift was with another's money; to spend it upon Jesus of Nazareth, the instincts of his nature told him, was simply loss in this world; and Satan himself had put this thought into his heart, as for himself, he was but a thief! There you have a sample of a great deal of the charity of this world. The devil acting upon a covetous, world-loving nature, he would keep what he could for himself, give perhaps a little to the poor, and obtain the world's favor in return. But Satan had not done with him yet; afterwards he put into his heart the thought of betraying Jesus. He obtained money more quickly by that means — thirty pieces of silver — and finally he enters into him! An awful history surely! Was not his presence a spot in that feast of love?

What a contrast to all this we have in the history of Mary! She, who had in heart and spirit laid hold of the true riches, receives a second time testimony from Jesus — “Against the day of My burying hath she kept this”; on the former occasion it was, “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” Her intelligence is awakened through her affections, the world, she feels, is against Him; for her He is the measure of the value of everything it contains. It is not without interest of a solemn character, that we find that whilst the odor of Mary's offering was yet filling the house, Judas was bargaining (Matt. 26) for thirty pieces of silver to betray the Lord! But who maketh thee to differ?

A great crowd of Jews came, not only because of Jesus, but, that they might see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead; but the chief priests seek to kill him also, because on his account many of, the Jews, went away and believed on Jesus. So they had cast out the blind man who had received sight. Their counsel was to destroy from off the earth both Jesus and His testimony.

Thus Satan raged, and thus thus the adversary advanced like the sea, wave succeeding wave. We had Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians, scribes, doctors, and now, at the end, the chief priests, hitherto in the background, and finally the Gentiles, in the person of Pilate. But all their rage could not prevent Jesus being glorified by God as His Son, wielding God's power over death itself; and that without changing His outward place and, being acknowledged by man on earth in every department of the future glory. The fruits of His testimony and work: on earth, too, must be seen and tasted, anticipatively. Already, manifested as Son of God, He takes His place at Bethany in the midst of His disciples, their Center and Object; the risen Lazarus at the table with Him; Martha serving; Mary anointing His feet; communion, service, worship.

Verse 12. A great crowd of Jews go forth to meet Him as He entered Jerusalem, and hail Him as the King of Israel (David's Son), coming in the name of the Lord. “Hosanna” (Save now), they say (Psa. 118). Thus far we have a foreshadowing of His glory in His relationship with the church and the Jews (Israel). A third relationship we come to presently. But remark how powerless were all the efforts of the enemy to hinder these testimonies to the glories of Jesus. They would fain have killed Lazarus; but not a hair of his head could they touch while his testimony to Jesus glory was needed. The testimony spread everywhere; verse 9, “A great crowd of the Jews”; verse 17, the crowd that was with Him when He raised Lazarus from the grave bore Him testimony; verse 18, “Therefore also the crowd met him, because they had heard”; in each of these verses the word is

“crowd.” In verse 12, we have also the expression, a great crowd, “when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,” and so on. See also Luke 21:38, “All the people came early in the morning to Him in the temple for to hear Him.” Many went up out of the country, too, before the Passover, and then sought for Jesus.

We find also, in the beginning of the Lord’s service, the same interest everywhere awakened. (See Mark 1:37, 45; 3:7, 20, 32; 5:1, and more). These opposers must learn that the weakness of God is stronger than men. “Perceive ye,” say the Pharisees, “how ye prevail. nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him.” It is always so when God works. If all the leaders of the nation had been in favor of the testimony, could it have spread as it did when all were against it? I believe not. Even in the last effort of human enmity, when with wicked hands they took and killed the Prince of life, they were but accomplishing the purpose of God. “For in truth against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou hadst anointed, . . . to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel had determined before should come to pass.” Howbeit, they thought not so!

It was just the same with regard to His birth in this world. Caesar Augustus had made a decree that a census should be made of all the world, but it did not take effect until Cyrenius had the government of Syria, and each person was to go to his own city to be inscribed. This was the way the purpose of God relative to the time and place of Jesus birth was to be accomplished. The great emperor was but an instrument in the hand of God, for the accomplishment of His purposes.

Verse 20. “And there were certain Greeks among those who came up that they might worship in the feast.” Now the Gentiles will form one part of the glorious earthly kingdom of the Son of Man. “Righteous and true are Thy ways, O King of nations. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and do homage before thee; for Thy righteousnesses have been made manifest” (Rev. 15:3, 4, JND.).

Did not Jesus know that it was of Him that it was written (Dan. 7:13, 14), that He was to be the glorious Administrator of that everlasting dominion? The government was to be upon His shoulder, of the increase of that government and peace, no end. Already one part of Isaiah 42, “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street, a bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench,” had had its accomplishment in His position and walk (Matt. 12:18-21). He was to show judgment to the Gentiles. He would rule over them, and in His name would they hope, which would be accomplished in His second advent; that reign was to come. It was of Jehovah’s chosen Servant and Beloved One, in whom His soul was well pleased, that this was said — no lifting up His voice in the street till the time of victory came. In the meantime, always only victorious, He neither failed nor was discouraged. He suffered, it is true, but He overcame even the world itself. The history of the professing church is the converse of this; it has ceased to suffer, and the world is its overcomer.

Was not all this present to His spirit when the Gentiles were announced — the day of glory come, when as Son of Man He shall be glorified; for in this character He takes the kingdom. But with this thought of glory — “Now is the Son of Man glorified” — was immediately associated that of death. Without that, where was the kingdom of the Son of Man? And were lost sinners to be the co-heirs of the King of glory, or who were to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father? No, abiding alone, the everlasting gates would doubtless have lifted up their heads to let the King of glory in, but where would be His followers then? And what of the oil of gladness, wherewith He

was to be anointed above His fellows in the day of victory? (Psa. 45).

The Gentiles always have their place, as such, in Scripture, until the everlasting state, when distinctive names disappear; and we read of the tabernacle of God being with men, as such, and God dwelling with them. When Christ was born, the angels had announced God's delight in men — He has His way in the end. By what a path it has been reached, the sufferings and glories of Jesus! So, the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, to bring forth much fruit. The Scriptures must be fulfilled, Jesus must die; but if the corn of wheat dies, how abundant the fruit, filling heaven and earth to their utmost bounds!

"The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." It is as if He said, "All the elements of the glory are passing before Me." He dies, and goes to heaven, and sits on the Father's throne till His enemies are subjected unto Him; in the meantime, a more ancient counsel is being accomplished — the heavenly church gathered out.

But if the state of man — of the world — is such that He must die, and this is connected with the judgment of this world, what is the value of life in it? We have got a measure for that, unknown before, in His death; how little this is taken up by the saints! yet few things are more serious, whether viewed from the Lord's side, or that of His saints. Then He teaches us that service to Him is realized in following Him; but this would naturally involve death; and so in another place he says, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The rewards of service are, to be where He is, not merely as to place, but including position also, as other scriptures teach us; and honor from His Father for service to Himself. Were ever such incentives to devotedness presented to the heart of man? And what is service which is not rendered consciously to Himself?

He is training the disciples for service; let us mark the time and scene and elements of instruction. The hour of His glorification, and also of His soul's trouble, was come; was there ever an hour like that? Rejected by man, and in that rejection the world judged; what must be the consequence of living in it? What else but to lose life in it (life in this world), and not keep it "unto life eternal"? Thus the conscience would be awakened, and the heart, detached from the love of this poor condemned world, would be drawn to Him who died for us in love. The world was already judged, and then if any man served Him (it was a matter of the heart and spiritual leading), the encouragement and rewards were with the Father and the Son. Honor from the Father, and to be where Jesus is. What encouragement for the heart of the good and faithful servant to continue in his work!

As to the expression, "love his life in this world," suppose a man who, while in the habit of speaking of religious things, showed that his mind was on earthly things, his life governed by, and rooted in, the things of this world, would you not say of such an one, "He loves his life in this world"? And mark the expression, "this world," how often repeated; "life in this world"; "judgment of this world"; "prince of this world"; "depart out of this world"; and the Lord's words (John 17), "The world has not known Thee." "Now is My soul troubled," that is all that this world brought to the soul of Jesus,

He fully tried and tasted

Its bitterness and woe.

Yet that was not even a shadow (His rejection by man) of the sorrow which none could share, His being forsaken by God. No, He would not say, "Father, save Me from this hour," while permitting us to know that His soul was troubled. "Father, glorify Thy name," uttered in the shadow of the cross, as it were, is but the completion of the thought formed in the brightness of the eternal glory — "I come . . . I delight to do Thy will, O My God." He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

He says, in verse 27, "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?" This is soul-trouble. He says nothing of that when He is talking of the corn of wheat; then He refers to others also — "much fruit" -- but now He speaks of Himself.

It was part of His piety to fear death; "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 from death, and was heard for His piety." He feared death as a man, a holy man, and did not play the part of a hero, who is often most heroic when he has succeeded best in hiding his fears. But this holy and incomparable Man feared death as God's judgment of sin, a sinless Sufferer enduring it for the sake of others, as One who would go through everything that God might be glorified. Now people are trying to hide the real character of death everywhere. The graveyards are converted into pleasure grounds, that one may forget that beneath lie the remains of those who once were as they are, now sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness. Indeed, to hide from his own sight, and from the eye of God, were it possible, his own state, whether in life or in death, has been man's great effort from the beginning; it suits him to hide, because he is of the darkness.

But Christ is a Revealer, the Light itself, as He is going to tell them. Only those who, by the grace of God, are now light in Him, reject the hidden things of shame, occupied with the manifestation of the truth, His life in them coming out as light. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." It is not that anything came in between His soul and God, whose glory was reflected there, considering Him merely on the human side, if this were possible. What death means, His appreciation of it, we have in the words, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour": The anguish of His soul comes out. In Gethsemane He was in an agony, and sweat great drops of blood. So here, His soul is troubled, but it all merges in, "Father, glorify Thy name, reminding us of, "I thank Thee, O Father" (Matt. 11:25); words uttered when His rejection was evident.

"Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (vs. 28). It is just as in John 11, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." And I believe that was in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. 6:4). If you look at a dead body, you feel that God's power alone can raise it. The people thought various things; some said that it thundered, others said, "An angel spake to Him."

Verses 30-50. Now we are coming to the end of His service in the world. In the first part of this chapter He seems wholly passive, the blessed object of the affections and attentions of others. Here He feels that the hour of His trouble and of His glorification has come; and first addressing the Father, He gives forth His final testimony on earth. He does not take up classes of the people, as in Matthew, it is His final testimony among men. There are three things that , it. First, the judgment of this world; then, "now shall the prince of this world be cast out"; and, "I, if I be lifted up

from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” This is not dealing with particular classes in Israel, but the summing up of several great results of His work on the cross. So, in John 16, you get the result of the coming of the Holy Ghost; what His presence on earth demonstrates; here the result of Christ’s work on the cross. “Now is the judgment of this world.” The “now” took in, of course, the hour of the cross.

Now look at John 16, as to the presence of the Holy Ghost (vs. 7), “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. “Bring demonstration,” it should be (see New Trans.); it does not mean “convince,” for that word supposes a work of the Holy Ghost in the conscience, but His presence will prove the world guilty of sin. “Of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” You will note two things; first, the result of Jesus work (John 12): this world judged; the prince of this world cast out; and the drawing of all men unto Him. Secondly, the presence of the Holy Ghost would be the demonstration of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Christ was no longer here, He had gone up in righteousness, the only righteous Man, and because of righteousness He had gone up to glory. The hope of righteousness is glory. “Thou lovest righteousness, . . . therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Psa. 45).

“Of sin” — because if they had believed on Him, He would have been sitting on the throne of His father David; instead of that, the Holy Ghost would be here. Sin in them; righteousness in Christ. The judgment of Satan, the prince of this world, is connected with the glorification of Jesus, and presence of the Holy Ghost. (Read Psa. 68:18). It is a solemn thing to think that, as far as the world, as such, is concerned, the presence of the Holy Ghost only brings the demonstration of its judgment. Neither the first advent, nor the presence of the Holy Ghost, affects its condition; the second advent will do that. The Spirit they would not receive, because they could not see Him. “Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.” Christ could not have broken the bands of death, apart from the overthrow of Satan’s power. But when the Lord Jesus rose from death, then Satan was judged. He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, and annulled, at the same time, the power of death. This was victory indeed.

Three judicial dealings yet await Satan. He is to be cast out of heaven, where he had acted as adversary and accuser of the brethren, already cast out, for faith, as to the power he exercised over the heart and conscience of men. Then he is to be bound with a chain, and cast into the bottomless pit; and finally, at the end of the millennium, having been loosed for a little while, he is cast into the lake of fire. Think of the contrast between this and all that we have had hitherto! It was the Lord that had been cast out and rejected, all His rights denied. It was man’s day then, and not yet the Lord’s. Now, for faith, it is all reversed morally: “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven”; and the power of the Spirit is present; when we get on to Revelation, the thing is actually accomplished; Jesus comes from heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords, and Satan is put into the bottomless pit.

Verse 31. "Now is the judgment of this world." People do not believe that — that the world is judged is explained away, and also the solemn truth that man is already lost. They say, "If you continue to do so-and-so, you will be lost." But God says man is lost already. It is a most solemn revelation, because you get the judgment of the world and its prince inseparably connected.

What a wondrous hour this was! if we consider it as extending to the cross itself, beginning with, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." And in John 17, "Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son." What mighty thoughts were filling the soul of Jesus in that hour! That His name was to be great among the Gentiles, His Spirit in the prophets had long since foretold; but first there was to be the moral glory of the cross (John 13:31, 32), and then glory with His Father — God glorified in Him and He in God. Even His being lifted up on the cross is a thought of glory, for there He would be the great attractive object for "all men" — "will draw all men unto Me." And when He speaks of dying, it is with no thought of sorrow, but that like the corn of wheat, which, when it dies, yields much fruit, so the Son of Man, having reached the glory by the path of death, might not be alone, become, when ascended, Head of the assembly, His body, united to Him by the Holy Ghost, and "First-born among many brethren."

Yet was His soul troubled — no note of sympathy from those who heard His expression of it — His words were few, and the feeling seemed to merge in the yet deeper one: "Father, glorify Thy name." It was necessary for the unfolding of His perfections that the fact of His soul-trouble should appear and be recorded, else one might have failed in realizing that it was the Son of Man who was so calmly unfolding such mighty events — Himself the Disposer of them — the judgment of this world; the casting out of its prince; and the result of the final act of his armies, led on by the power of darkness, being the drawing of all men unto Him. In the words of Psalm 8, we might say, "Lord, what is man," that could claim all that these words imply in the day of His humiliation and rejection! Man on earth, the Conqueror of Thine enemy and Glorifier of Thy name, as in heaven the Sitter upon Thy throne, set over all the works of Thy hands!

With regard to the expression, "abideth alone," (John 12:24) the Lord, while on earth, was necessarily, alone. Before He could have His spiritual body, He must be in heaven as its Head, redemption being accomplished, and the Holy Ghost down here to unite the members to the Head in heaven.

Verse 34. "The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest Thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? who is this Son of Man?" From this passage we learn how little they knew of their own Messiah, a people perishing from lack of knowledge; yet to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises. Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, "who is over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:4-5). Yet the most prominent facts concerning Him in Scripture were all unknown. His humiliation in connection with His exaltation, His face so marred; the sorrows that characterized Him, "tormented for our transgressions"; the bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows; the healing with His stripes; in a word, whatever in His life and death had been revealed in the law and prophets, as ordered for God's glory and suited to man's need, had been hidden from the people — the connection of the sufferings and the glories absolutely unknown. Take for instance, "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek . . . out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in

Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” “And he shall stand and rule in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth” (Mic. 5). Compare with this profound ignorance on the part of the Jewish people, the actual knowledge of Christ in His present relations to the church and the world as Man glorified — the second Man — possessed even externally by professing Christians, and I do not think that the difference will be very considerable.

In the thought that the Christ should abide for ever, sin and its judgment were ignored! But where was the priest? “for his lips should keep knowledge, and they [the people] should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” This is what the Lord of hosts said of them by His servant — “Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble . . . ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi” — they were despisers of His name — “Unto you, O priests, that despise My name” (Mal. 2:8). In the Apostle John’s day, it was the same generation — the priests were confederate against the Lord.

Then, of His glorious character as Son of Man, in which title He receives the dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all nations should serve Him, an everlasting dominion which should not pass away (Dan. 7), they knew no more, it would appear, than of a suffering Christ, in the next chapter but one, of the same prophet; “Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing.”

But it was too late to talk of these glorious titles which imply relationship with men — the throne of God at Jerusalem, or “the kingdom of the world”, when He has His earthly rights and glories. The people were in darkness, the darkness of moral death, yet the Light was still with them, they might yet believe before it left them for its own regions; and remark, He does not say now, “Light of the world.” It was all over with the world — He had come as Light into it. It is no question here of any national or ecclesiastical standing or responsibility, but one of light and darkness, of the reception or rejection of One present as Light. They might at least have said, “What is light?” as Pilate inquired, “What is truth?” there was some sign of conscience there, but here all is silent as the grave, The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Their eyes were blinded, their heart hardened, that they might not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and He should heal them. It appears that the people whom the Lord addressed here, were the same generation, morally, as those addressed by Isaiah, in the message of the Lord, when He saw His glory. Compare also Paul’s address to the Jews, who visited him in His lodgings at Rome (Acts 28), “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet” and Matthew 13:14-15. I think the Lord had Isaiah 6 in His mind in that scene in John 9:39. “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.” We see that there is such a thing as being given over judicially to moral blindness in this world.

Thus the characteristics of that generation are all before us. Their eyes were blinded, their hearts hardened; “they loved glory from men rather than glory from God”; “they loved life in this world”; they believed not on Jesus — yet the glory (Jesus) was loath to leave them. It had already departed, and hidden itself behind the dark clouds of their unbelief; but once more, before it shines as Sun of righteousness, it rose upon the horizon as Light. “I am come as light into the world” — a Light, and not a Judge. Who that had really seen it could abide in darkness?

Verses 49, 50. "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." Moreover, the commandment that He had received from the Father (to speak as commanded) embraced His whole testimony on earth; the words were the Father's words, the reception of the testimony was life eternal. Thus His final testimony to them closes with the glorious truth, that Life and Light are found only in Christ.

Chapter 13

The whole scene is changed now. The Lord's work in the world is all over, the final testimony given, except the words He spoke when He stood before the governor and before the high priest. He witnessed before Pilate the good confession, and did not conceal from the high priest that He was the Messiah, Son of God. He had completely done with the world, as He said in John 12:31

"Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." So it was all over with the world, and His service in it. He is leaving a condemned world. I was speaking some time ago of a godly clergyman, who, when he was dying, said he was leaving a ruined church and a condemned world. But here we have the first announcement of this judgment of the world, from the lips of Jesus Himself, in connection with that of His professing people. How sweet and precious the sympathy of His spirit!

So the Lord is leaving a condemned world and a ruined nation, which had had the testimony of God. We also are leaving a condemned world, and a ruined church. Looked at on the side of profession and responsibility, the church has not continued in the goodness of God, and must therefore undergo judgment (Rom. 11). The faith is being given up, and the truth as to the Person of Christ assailed and denied; the judgments that are to come upon the corrupt and lifeless profession seem to be no longer far off; and the Holy Ghost is bringing before the hearts and minds of the saints the coming of Christ (Morning Star) to take us to the place He was going to prepare for us (John 14:1-3), and for which He was, in a sense, preparing us, in this chapter 13, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Thus we can see the similarity between the then and present condition of things. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in his holy temple. "The Lord's throne is in heaven," that is most true; but there is another truth which meets us here, "The firm foundation of God stands" (2 Tim. 2:19). The foundation is as firm as the throne itself; we have the foundation — the truth — on earth, the throne in heaven, our refuge and our strength. In our day, too, the testimony is being given up. Jude exhorts to contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints; the faith means Christian truth (Christianity), the subject-matter of faith. To contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, is to contend for the subject-matter of the faith, the truths peculiar to Christianity "-- life and immortality, "for instance; the revelation of the Father; with other precious truths.

If the saints were to contend for it in that day, it will give us some idea of where we are now. The progress of evil has not stopped one moment since then, though there have been revivals through God's grace. Protestantism was a great revival. In the middle ages, even, there were persons who read Paul's epistles, and were called Paulites, which was a revival of truth in the Roman Catholic Church itself.

It is remarkable the way the Lord talks of "this world." In John 12:25, He says: "He that hateth his life in this world"; and in verse 31, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out"; and in John 13:1, "Knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out

of this world.” This world was evidently in the Lord’s mind a terrible place. He could not stay here. The Apostle John says, “All that is in the world . . . is not of the Father”; and, “The whole world lies in the wicked one.” In John 12 we get the revelation of its judgment, as of a hopelessly evil thing. So He says further on, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee” (John 17). That was a terrible thing. The Lord was bringing the world before the Father, not as the gracious Father, or Father of mercies, but He simply presents the world that would not know Him to the righteous Father; leaving it under judgment, and without intercession.

Verse 1. “Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world” — this is the leading thought now, He is about to depart out of this world. It has been said, and it is quite true, that God did not make this world we are living in — in the moral sense, “this present evil world.” He made the material earth and sea. We live in a world of lost sinners. The devil made that, and not God; he brought in the alienation and ruin and apostasy. In the Lord’s mind, the world and its prince go together. The judgment of the one involves the judgment of the other. “Out of this world” — so He had done with it! All this is brought out doctrinally in Paul’s epistles, in connection with the new order of things founded upon Christ’s death and glorification with the Father, and the presence of the Holy Ghost. The Lord brings out the all-important facts with their necessary and immediate bearing upon the moral state of the disciples.

The world was condemned because it did not receive the Lord, its rejection of Christ necessarily involved its own judgment. “If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.” This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

With the Spirit of God was given the full revelation of the mind of God, concerning the death, departure to the Father, and glorification of Jesus, with the glorious results — present and future — in heaven and on earth. His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father. It does not say He is going to heaven, but to the Father. What sweet consolation for His blessed spirit, wearied as He must have been of this sinful world, but not weary of service in it, this thought of departing out of it to the Father! Few subjects in this wonderful gospel are more interesting than this departing of Jesus out of this world to the Father. In chapter 3, it was One coming out of heaven, the Son of Man which is in heaven; there, the difference between heavenly and earthly things was in question; here, this world and the Father are in opposition. His love to His own had borne every strain — no faults or failings on their part, nor malice of Satan against them, had altered the affections of Jesus. His love to them was as victorious as His faithfulness to God when the world stood against Him. “I have conquered the world,” He says farther on. The adversary would have brought the world into His heart, and thus have separated Him from God. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. The accuser would have pleaded the unworthiness of the saints, to turn away His affections; but Jesus both conquered the world, and loved His own which were in it — even unto the end.

Verse 3. “He was come from God and went to God,” and He went as He came; not a spot nor a stain from conflict with evil, in the light of victory over the power of darkness, to bring new glory to the throne of God, and fresh delight to the Father’s heart. The moral glory in which He departed, what mind can take it in! But there was One who could, who said unto Him, “Sit Thou at My right

hand,” “Jehovah said unto my Lord [Adon, name of power applied to the risen Man], Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” — and God made Him — that is, the risen Man, Jesus of Nazareth, both Lord (the Adon of Psa. 110). and Christ. These were the glories that first awaited Him: the place at the right hand on the throne of God; and Lord (Man invested with power); and Christ (Anointed Man); made such in heaven.

Elsewhere the Holy Ghost gives us an outline of His way of coming into the world and going on to the end, as here of His departure out of it — not a step in the path is, or could be omitted. How He emptied Himself as God, and humbled Himself as Man; how He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. His sorrows and conflicts, and how He drank of the brook by the way, are not given here (Phil. 2); but merely how He descended from glory on high, and the answer to it all. Here in the gospel of John we have the character in which He departed out of it. The One whom man rejected, who was cut off and had nothing, in everything and everywhere personally victorious; the Destroyer of Satan, the Glorifier of the Father, the Lover of His people, all this we get in John. You may read the passages that give us this in John, along with Philippians 2. You will find glory answering to glory, and suffering nothing from the comparison, from whichever side you begin (Phil. or John); for all was equal in Jesus.

Well, but was not this a glorious way to depart out of this world? We see that He did not fail, neither ways discouraged. But what of the other side? He was nearing that now. Did He not often think of what awaited Him there from His Father’s heart and hand? Did He read Psalm 110 as we do? “Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” Could He have been unconscious of the glories that waited for Him? We know that for the joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame.

Let us look at a few of these honors, as belonging to Him, they feed our souls. Those I refer to give us His position as risen Man, the Psalm quoted reveals Jehovah seating Him as Man at His right hand on His own throne. In Acts 2, God has made this same Jesus Lord (the Adon of Psa. 110), and Christ (Anointed Man). This is God’s present answer to those who rejected Him; but there is one glory wanting to complete the picture of this present position as exalted Man. In Philippians 2, we have seen Him coming, as it were, out of heaven into the world, and the manner of it — -emptying Himself, humbling Himself, and becoming obedient to the death of the cross. Then, as before, God answers the claims of such service by His exaltation, and then, which is peculiar to this chapter, and beyond measure interesting, He takes up the name (Jesus) by which He was known in His humiliation amongst men, which contains in itself a mystery, like the truth of His Person, it being His human name, and at the same time signifying, “Jehovah the Savior,” implying clearly that He was a divine Person, the angel also explaining it: “for He shall save His people from their sins.” God gives Him this very name in heaven as a name of surpassing glory; that at that name — once so familiarly known — and known only to meet with hatred and scorn amongst men “every knee should bow, of heavenly, and earthly, and even of infernal beings, and every tongue confess Jesus Christ Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

What a glorious answer on God’s part to the despisers and rejecters! The rejected One at the right hand on the throne of God in heaven, invested as Man with Lordship and Messiahship there, and the name He was known by in His humiliation given to Him again in heaven (as the titles “Lord” and “Christ” had been), as the great name at which every knee must bow. Lord and Christ, and

Jesus, these positions, and the name given to Him in heaven, designate the wondrous Man now sitting at the right hand of God. He comes into the world, emptying Himself, humbling Himself, and obeying; He departs out of it the Conqueror of the world, Destroyer of Satan, the Glorifier of God. In each of these "lines" of "truth" the "soul" recognizes "Him" as "pre-eminent" and unapproachable, infinitely glorious as Man, and its own food and delight for evermore.

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That is just what you might expect. How could He cease to love them — infinitely weak, too, in themselves, and objects of the malice of the enemy? Satan had sought to get in and hinder. The Lord says to them elsewhere, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." That is, the whole company; and He says to Peter, "I have prayed for thee." So, in Colossians 2:4, you can see Satan was coming in; "This I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." There Paul, in the spirit of his Master, is loving and guarding the saints. The apostle is contemplating the outburst of satanic power in the church; and Satan will always have the ready agents of his power in evil, so long as this present evil world lasts. So it says, "The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" The broad spiritual meaning of that is, one acting in the power and mind of Satan, Satan himself is an Amalek. Satan may attack, but it is all in vain, when Christ loves, whether the object be an individual saint or the church. "He loved them unto the end" — on to the end of His service on earth. He had kept them, and guarded them, and now He is going to tell us how He loves His saints to the end of their sojourn in the world, how He would keep them, and by what means.

Verses 2-3. And supper being ended ["during supper," is the meaning, of it], the devil having now put into the heart, of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God." That is a wonderful position for man, first revealed in Jesus, and in all its reality others are brought into it by grace and redemption, We, learn how, after the cross, and when He had breathed upon them the Holy Ghost, He said, "My God. and your God, My Father; and your Father" (John 20); thus connecting them with Himself, by grace, in His relationship as Man to God. You find in Christ that the most lowly acts are the necessary outflow of His glorious nature. "He could not be hid," because "the light shines."

"Knowing that the Father had given, all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God he riseth, from supper." That is, in all the consciousness of His own personal relation in every way to God. "He was come from God, and went to God," and the Father had given Him all things: He is always in full consciousness of His relation to God and His Father. Yet it is a Man who gives expression to these glorious thoughts. In Revelation 21, it says the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God. There is no more glorious thought than that, The glorified saints had been with God all through the millennial reign, and now come forth from God.

Verse 4. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." Then He begins to wash the disciples feet. You see what a new scene it is. There are no Pharisees here, or Sadducees, it is all between the Lord and the disciples, and all in connection with the place He was going to He was going there, and would have us there with Himself in due time. Then He comes to Simon Peter, and Peter was

by no means prepared for such blessing as this. "Thou shalt never wash my feet," he says. And this was simply the pride of self-ignorance affecting humility; but the thoughts of his heart would ere long be fully revealed, even to Peter himself, by the word of God, living and operative, and not less so surely when proceeding from the mouth of Jesus Himself.

It is deeply interesting and instructive to consider the history of this man, to whom the Lord committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Did not the Lord know the character of the man He was taking up? He makes no mistakes. He knew that this vessel of election was just as capable as that other one, whose calling was from heaven, for the work allotted to him: but that in him, as in all, there must be first the emptying, and then the filling. What though the utmost grace and patience were needed in the Teacher; was ever teacher like Jesus?

Let us look at some of Peter's ways, always rash, equally ignorant of his Master's character, and of his own weakness (Matt. 16:21-23). "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." "Savorest" means, "Thou thinkest, thy mind is not on the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Yet the Lord, knowing everything, took up this man to form him and fit him for service to Himself, and to give him a glorious place in the kingdom. It was natural love made him say it; thinking the things that be of men. I am often awake to the consciousness that I am thinking the things that be of men, things nice perhaps in themselves, but quite contrary to the present thoughts of Jesus. Thus, in seeking to spare one's self, or the fleshly feelings of a saint, one might easily become a very Satan (adversary), running directly counter to the thoughts of Jesus, who had to break down the flesh, to replace it with something from Himself. So, in imitating what holy men of God have done in former times, people often become Satans — adversaries, for that is what it means. The Israelites had to kill people to inherit the land, but if we killed anyone it would be a heinous sin. The Lord meant that he had that thought from Satan. Peter must have known very well the Lord loved him.

Verse 6. "Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" Peter thought it was really great humility, his resisting the Lord's gracious movement. "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" (vss. 7-8). There is the point, he could not be with Him in glory unless He washed his feet. It is very remarkable that the man the Lord chose to entrust with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, should never have shown the least intelligence as to his Master's ways. But he had neither the Holy Ghost, nor the knowledge of redemption, practically also the Word of God was a sealed book to him. His understanding was yet to be opened. Here we have all the elements of his then state; a quickened soul, and the divine Person before it, sustaining it in its weakness, everything else wanting. In Luke 24:45, it says, "He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures," and He opened the scriptures to the understanding given. They did not understand the scriptures before that. When the Holy Ghost came, a few days after that, Peter leads them all, quoting the scriptures intelligently. They were very much like thousands of people that are born again, but do not understand redemption. I believe numbers of Christians

are not sealed by the Holy Ghost; they love the Lord, they fear eternal judgment, but they do not know they are redeemed, they hope they may be.

The Lord says, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." If I wash thee not, thou hast no part "with Me." That is a very important thing. No part with Christ in glory. The washing of regeneration is an act done for all eternity, but feet-washing has to be repeated every day of our lives. It is actual sin if we have a thought of sin. If I have to do with a great deal of what is unpleasant in you, or you with me, one's own nature comes out. You might feel indignant, and the indignation quickly pass into anger. As Moses says, "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" — takes things into his own hands, sinned, and so lost the present enjoyment of Canaan. It may be my duty to take up sin in another, or in an assembly. If I get excited about it, it is sin. It might not be a great sin, and it is not like a man willfully playing into Satan's hands. But the simple fact is, one cannot touch defilement without becoming defiled one's self, no matter how pure the intention; if it was only touching the bone of a dead man, the water of separation must be sprinkled (Num. 19:16-19).

The priests washing their hands and feet signifies that they could not go about the things of God unless they were practically holy (Ex. 30:19-21). We shall never come into judgment, but there are defilements that every saint of God contracts. If you think an ungodly thought, though you may have resisted it, it is sin, for if you had been walking with God, the thought would not have got in. If we knew more of the character of God, and what holiness means, we should be very sensitive.

This is a figure of what He does from heaven, He intercedes for us there, and the Spirit of God in His action in us responds. The Holy Ghost applies the Word; whoever may be the instrument, it is the washing of water by the Word. "He that is washed" — regeneration can never be repeated, it is not needed — no question of blood here, though everything is founded on it. When you see a saint on his knees, confessing his sins, it is the result of Christ's intercession for him, and the Holy Ghost's action on his soul. I used to think that if I went to the Lord, He would intercede for me, and the Father would come forward and forgive me, but it is a far deeper thing. We should never be confessing our sins, but as the result of His praying for us, and this is most precious grace, let us remember it. "He that is washed," is not the same word as "to wash his feet." It means the washing of regeneration, a new nature. The apostle says, "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It does not mean washing with blood. Looked at on the side of the new nature, he is always clean. The other word means, "to wash one's hands or feet." It is only to wash our feet with us. In Israel, before perfect grace was revealed, man was on the ground of responsibility.

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" — we should have no part with Him in the place He is in now. It shows what a serious thing it is in the eyes of Christ. The Lord takes note of all these things. He follows them out to their full end and results. If He did not wash our feet we could not be Christians at all. Suppose I was perfectly careless, and did not care whether my feet were washed or not, it would show I was not a Christian at all. When we think of the holiness of His nature, it wakes us up to holiness. It is interesting to see how, in connection with His own departure out of it, He is drawing the saints in heart and affection away from this world He was leaving, and we know He is coming again to take us entirely out of it. "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4).

The advocacy in John's epistle is His intercession where we have failed, but the priesthood in Hebrews 4 is for infirmity. If we are weak, and the power of Satan comes in, we are to come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need; but when we have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Verse 9. "Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." He is a man of an ardent spirit, but ignorant of the truth. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." He was an ardent soul, but a man merely having strong affections is more liable to get into mischief than a man who has no affections at all. Peter followed afar off, and went into the palace of the high priest, and sat by the fire; but people who did not care would not have gone in. So that is where natural affection brought him.

It is a wonderful thing to think that the head of the apostles should have always gone wrong. See Luke 22:31, 32: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." "Restored" — it does not mean "converted," in the evangelical sense. His fall was to be the means of strengthening him. But, till a man has been bruised and broken to pieces, he is no good for service. "And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death" (vs. 33). Just as usual — self-ignorant. We really cannot get on in this state. Till a man has learned himself, he cannot get on, cannot serve Christ. Then in verse 50, "One of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear." John tells us it was Peter. There you see the violent man. His self-ignorance "and unbrokenness we have noticed. He followed afar off — here is the coward; to violence and cowardice he now adds profaneness, he denied Him with an oath. It is thus that poor Simon, son of Jonas, comes out — by and by we shall see in Peter sweet traces of Him from whom his name was derived (Petros, Peter; Petra, the rock). "On this rock I will build," and so on (Matt. 16:18). We must be broken, must learn ourselves, or, in attempting to follow Christ, we shall only expose ourselves.

"The cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him . . . And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14:72). There is repentance. In John 21 there is self-knowledge, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He has lost all confidence in himself. There the saint comes out. He does not undertake to do anything. Now Christ will be glorified in him; the Lord says, "You are going to suffer martyrdom for Me." There are these three things: repentance, self-knowledge, and following his Master even unto death — a glorious career. It was Simon Bar-Jonas that drew back at the cross; it was Peter that was faithful even unto death.

Verses 12-15. "So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." But we must be very like Christ in trying to do that. For if I go to wash a failing saint's feet, and my own flesh is not subdued, what a terrible state of confusion would ensue. One must act in His spirit.

What a scene that was! There was Peter, wholly unbroken, the same kind of man we have been looking at in Luke. He had been already acting as an adversary, always looking at things from a human point of view. There is nothing more distressing to us when we become spiritual, than to see the saints thinking of earthly things. Then there was Judas — all that was weighing on the

spirit of the Lord. Meanwhile He was thinking of us all through our earthly course, how He would bring us through it!

In washing their feet, then, He has given us an example; blessed are they who follow the example of the Lord and Teacher! But not all who were there present were chosen; the scripture was to be fulfilled in the exceptional case of the betrayer, who lifted up his heel against Him — lifted up his heel against his divine Master, with whom he must so often have eaten bread. Continually in His company, yet never knowing Him; outwardly near, but inwardly and spiritually the chasm that subsisted between Jesus and him was immeasurable — in fact, was never crossed.

Nevertheless, whoever received one really sent by Jesus, received Himself — Judas should have been among the number. It may be that this was Jesus thought at that moment, for when He had thus said (vss. 20, 21), He was troubled in spirit. Every kind of sorrow the Lord was to taste, and so this special one of a false friend. And He said, “One of you shall betray Me.” The disciples want to know who it was. Peter feels that he who leaned upon the bosom of Jesus was most likely to know the secrets of that bosom. What a wonderful place of intimacy for mortal man! How profound the reverence which that intimacy produced! That which he listened to, looked upon, handled, of the Word of life, was the eternal Life which was with the Father.

The last act of Jesus towards Judas was one of gentle courtesy; He dipped the sop and gave it to him. Satan thought it was time to take possession of his victim, and entered into him — he went out, and it was night. The Light of the world would quickly leave it. When the wicked was before Him, He was troubled, but the trouble has given way before the sense of glory; the very cross is to be a scene of glory, the Son of Man glorified there! But this was moral glory. Well might the blessed apostle say, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”; and well may we in our day take up this boasting. God Himself was glorified in Him there, and would straightway glorify Him in Himself. The cross was a very different place from heaven; but the moral glory of Jesus was the same everywhere.

The disciples could no more follow the Lord than the Jews themselves; yet they had life with its instincts, and could love one another. When Jesus had passed through the dark waters, they might follow Him then; but Peter was quite ready to lay down his life for his Master’s sake! Within a few hours he would have thrice denied Him. It was only Simon, son of Jonas, that made the boast.

Chapter 14

“Let not your heart be troubled,” said He whose own heart, when He had comforted theirs, would be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And a step beyond that (the final one), there lay in the path of their divine Comforter the trouble, the shadow of which would have consumed them. The very shadow of the cross would have withered up mortal man, God entering into judgment with man about sin. “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.” But here was One who was going to bear the fire and wrath of God’s judgment against sin. The bloody sweat tells of the agony of His soul, in anticipation of that hour; when it came we know He met it with a calmness equal to that in which He addressed the disciples here, having gone through it first in spirit with His Father. How great the agony of Gethsemane, the bloody sweat, and the cry, “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me,” bear witness.

And this was all before Him, even at the door, during the progress of this wonderful discourse; yet was His spirit free in communicating these precious instructions and revelations, as though not even a shadow was to darken His path. To the last moment He is occupied in meeting the troubles of other hearts. He had just been washing their feet, and now He comforts their hearts in opening up scenes of rest, and we may add, of glory, too, in the Father’s house above.

“Let not your heart be troubled” — how sweet from Him at such a moment! “In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you.” Rest of heart they were to have, and peace, even His own peace, down here; but an abiding place in the Father’s house — “that rest secure from ill — prepared for tired pilgrims, and to go no more out,” gives the heart a fresh spring and an object in pressing forward. He knows what the heart needs, and gives accordingly. Who so restful as Himself amid the trials and conflicts of His life of service? and He, too, Man of sorrows, was comforted by that which lay beyond — “for the joy set before Him endured the cross,” and so on. Did He not appreciate the rest of the Father’s house, and the glory that awaited Him? Though for Him even the cross would be the realization of the highest moral glory, the vindication of God in regard to sin brought into His creation. John was the one to note this; he sees glory in the cross, and power in His dying even, an act of power — “He delivered up His spirit.” He was very near Him and loved Him, was the disciple whom Jesus loved; none seem to have envied him this place in Jesus affections.

It was surely from a loving human heart that the words of comfort came, yet from One who could link Himself with God in uttering them — “Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” He knew, in His path of obscurity and rejection, of sources and resources beyond man’s vision and reach: the Father’s house above; the Father Himself; the Holy Spirit as Comforter and Revealer — these He hastens to disclose. And then the secret of that path of life from which He had never swerved, how He had kept His Father’s commandments, and abode in His love; so that the prince of this world, when he came found nothing in Him.

But all this teaching of chapter 14 is for those who have accompanied Him thus far, and have seen Him about to leave a judged world for the Father’s house, whose hearts have been united to Him

on the way. It is this revelation which set them on their pilgrim path. A condemned world yields no resting-place. When a mansion below has become an object of desire, two things — and serious truths, too — have already faded from the mind: the judgment of this world, and the mansions (abodes) above. One is in the wilderness, deliverance from Egypt forgotten, and Canaan not in the thoughts. We can understand why judgment begins at the house of God. But one in this state is incapable of appreciating the truth before us. The state of soul needed to receive anything is formed by the ministration of suited truth. “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” The difficulty of entering that kingdom would touch the conscience as to the state that hindered. The thorns and briars of poverty hinder, and riches have the same effect; but faith, strengthened by the word, breaks through them all, and can sing along the way.

Verse 3. “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” The terms in which Paul gives his experience in Philippians 3 might serve for something like a response to love like this; he wanted to win Christ, know Him, reach Him, even in being made conformable to His death. Such, at least, was the beautiful response of His Spirit in the soul of one who truly loved Him. He wished to reach Him where He was, not bring Him down here. He will come with Him in the day of glory. But this is life in power, life governed by the objects God presents to faith.

The disciples had known Him after the flesh, and would fain have continued to know Him thus. How strangely the words, used on a later occasion, would have sounded in their ears: “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” But He was all things to them, and was now about to leave them, no wonder that sorrow filled their hearts, for it was His presence in the flesh that sustained them, and ministered to the nature of which they were already partakers. But this nearly describes their position. They were, indeed, born again, and that was nearly all that could be said of them — grace attaching them to His Person. Redemption unaccomplished, peace unknown, the Holy Ghost not come, the conscience not perfected, the Father unknown! the Father’s house unheard of, their hopes of His coming again vague and undefined (Matt. 24). Witness also their query in Acts 1: “Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” How hopeless their case, had Jesus left them without these precious instructions! Blessed Comforter of Thy people! that could not be. How important to understand the position and state of those whom Jesus addresses. They loved Him, but beyond that knew nothing and could do nothing.

It is blessed, too, to note that His own Person when absent, as the direct Object of faith, is the first word of comfort He presents to their sorrowing hearts. Henceforth their faith in Him absent, was to be like their faith in God, whom they had not seen; but they had felt no difficulty in that, and there were blessings for them of which they as yet knew nothing, dependent on His departure from them. There were many mansions (abodes) in the Father’s house, He told them, and He went to prepare a place for them; and the coming of the Holy Ghost was so important that it was expedient even on this account that He should depart, that He might send Him to them. But of all the consolations He would pour into their troubled hearts, was not this the sweetest — “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also”? And so we find them in the beginning waiting for the Son from heaven, “and the virgins (Christians) going forth to meet Him.”

In the meantime, they knew the way without being conscious of it. It was no longer a question of leading the sheep out of the Jewish fold, but of conducting the saints — the children — to the Father's house on high. But this blessed thought they little appreciated at the moment, for they knew not that in knowing Jesus they knew the Father also.

In Him, most perfectly express'd,

The Father's self doth shine.

But in everything they show themselves wholly unacquainted with, and unprepared for, this new path that led to the Father's house; but what was lacking for them, found its answer, as ever, in the glory of His own Person. Already we have seen that it was "I am" Himself in their midst; here He declares Himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that no one came to the Father but by Him: this was the present answer to their difficulty.

The Father once known, how dear to the soul the dwelling-places in His house! We have truth communicated in this way throughout the gospel; difficulties, trials, and sorrows become occasions for the manifestation of who He was. "I am," He says, "the way, and the truth, and the life"; as, a little while before, "I am the resurrection and the life"; and before that, "I am the Good Shepherd, laying down My life for the sheep" — for their sakes taking His place in death, yet in Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Equally for His people, whether in the grave, or in the Father's house preparing a place for them.

In earlier chapters, we have seen Him as the Life and the Light, and the Bread from heaven, and, as to position as Man, sanctified, sent, and sealed. In this last chapter, He comes out fully as Himself the Son, Revealer of the Father, and Sender of the Spirit. Neither His words nor His works proceeded merely from Himself, but revealed the Father, who abode in Him and did the works (vs. 10). Yet compare with this what He said John 8:25 (New Trans.), "I am what I say." His words, language, revealed Himself, as here the Father. How blessed this is! you cannot find the Father without finding the Son, nor the Son without the Father. "Believest Thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" — and the works that Jesus did, the believer should do also, and even greater works, because He went to the Father. In all this, He was leading them gently on to see the importance for them of His departure to the Father. They would not only do greater works (when He should have sent the Spirit), but whatever they should ask in His name (they had never done so yet), the Father would own that name when presented in faith.

What blessed teaching and comforting of the disciples! How gently He prepares them for a path that man had never trodden before! It was not revealed for "dwellers upon earth," but for pilgrims on their way to the mansions above. He must go before them too, that they might know the way, for they had not passed that way heretofore.

But to return for a moment to verse 3. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Fellowship is properly with persons, and not with truths. A truth may reveal a person to me, but fellowship is with a person. "That where I am, there ye may be also." Think of the patient grace that is never weary of opening out fresh sources of comfort for their troubled hearts! Very often, from our very familiarity with the word, the thoughts have lost their true import for our inattentive hearts.

Verse 6. “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” He wants to engage their attention, and open their minds about the way to the Father. The answer to this state of entire ignorance is found in the knowledge of the glory of His Person. It is Himself that is here — in which knowledge they were always coming short. He, and He only, was or could be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; this was in connection with His going to the Father out of this world. His coming into it, and His work in it, was as sanctified, sent, and sealed by the Father. We need to get these things definitely.

Verses 15-17. “If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Their love to Him would be shown in keeping His commandments, in this way they would approve themselves as really His own, by obedience, one of the qualities of the divine nature in man. How it shone out in Him we have seen; and further, He would obtain for them the Spirit, that He might abide with them forever, the expression of no passing favor, and the power by which they would realize all that appertained to them in their relationship to Him, as developed afterwards. They would understand and know the things given unto them to know and enjoy.

Verse 18. “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.” He would not leave them as orphans, but would come to them; first in person after He was risen, then in spirit, and finally in person from heaven. Their life (eternal) would be simply dependent upon its flowing from Him. How could they be more closely connected with Himself?

But to crown these blessings, they would know in that day that He was in the Father, and they in Him, and He in them. These were the secret blessings, flowing from the presence of the Holy Ghost, and while Jesus was on the Father’s throne, hid from the eyes of men, their life hid with Him in God.

It is well to observe the order; we in Him, and He in the Father. We are in Him who is our Life, and, according to the power of the Holy Ghost, He would make it known and enjoyed, “in that day ye shall know.” But the unity of the body, Paul’s doctrine, is not the subject here, but rather individual union (oneness), if that be a correct phrase; the word says, “in Him.” When the glory is manifested, the order is different, then it is the Father in Him and He in us, “that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.” Then He will glorify His saints, and make evident in glory what hitherto the world had refused to believe — the truth and character of His love to the saints. In the meanwhile, the world knows us not. Are we satisfied with the secret blessings? Do we all know them, or are any in danger of forgetting these things through neglect of communion?

Verse 21. “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them” — in keeping them it is that truth in the inward parts is realized — “he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father.” As in John 12, “If any man serve me, him will My Father honor. “Honored and loved of the Father for service and love to Himself! But these are results of holy diligence in service, and earnest love to Himself. We have come now upon the ground of the saint’s responsibility in service. In answer to Judas’s question, “How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” the Lord answers, “If a man love Me, he will keep My word” — not “words,” His testimony — “My Father will love him” — but further, and what He had not said before — “We will

come unto him, and make our abode with him,” His interest in Christ and His word met with a precious reward, and so it is always, we receive more than we asked for, the diligent shall be made fat.

These were His instructions while present with them, but the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in His name, as representing Him and acting for Him, would not only bring all things to their remembrance whatever He had said, but would teach them all things. Compare 1 John 2:20, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things”; and 1 Corinthians 2:15, “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.” Thus we see how knowledge and discernment in the saints are connected with the presence of the Holy Ghost, as, in Philippians 1, with the development of the divine nature in us, “That your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all intelligence.”

We have already had brief teachings about the Holy Ghost, expressed in beautiful figures; the wind from heaven that bloweth where it listeth, conveying life in its gales; the well of water springing up into eternal life; the river flowing from those who, being thirsty, had drunk for themselves of the fullness and glory of the Person of Jesus. Each beautiful figure implies the energy of life. The wind blows, the well springs, the river flows. It could not be otherwise.

But here figures are dropped, none are sufficient for the mighty truth, the personal presence of God the Holy Ghost on earth, when God the Son should have left it; and see the glorious way in which the truth is unfolded! Each Person in the Godhead is before us. The Father, in the name of the Son, sends the Holy Ghost. This, next to the first coming of Christ, is the most important for the church of all truths; while, of all truths, it is the least practically known. See how scripture speaks of Him when present on earth. The Spirit of life and of power, of truth and holiness, of sonship and unity. The power of every divinely formed relationship, as of all worship, service, conflict. “We worship by the Spirit”; we pray and sing in the Holy Ghost; we use in conflict the word as the sword of the Spirit. Every gift to the church, and every exercise of gift, is the effect of His presence amongst us. Has the world believed on Him? No. But how have the saints treated Him? Very much as we have treated our divine Master. We have forgotten Him, and gone to sleep; the Holy Ghost we have grieved almost beyond measure! Many would say, “Wherein?” (Mal. 1:6, 7).

But the Lord, thinking of the deep need of His beloved ones, when His gracious presence on earth would no longer shelter them, tells them of the character and actings of the Spirit, when sent of the Father. And what is the character in which Jesus presents to them the Holy Ghost? Just that which suited the affections of His own heart, and the deep wants and sorrows of theirs, for sorrow was filling their hearts. Think of this for a moment — a heart filled with sorrow because Jesus would be no longer here! And so He announces the Holy Ghost as the Comforter, and then gives His ways in their simplest yet deepest character, He would teach them all things, bring to remembrance all that Jesus had said, guide into all truth, take of the universal glory of Jesus — the “all things given to Him by the Father,” and show them unto them. Was any one amongst God’s creatures qualified for such service as this? Who amongst the mighty could have attempted it? Mark the word all. “All truth,” “all things,” “all that the Father hath,” are “God’s exhaustless tides,” from which the Holy Ghost would refresh and restore the hearts that mourned Jesus absence.

But was ever service like this, save that of Jesus alone, or ever service so slighted, save that of Jesus Himself? But what a revelation of God! Father, Son, and Spirit, in thoughts which are to

usward, nothing kept back, no reserve, all the ways of love, all the Father's counsels and purposes concerning His Only-begotten, communicated to the saints, the Holy Ghost leading into all.

But what can one say to these things? What can we say to Him of these His ways, or of ourselves as the objects of love like this? O depth of the riches! To Him be glory forever. Amen. Precious Spirit of God, that warms the heart while He feeds the mind! that when He speaks of Jesus makes His own presence felt, and so acts in our souls that growth in knowledge of One of the divine Persons is necessarily accompanied by a deeper knowledge of the glory and blessedness of the other Persons in the Godhead. His presence in us links us with all that is divine.

But the sending of the Holy Ghost was not all, He leaves them peace, endless and unbroken! fruit of His work, so soon to be accomplished. Peace that no tongue can tell, enduring as the work on which it was founded! Besides this He gives them His own peace; this is another thought, the privilege of realizing the peace in which Jesus lived and finished His service on earth. Meekness and lowliness were not the whole secret of that peace. His heart had a supreme Object outside this scene. His Father was greater than He (in the human position He had taken), He loved, and did, and kept His Father's commandments, and abode in His love. No idle word or foolish thought escaped from those lips or entered that heart, whose consecration was perfect, to grieve the Spirit that found its only resting-place on earth, on Him. And so, when it was but a step to the cross, we hear Him speaking of His peace, which He left as a privilege to His people. The insults of man and the enemy's wrath were powerless to disturb it, simply because it was Jesus peace. If storms arose, if waves ran high, if enemies threatened, and Satan raged, Jesus was with the Father, and the Father with Him. The Father did not leave Him alone, for He did always the things that pleased Him.

It seems easy to understand Jesus peace, not so to realize it; but He gave it as privilege, and we must remember that it is Jesus peace, and that He gives not as the world gives — an important and interesting word: compare with this, God gives freely (James 1), that is, without a "thought behind," or "second thought," a beautiful way of giving. It is indeed God's way, and not man's.

With peace of conscience, and peace of heart — Jesus peace — how could they be troubled or afraid! but these two things are precisely what so many precious souls do not possess, hence trouble, and fear, and heaviness of heart.

Verse 28. "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I." "I am going away," He says, "up to My Father Himself, and He is greater than I, will not your hearts rejoice, when you think of Me with Him whom I have told you of — with My Father?"

It is a very great thing with Him, the love and sympathy of His saints, their joy in His exaltation, their remembrance of Him in His humiliation and dying love.

Verse 30. "I will not speak much more." Oh what a word for the heart that loved Him! — not much, more! Was the tongue that spake as never man spake going to be silent to them? "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do." But Satan could not come till the last word given Him of His Father was uttered, His divine testimony completed. And he found nothing in Jesus, no vantage ground there — he found God there, and nought else; already vanquished,

before his apparent triumph in Jesus death sealed his own destruction forever. In Psalm 17 the Lord says in spirit, "My Father shall find nothing in Me, nothing that is not a fair witness to His glory"; here, "Satan shall find nothing which is not an eternal witness against himself [Satan]. "Arise, let us go hence!"

Chapter 15

Verse 1. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman." John 13 we had the subject of feet-washing, practical holiness in view of having part with Christ. In John 14, keeping Jesus commandments, when one had them, was the measure of the saint's love to Jesus, and drew forth the manifestation of Jesus love to him; for the ground here is Christian responsibility. It is not in this place, "We love him, because he first loved us"; here the principle is, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto Him, and make Our abode with him." Would any one learn the precious secret of obedience, in love and perfect liberty, "to Jesus commandments, His word having the force of commandment, he will find it in the knowledge of Jesus Himself. Blessed such knowledge, and blessed the results! See John 10:17-18, "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 of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father": But here, chapter 15, the subject is fruitfulness Godward. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit?"

How beautiful these thoughts are, as we see them in the mind, and word of Jesus!

1: The washing of our feet that we might have part with Him in glory:

2. Obedience; in love, to His commands, that, with His Father, He might come and take up His abode with us; and,

3, the purging of the branches, that there might be more fruit, no measure here. The Father is glorified in this, and in so doing we become Jesus disciples.

The secret of this fruit-bearing that glorifies the Father, is learned in Jesus alone; fruitfulness proves us to be His disciples. What sweet and holy thoughts these are!. How adorable is the One who is the Source of them all! What a Teacher is He, and what disciples are we!

But fruit for God there is none amongst men, neither testimony nor service, apart from Christ; therefore He calls Himself the true Vine, as elsewhere He presents Himself as the true Servant and true Witness. He was the true Son out of Egypt, and the Second Man. He takes up in grace, and establishes in His own Person, in power, all that had perished in the weak hands of man. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, "for the subject here is profession and responsibility. The true Vine and the branches were all upon earth.

A body, the members of which are on earth while the Head is in heaven, is a wholly different subject; here the union is vital and eternal, and by the Holy Ghost. Who shall separate? The members are nourished and cherished, not taken away, for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. The figure of the Vine and its branches is used to test profession, and show wherein true discipleship consists.

Verse 3. The disciples were clean through the word which He had spoken; the word had already wrought in their consciences as far as it had reached them. It was the washing of water by the

word. But what a deeply important truth and testimony, from the Lord Himself, as to the cleansing power of the word! He had known that power Himself, in His wondrous, lowly way, saying in spirit, By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer." This was as "concerning the works of men" (Psa. 17). The works of men cast up the paths of the destroyer.

But without Him, He tells us, we can do nothing, a truth acknowledged by all the saints, how oft forgotten that day will tell! The great truth here is, He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. May we realize this! What a word it is, "Abide," like that other word that He spoke to all, "Watch."

And now He reveals the secret of power with God in all its measureless range, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (vs. 7). And what, then, is the secret.? The word reveals it, communion with Himself — If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you." How few of the countless prayers which are continually offered up — and often sincerely, too — spring from a well so deep and pure! We are invited to make our requests known to God, whatever the burdened heart is conscious of how great is His grace! But prayer to God is necessarily connected with communion, the state of the heart before Him: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." How often it groans, yet not to Him! "They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds" (Hos. 7:14). "Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear." Fruitfulness to God, and the promise of all prayer being answered, are inseparably connected with abiding in Him.

Verse 9. "As the Father hath loved. Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love." The subject changes a little here. The source and fullness of all holy affections in man are in Himself, and are only realized by us as we abide in Him. Thus fruit for God, and answers from God, as well as also the enjoyment of His love, are all dependent on the soul's abiding in Him, that His love should be our portion.

Abiding in Him was not the whole thought in this passage: His joy also was to be ours, and that joy should be full. Thus spake the Man of sorrows, "that My joy" [what He had realized] "may be" in them. The spirit of man makes no progress here, a mystery by him unfathomable bars the way, yet all is simple and precious to those who have the secret of God; on the hearts of such it is all engraved with an eternal pen.

Next, in beautiful order, having spoken of the way of realizing His love by keeping His commandments, and of His joy being our portion, He commands us to love one another, and here the measure reaches even unto death (for thus He had loved His own); as fruitbearing had its only measure in the glorification of the Father, as He said of Himself, "I have glorified thee on the earth." We have seen how His love and His joy are known by abiding in Him; it is thus also that His peace is enjoyed.

But here we have a new privilege, we become His friends in practicing what He commands. We are constituted His friends through the communication of His Father's mind, "For all things which I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." We have seen already how, in glorifying the Father, the position of disciples of Jesus becomes ours (vs. 8). Another might say, "I have kept the faith"; but One alone has said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." We see now what the then revealed rule of life was, that it was found in the realization of Jesus love, His peace, His joy, and

His obedience; the glorifying of the Father as He had glorified Him; the loving one another as He had loved them; and that this realization was through abiding in Him.

But now that redemption is accomplished, and the Holy Ghost present, now that we walk in the light as He is in the light, the whole truth revealed, we can say the life itself and its rule are the same, even Christ Himself — Christ become our life. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” What a pleasure it is, sweet and sacred, to see the truth expanding to its full proportions in Christ! I do not mean what some call “new truth,” but simply to find, as we go on with scripture, that Jesus Himself is the substance and fullness of all the blessedness God has given, or will yet give, to His people.

How little the disciples understood the underlying depths of these precious communications! We might have been, oh how happy! in searching into them. But slighted privileges and unhappy souls go together; our tastes are vitiated, our simplicity lost! I speak of the general state, we know it but too well. But many are awaking from the long sleep and arising from among the dead; to find Christ Himself shining upon them. But what a thing this is! Christ Himself shining upon me, after the slumber among the dead. Is not this indeed the light of life, and glory, too, in its very sweetest form? Shall we not walk in it? Will the grace of it keep us from slumbering again? He knows our weakness when He says, “Watch”; “Abide in Me.”

As to their relations on the world’s side, they should share the reproaches that fell upon Him, and partake of His rejection. With regard to the Jews, their root was now laid bare, the innermost thought of, the evil heart laid bare, and detected in the light, even before that great day when God should judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ — they had both seen and hated both the Son and the Father. They were now morally the world, and “the world has not known thee,” Jesus said to the “righteous Father.” And we know what this means, they would be judged in the world’s judgment, as He said afterwards to a fallen assembly (Sardis) “I will come upon thee as a thief,” (as He comes upon the world) “if thou shalt not, watch.”

Chapter 16

They had seen, but only to hate, both, Father and Son, the thoughts of many hearts were already revealed, the secrets of men judged (morally), before the great day when God would judge them by Jesus Christ. The presence of the Lord is always the judgment of the flesh. Even the application of the commandment left nothing living but sin. The commandment, being come, sin revived, but I died.

The presence of the Holy Ghost, the great subject of this chapter, would bring a demonstration to the world which revealed its true relations, to God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In none of these chapters does the Lord speak of the church, or of the unity of the body. When unity (oneness) is spoken of, it is either in Him (but this is individual, “He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit”), or the result of the fellowship with the Father and the Son, “that they may be one in Us,” the powerful source of a testimony that persuaded men, “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” It was practical in the deepest way, a realization of the highest truth and privileges, but not the unity of the body. We are baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body (1 Cor. 12:13); but this blessed truth is not the subject of John’s testimony. The Holy Ghost is not sent to the world, but to the disciples, but being come, He brings a demonstration of certain things to it.

In this chapter the Lord completes His instructions to the disciples. They begin with the announcement, that He was about to leave the world and go to the Father (John 13), and end with the declaration, “I have overcome the world.” In John 14, He was Himself both the Way to, and Revealer of the Father. In John 15, He is the true Vine on earth, His Father the Husbandman who purged the branches. John 16 gives us the ministry of the Holy Ghost, who would lead them into the knowledge of all the glory of the Lord, when no longer on earth, but with the Father. The Holy Ghost would glorify Him thus — the Father glorified Him in Himself.

His journey through this world was ended. His coming into it had been celebrated gloriously, but that was from above. “Jerusalem that now is,” “was troubled,” “all Jerusalem,” “Thy city Jerusalem.” “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!”

It was not to priests and Levites, but to shepherds watching their flocks, that in the silence of the night (how brightly the stars must have shone that night!) the angel of Jehovah appeared, “The glory of the Lord shone round them; a multitude of the heavenly host was with the angel; good tidings of joy to all the people,” was the angel’s announcement; the heavenly host went farther, good pleasure in men.

Again, when He entered on His public ministry — the revelation of the Father — not heavenly hosts, but divine Persons were there. The Father’s voice and Holy Ghost’s presence told out the glory of His Person. What drew forth angels praise was the sign in the manger of Bethlehem; what moved the Father’s delight was the Son’s association with sinful men when telling out their sins to God, grace deep in its root as that revealed when He took their place upon the cross.

And here we have His last words, ere He left the world He had overcome, spoken in the devotedness of a love in which, while thinking of their sorrows, He had absolutely conquered His own. Never had such a path been discovered before, and never a man to walk in it, had there been one, until Jesus of Nazareth was there: His footsteps alone have made it, and, there is but that one in "the waste"!

And now the end is come, rivaling the beginning in all moral beauty and greatness. Viewed from man's side, rejection and defeat alone seem to mark His path, which becomes increasingly solitary as He nears the goal. His testimony is refused; the wrath of His adversaries increases; the power of the enemy prevails; His sorrowing cry, "Let this cup pass from Me," apparently unheeded; "Where was His God?" the taunting expression or thought of His adversaries!

And where was Jesus at this moment? For Him the hour would soon be past. I do not know that it could be said then, "Joy dwells upon His brow," but at least it was an unclouded one; the light of victory and of glory was within. While the wicked were gathering against the soul of the righteous One, He was quietly telling of a conquered world; "I have overcome the world"; and of the judgment of its prince (the dragon shalt Thou trample under feet); and of glory boundless as the creation of God, (He will have it as a gift from His Father). So, when the great storm arose, and the waves beat into the ship, He was asleep on a pillow in the stern — awakened by the fearful ones, whose terror only increased when He rebuked the winds, and said to the sea, "Be silent," and there was a great calm. And so too, when Satan offered Him the kingdoms and their glory, He did not need to change His ground, or lift up His voice in the wilderness, He simply rebukes him, "Get thee behind Me," and, "It is written"; then the accuser was silent, left Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him.

Verse 14. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." The Holy Ghost would thus glorify Him who, for the Father's glory, and for man's sake, had emptied Himself. When He spoke of the desire of His own heart, that was to be with the Father in the glory and the love He had with Him before the world itself existed. What could the world do to such an One? (Even one of His own martyrs, when men came to lead Him to death, quietly remarked, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.") Its last act of iniquity, perfected in hatred, only afforded occasion for the accomplishment of His own great, work of love, whose depth no tongue can tell.

But what a period of wondrous privilege this chapter unfolds! The Holy Spirit present to reveal the glories of Christ while He sits upon the Father's throne, and the saints participation in His sufferings in testimony in the world. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:19-20). In the beginning, He had not spoken to them of the sufferings of which He forewarns them in the commencement of the chapter, which would in fact be the fellowship of His own sufferings from the hand of man, for He had been amongst them, the Shepherd of His people, and had kept them in the Father's name.

"When I sent, you without purse and scrip and shoes," He says in Luke 22, "lacked ye anything? But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let

him sell his garment, and buy one." They are thrown, as man would say, upon their own resources, in reality upon His. Faith and prayer alone can wield the sword that Jesus speaks of. "Lord, here are two swords," they say; "It is enough," He replies; they understand nothing, neither His word nor the scriptures; presently He would make a place for both in their opened understandings, and then would their hearts burn (Luke 24). How precious is the knowledge of Jesus! Here sorrow fills their hearts when He speaks of going to the Father, but His ways, which they had not known, He is unfolding here; for what is the heart of man, when unable to penetrate the clouded mystery of divine ways, to which, as yet, he has no clue?

These He commences to unfold by saying, "It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. How blessedly these instructions blend and harmonize; the purse and the sword, the saints responsibility; the Advocate on high; and the Spirit of power down here! Already He had told them He would beg the Father, and He would give them another Comforter. The Father would send Him in Jesus' name. Note, all the Persons in the Godhead are before us in this blessed passage, one in their love to redeemed sinners. The Son asks; and the Father sends in His name, and the Spirit comes to bring to remembrance what Jesus said, as well as to teach them all things. Jesus Himself is the Center here; compare with Matthew 3, where the Father and the Holy Ghost are occupied with the Son.

In John 15, Jesus sends from the Father. In the place He had taken amongst men, He had served as the sent One, but having reached the glory He had with the Father, His own glory, He now sends the Holy Ghost, the Witness of His glory on high with the Father. The sent One is become the Sender, humiliation is exchanged for glory, the place is changed, but not the Person.

To know Him, whether in humiliation or in glory, the presence and power of the Holy Ghost are indispensable. Who but He can take of the things of Jesus, and show them unto us?

(1). The first effect of His presence, as given in these chapters (14-15) would be the knowledge of their oneness with Him who is in the Father;

(2). then their divine Teacher would bring to remembrance what Jesus had said;

(3). and thirdly, He would testify of Jesus glorified with the Father. (Compare 2 Cor. 3:18, "Beholding the glory of the Lord" and so on).

But He must leave them, in order to obtain for them this inestimable blessing. Already the winds and waves were rising, they were looking at them rather than at Him. "If ye loved me," He says, "ye would rejoice that I go to the Father, for My Father is greater than I." But fear and trouble were in their hearts, while thoughts of rest for them, when He should have brought them to His Father's house, and the joy and glory of being with the Father, were filling His. And here He says, "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart."

Thus, on the very eve of the accomplishment of redemption work, of the glorification of Jesus, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, their hearts were filled with trouble, fear, and sorrow; none of them had heart to say, "Whither goest Thou?" Thus, too, it was just before another day of redemption, the darkest hour preceded the brightest, "the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them," and "they were sore afraid"; but a little after, the cloudy pillar went from before their face, and came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of

Israel. It was only a dark cloud to the Egyptians, while it sent forth the light of salvation to Israel; it was in truth the light of the glory, which had made the cloud its dwelling-place.

(4). But fourthly, when He is come, He will bring demonstration to the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, the effect of His presence and testimony in relation to the world. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." His Person was the test now. He had been amongst them, and they had not received Him, and the world knew Him not. Had they believed on Him, their sins would have been forgiven, but the Holy Ghost present replaces, so to speak, a rejected Lord, and is the demonstration of that rejection, and therefore of this world's sin. His presence in grace was the final test, and left them without excuse for their sin; similarly the voice from the law stopped every mouth, leaving the whole world without excuse in its sin, under judgment to God.

Verse 10. "Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." Of whom could it be said, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows," but of Him whose throne was for ever and ever, administered in righteousness? He had preached righteousness in the great congregation, He had not hidden God's righteousness within His heart, and presently it would be fully revealed in the mighty work of the cross, and then the Glorifier of the Father would sit upon that Father's throne, while waiting for His own, still glorifying Him even in receiving from His hand that glory which He had with Him before the world was.

How righteousness and glory, love and joy, commingle here! God blessing for ever One fairer than the children of men (His face had been marred more than any man); God anointing Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows! The Spirit's presence on earth would be the demonstration of a righteousness divine and infinite before the Father, for Jesus must be with the Father to send Him. Yet at this moment they were "gathering themselves together against the soul, of the [only] righteous [One], to condemn the innocent blood."

Verse 11. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." He who sends the Holy Ghost from the Father ascended after death. He that breaks the bonds of death, is necessarily the Destroyer of him that had the power of death. He presented Himself to John afterwards as the Living One who had become dead, but was living to the ages of ages, in possession of the keys of death and of hades. Blessed, almighty Conqueror! He had already given the keys of the kingdom of heaven to one of His servants. For those like-minded with Himself, the Holy and the True, He told His servant John, He had yet another key, with which when He had opened, none could shut (Rev. 3). It is easy to see that the Spirit's presence involved the judgment of Satan. In John 12 He had pronounced the judgment of this world.

They could not, however, bear the many things He had to say to them. But the Spirit would come, and then He speaks of a fifth operation of the Spirit. (5). He would show them things to come; besides this (6). He would guide into all the truth. (7). In the seventh, He glorifies Jesus, taking of the things that are His, all things that the Father has being His, and shows them to the disciples. What a wondrous place of blessing! The Holy Ghost present, ministering to the opened understanding of the disciples the infinite glories of the Son, and in doing so, revealing His oneness with the Father in the possession of all things "that He has."

And how blessed to find, in another place, the Holy Spirit's unfoldings of the counsels of the Father in connection with these boundless glories, the all things which the Son possesses with Himself; the purpose being to invest the Son when risen as Man, the Conqueror of sin, Satan, and the world, with the headship over these all things to the church His body, putting all things under His feet (Eph. 1). Neither the Spirit nor the Son could act in these communications apart from the Father. What the Son possesses with or from the Father, the Spirit unfolds, bearing testimony to Jesus, who is the Center here again of all these thoughts.

As the Lord went on with these glorious communications, did the disciples continue to look at the rising winds and waves, trouble, fear and sorrow filling their weary hearts? I think not, for when He adds the word about the little while, and seeing Him again, their tongues are at length loosened. They confess to each other their ignorance of the meaning of the "little while"; the Lord anticipates their request, and explains.

"In that day" refers to this period, while He is with the Father, and the Holy Ghost here. The first mentioned blessing of that day was in John 14:20. They would know that He was in the Father, and they in Him; here (vs. 23) He tells them, that "in that day" whatsoever they asked in His name the Father would give them. They had never asked in that name yet; if they did ask in Christ's name they should receive, and their joy would be full. The fullness of that joy would not be found so much, I think, in the value of what was given, as in the Father's response to requests in Jesus' name.

How great is such joy, and how little known! In that day (of the Spirit's presence), the saints praying in the Holy Ghost would ask the Father in Jesus' name; this belongs distinctively to Christian position, the presence and energy of the Holy Ghost its power. So in Ephesians 1, we have access to the Father through Christ by the Spirit. In all true worship, service, and conflict, we are really in communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

In verse 26, "that day" is mentioned for the third time, the blessing here is that the Father Himself loved them. "At that day ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." His heart was towards them, so that in this sense He needed not Jesus intercession to draw forth His love towards them. "I say not that I will pray the Father," explains verse 23, "Ye shall ask Me nothing."

Now we come to His last word to the disciples. He had come from, and was now returning to the Father; but as yet they were incapable of understanding what that meant. That He was come from God, they could understand; but they needed the Holy Ghost to enable them to understand the Lord's teaching about the Father. At the end of John 14, He told them of the prince of this world coming and having nothing in Him. Here, that though tribulation would be their portion, in passing through it, yet it was a world overcome by man in His own Person, through which they had to pass.

"Be of good courage, I have overcome the world." They were not to be troubled, fearful, or offended, they were to "be of good courage," and their sorrow was to give place to joy. The great thing here is that the prince of this world is judged, and the world itself overcome — such was the scene they were to pass through. What comfort and encouragement for them and us!

What mighty themes the Spirit has brought before us in these chapters! The sufferings, glories and victories of the Savior; the revelation of the Father; the presence of the Holy Ghost; the world overcome by One found as a Man; and its ruler judged! In after days, when love had grown cold, and the church had fallen, He sent by His servant John (the book of Revelation), with notes of warning, a word of encouragement to all the faithful, setting them upon His own, the overcomer's path. The least amongst them should sit upon His throne, even as He had overcome, and sat down upon His Father's throne (Rev. 3:21).

Chapter17

The great discourses of Jesus with His disciples, the last on earth prior to the cross, terminated with these glorious words, "I have overcome the world." Other men had wrought righteousness, become mighty in war, made the armies of strangers give way, but Jesus overcame the world.

It was in vain that Satan offered Him the kingdoms of this world and their glory, He overcame him also by the word of His testimony, guided by it Himself in an obedience that was perfect and absolute. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Again, at the end of the path, the prince of this world came, but "he has nothing in Me," was Jesus testimony. It would only be a means of letting the world know that He loved the Father, with a love that manifested itself in obedience to His commandments. On each occasion His obedience gave Him the victory. A new weapon in the hand of man, but wielded by Jesus in the energy of the Holy Ghost, it reached the enemy himself. "Obedient unto death, even the death of "the cross," "by death destroyed him that had the power of death."

But there were other ways in which Jesus overcame the world, than by simply resisting the open attempts on the part of the adversary. Besides its glory, there were the principles and the spirit of the scene of this present evil world, which Satan had formed around man. Which of these had any place in Him? When the prince of this world came, he found nothing in Jesus, neither will nor lust, he found God there, and presently proved that His weakness was stronger than his own power. Jesus overcame the world in its spirit and principles as perfectly as in its prince.

But the end was near, His teachings were ended, and He lifted up His eyes to heaven. The hour was at length come, the lonely hour of all time, when Jesus must be alone, rejected by man, forsaken of God. But these precious communings of the Son with the Father preceded what He called their hour and the power of darkness, at least in their full application. "Father, glorify Thy Son," comes before "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and again, these last words were preceded by, "Father, if Thou wilt remove this cup from Me: but then, not My will, but Thine be done." With the sensibilities of a perfect Man, and rightly estimating the true character of the cup He had to drink, He refused to know any will but the Father's.

But this is not the character of His communings in this place; here they are those of the Son with the Father, at the close of His service and work on earth. In the beginning of these great themes (John 13), when Judas had gone out, Satan having entered into him, and it was night (all virtually over as to present blessing for "His own," or for the world as such, John 1:10-11), He thinks of the mighty work before Him, the foundation of the new order of things, the new creation, in fact; of His glory as Son of Man in connection with the cross.

Judas was a sample of what man had become under the power of the adversary. But here was a man "out of heaven," the Second Man, so taking up the whole question of sin as it affected God's glory amongst His creatures, as by His atoning death on the cross to cover Himself, so to speak, with eternal glory. But not apart from God's glory, that could not be in Jesus thoughts. If the Son of

Man was glorified, God was glorified in Him; and could God be glorified in Him, the Son of Man upon the cross, and not glorify Him in Himself, at His right hand on the throne? But what a wondrous truth, Man glorifying God in the place of sin, and then glorified in God Himself! and seated at His right hand.

But here, there is a difference in the thought and words. It is not God glorified in the Son of Man, nor the Son of Man glorified with God, but the Son of the Father demanding to be glorified by the Father, that He might still be glorified by the Son, the place alone changed, the mind unchanged. Would it have been "robbery," the Son taking that eternal glory He had with His Father (John 17:5), when His work was done, without seeking it from His Father's hand? His title to the place was equally perfect on every ground, personal and relative, but, "Father, glorify Thy Son," reveals thoughts and affections belonging to that place of Son, whose sweet and hidden depths man may not see. God only knows the love of God; but His words reveal His thoughts, and these are precious unto His people.

Verse 2. "As Thou hast given Him authority over all flesh, that as to all that Thou hast given to Him, He should give them life eternal" (New Trans). He was Himself the eternal life which was with the Father (and the Head of every man), but He will not give it without authority received from the Father. So with regard to a place in the kingdom of glory. It "is not Mine," He said, "to give, but for whom it is prepared of My Father." Again, when it was a question of the time of restoring Israel, "It is not for you to know the, times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts 1:7). It is the same thing everywhere. He makes His Father's glory known, but in doing so, His own shines forth by a divine necessity. It was eternal life to know the Father and the Son. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). "He who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23). The Antichrist will deny both.

Verse 4. "I have glorified Thee on the earth." He is bringing His offerings, as it were, "I have glorified Thee." I have finished the work which Thou gavest in His path, and the cross would be the finishing of the work. Neither men nor angels, this present evil world nor the world to come, are in view here. He desires the place of glory He had with the Father before the world was, that was the glory His heart went after, glory with His Father.

It was not the time to ask for the nations for His inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. This will be His portion in another day, in connection with relationships belonging to time (see Psa. 2), "This day have I begotten Thee." In this character the Father will set Him upon His holy hill of Zion. But the kingdom of the Son of His love (its present form, or when manifested in power) is not the same thing as the glory of the Son with the Father, though He receives that also, for dominion over Jews and Gentiles is part of His glory in that character. "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified," He said, when the Greeks desired to see Him. He appreciates that at the right time and place; but it is most interesting to see where His heart was when His work was finished.

Verse 6. Now He tells His Father of His work amongst the saints, the excellent of the earth, in whom was all His delight. It is a wonderful thing, that we should be permitted to hear Him when He speaks to the Father of His work amongst His saints; one recognizes that the only-begotten Son and the "holy Servant" are one.

Seven distinct acts complete this blessed service amongst them, and everything is in connection with the Father.

1: I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world.

2: The words which Thou hast given Me, I have given them.

3: I kept them in Thy name; those Thou hast given Me I have guarded.

4: I have given them Thy word.

5: As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

6: The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them.

7: I have made known to them Thy name, and will make it known.

He has caused them to understand that all was from the Father; yet "All that is mine is Thine, and all that is Thine mine," reveals His divine glory and Godhead. He had ever made it known, that whatever He gives He receives first from the Father, and thus He makes His glory known.

He reveals His own position in humiliation then gives it to them, and then imparts that through which He was sustained by the way, "The words which Thou hast given Me I have given them." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. "The words which Thou hast given Me," may be explained by Isaiah 50 "He openeth Mine ear morning by morning." What can be more blessed and wonderful than to have the words that Jesus fed on, morning by morning, ministered unto us? The word (vs. 14) was the Father's testimony, which necessarily revealed the Father, as Jesus did personally. In ministering these things to us (the words and word), He feeds us with the mighty's meat.

Can we not understand what He meant when He said, "These things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them" (and this in face of the world's hatred), the glorious secret of the hidden life of Jesus? All these flowed from heavenly springs unknown to man; the tongue of the learned; the opened ear; the word for the weary. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him"; well may we sing when we know these things, "Rise, my soul, thy God directs thee."

We have been looking a little at the details of His service in making the Father's glory known. We come now to His requests for the disciples. They are five in number.

1: Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We.

2: That Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

3: Sanctify them by the truth.

4: And I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on Me through their word; that they may be all one, as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

5: "He desires that where He is, they also may be with Him, that they may behold His glory which the Father had given Him," which could not be separated from that love from eternity, of which He was the Object.

The first demand implies that those thus kept are holy also; but “one as we,” is a wondrous thought. When the Holy Ghost works in us, being ungrieved, we “follow after love,” which always leads to “oneness,” for love does not seek what is its own, bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and “never fails.” God Himself is love. Such is the path that leads to unity, and this path alone; but what a measure! “as we are.” Yet are not all God’s measures for His saints found in Himself and His ways? We may wonder and adore. One can easily see that this unity is only realized as we walk in holiness and love. “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” “Let us love one another, for love is of God.”

“Sanctify them by the truth,” and so forth. The separation, inwardly, of the heart from the corrupt and perishing things of time and sense as effected by the truth (through the Spirit’s power), especially by the Father’s word in testimony. With what a glorious character the truth is invested here! The “Father’s word”! Is not the Son Himself the great subject of that word? Alas! for the multitude of His people by whom, apparently, this precious means of sanctification, with its blessed fruit of joy in the Holy Ghost (in the strength of which the world is forgotten or overcome), is practically neglected. Where are the perfect (full grown), who occupy themselves with that “hidden wisdom” which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory, embracing things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man’s heart, but which God has revealed by His Spirit?

Having prayed for their sanctification through the truth, He says, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, they also might be sanctified by the truth.” Jesus’ sanctification has but one object and meaning, whether in heaven or on earth, the glorification of the Father; for His people’s sanctification would but subserve the Father’s glory. He was going to change His place His purpose He could not change. “I have glorified Thee on the earth” — “Glorify Thy Son [in heaven], that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.” His position and ways on high, humiliation exchanged for glory, would but illustrate, in scenes new to man, the holiness and separation in which He had walked on earth. But what an object for the heart of His own, the “man of sorrows” in the glory of God, and ministering, to that glory, as in the day of His rejection!

Verses 20-21. “May be one in Us.” This is the realization of unity in its source, through fellowship with the Father and the Son, partaking of the divine nature (and having the Holy Ghost) (1 John 1). “As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” It was the manifestation of this unity that would lead to faith in Him as the sent One.

In verse 11, it is “one as we are,” in thoughts, purposes, ways; it is important to note that this prayer is for the apostles. The Son, in His blessed work of making the Father known, had accomplished this service, not by word only, but in His own personal ways, and in all that revealed the Father was absolutely one with Him. Thus they were to be one in their service of testimony, a unity actually realized, as in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles.

No one scripture can be found to contradict another. The Spirit of grace and truth accomplished this miracle, that there should not be one discordant note to mar the blessed harmony of their testimony. Every scripture is divinely inspired. This was in no wise the result of human contrivance or combination; any such effort would have betrayed its merely human source, and become manifest at once. “We are of God,” the Apostle John says, “he that knows God hears us [the

apostles]; he who is not of God does not hear us.” We should note the place the apostles hold in these scriptures.

We have now had two of these blessed unities in verses 11, and 20-21.

(1). “One as we,” one in thought, purpose, and so on; a wondrous thing, and realized in the apostles testimony.

(2). “One in us,” the divine source of unity, that the world may believe in Jesus as the sent One.

(3). Verse 22. The third unity is realized in glory, so that the world knows that the Father has loved the saints even as He loves the Son. “The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them. That the world may know . . . that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.” This would be through unity also, “perfected in one.” The Father in Christ, and Christ in the saints. The world, seeing us in the glory of Christ, will know that the Father has sent the Son, and has loved us as He loved Him.

This looks like the climax of blessing, to share the glory which the Father has given Him, and the love of which He is the Object — “hast loved Them as Thou hast loved Me.” What more can even the Spirit of Christ think of for His own? Yes; something yet remains, but outside all this weight of blessing — one supreme Object for the heart, when all that God can give has been given. To be with Him, and see Him in the glory that tells of that eternal love — the Father’s love before the foundation of the world.

This will be fellowship with the Father too, and in the highest way! That glory and that love will be from Him — “The glory Thou hast given Me”; “Lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” We cannot contemplate Him without thinking of the Father; Jesus cannot display His glory without letting us know that it is from the Father. Jesus glorified is the link between our hearts and the Father’s, as in Jesus crucified we had been reconciled. The glory and the love are each of eternity. “The glory I had with thee before the foundation of the world.” “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” The thrones and kingdoms will be wondrous scenes, when the everlasting doors have lifted up their heads to let the King of glory in, and we shall be with, Him there also.

“That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them!” How the wonderful thoughts and ways of God which are to usward make us as conscious of the nothingness of the creature as of His own glory and grace!

Chapters 18-19

Verse 1: “Jesus having said these things, went out with His disciples beyond the torrent Cedron, where was a garden, into which He entered, He and his disciples.” “The king also himself passed over the brook Kidron . . . and David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went.” Jesus and David, each in rejection, found it a *via dolorosa*, a path of sorrow indeed! The outward path here was the same, but there the resemblance ceased.

By the new test of prosperity, the inner man of David's heart was more fully revealed than by the conflicts and trials of earlier years. The faith and energy that distinguished him at that time had given way to moral relaxation. His own last words contain his own condemnation. The “ruler over men knew not how to deal with a son of Belial of his own house,” and therefore it was that his “house was not so with God,” nor himself “as the light of the morning.” But we turn to Him who was Himself “the day spring from on high.” That heart, as a sanctuary, was then God's true dwelling-place upon earth; but He is now about to take the Victim's place.

All is in contrast with John 17. There, no shade of sorrow can be found; He is looking forward to the infinite delight of being with His Father — “I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee.” He thinks of the eternal glory He had with the Father before there was either man, or devil, or lost world.

But in this chapter He passes from the scene of communion with His Father and conscious victory (glorified Him, finished His work, made His name known), to one of conflict and agony (His sorrow, as another scripture tells us, was even unto death); from the demand to be glorified with Him, to the perfect submission of One who takes the cup and conquers agony — I mean that through agony He accomplishes His Father's will; from, “Father, glorify Thy Son,” to, “but then, not My will, but Thine be done” — that is, from perfection to perfection. The Light pierces through the clouds that surround Him, and reveals His glory!

Verse 4. “Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye?” Compare this with John 13: Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, and that the Father had given all things into His hands, and loving His Sown unto the end, girded Himself to wash their feet. And here, the end being come, Jesus, knowing all things that were coming upon Him, that He was to be cut off and have nothing (Dan. 9:26), demands of His adversaries that, if they sought Him, they would let the disciples go. The word was fulfilled, “Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none.” He loved them unto the end. His foreknowledge was perfect, for Him there were no surprises, the reception of all things from the Father was not more present to His spirit, on the former occasion, than the loss of all things, His own cutting off, here.

How different the positions contemplated on these occasions! the glory and the suffering. Equal to each, He passes from one to the other in the unchangeableness of absolute perfection. Love reigned through suffering, as grace reigns through righteousness. His calmness in each scene is

unbroken — the secret of it unknown to man. He has but to say, “I am He!” — Jesus of Nazareth! and the very murderers go backward and fall to the ground. “When the wicked, even Mine enemies and My foes, came upon Me to eat up My flesh, they stumbled and fell” (Psa. 27:2). Already at the name of Jesus even His enemies were constrained to bow. “Let these go their way,” marks the Shepherd’s heart. A voice resembling this had been heard in David’s words, “These sheep, what have they done?” but it was his own sin that had brought destruction upon the sheep. The earthly shepherd, but for grace, would have lost his life with them; the good Shepherd gave His in grace for the sheep.

But His way in this final scene is marked by the utmost dignity. The conduct of the abject ones only makes it the more conspicuous. It was their hour, and the power of darkness; and He is before man here as He was before God in John 17; all is changed except Himself. He never changes, whether lifted up, or cast down; whether creating the heavens, the works of His hands, or when as a vesture He folds them up and they are changed, He is still the Same. “But Thou art the same.” And, when the saints were in danger of being carried away by strange and subversive doctrines, it was written, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” That which was from the beginning.

His word to Judas was, “Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” — was there no other way? He merely touches Malchus’s ear, and it is healed. To Peter He remarks that the cup was, from His Father — should He not drink it? His Father’s glory was what occupied Him while the murderers clamored around, nevertheless it was not from them, but from His Father, that He took it: from Him He had learned, in absolute surrender of will, that neither “the hour,” nor “the cup,” might pass from Him (Mark 14).

What knew they, the abject ones, of this? What of the bloody sweat, and acceptance of His Father’s will? what, a little farther on, of the “smiting of God”? It was indeed their hour and the power of darkness, yet in another sense it was His hour. But then it is connected with the light of His own glory, the power and the glory of God characterize it; nothing is seen but that the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” God glorified in man, and man in God! What an hour was that! His coming into the world was marked by the announcement of God’s delight in man, His leaving it by His own declaration that God was glorified in man (the Son of Man); in this way has God’s love to man met with a full response.

They bind Him, and lead Him to Annas, who in turn sends Him bound to Caiaphas. The high priest asks Him concerning His doctrine. The Lord does not answer him, save to remark that He had spoken openly to the world, teaching in the synagogue and in the temple. He had not hidden God’s righteousness in His heart, nor concealed His loving-kindness and His truth from the great congregation, in secret He had said nothing.

And these unhappy men were the heads of the Jews religion, it was nothing more now — dignitaries without dignity, priests without knowledge, men without conscience and without mercy, gathered against the soul of the righteous One. In Mark, we are told, they accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing, so that Pilate wondered. The link in the chain of their successors, men like-minded, is seldom missing in the awful history of the professing church. But to these men He answered nothing — the silence of Jesus, how terrible its meaning!

To Herod also, we read in Luke, Jesus answered nothing. His father, Herod the Great, rebuilt and adorned the temple at Jerusalem, but slaughtered the children in the hope of destroying Him who was born King of the Jews. He (Herod Antipas) did not proceed quite as far as his father had done, his interests were not so nearly affected, as men would say. He mocked Him, and set Him at naught.

Jesus was sent by Pilate to Herod, as Annas had sent Him to Caiaphas, and then back again, an occasion for the exchange of complimentary messages, and the mutual reconciliation of these men. No fault being found in Him, He was, mocked by One, and put to death by the other; yet was the sin of the Roman governor and Idumean king thrown into the shade, so to speak, by that of the Jews. "Thine own nation and the chief priests," as Pilate said, "have delivered Thee unto me."

But the lowest place of all in this terrible scene, is filled by the only one in it who really loved and knew the Lord (vss. 24, 25). Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas, and Peter warmed himself while he denied his Lord; for the moment, he was morally one of themselves. Peter and Judas, apostles; Pilate and Herod, Gentile rulers; Annas and Caiaphas, high priests. Never was there such a company before, and never had man fallen so low as Peter, who, as to privileges conferred (the special revelation by the Father of the Person of Christ, and the promise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven), held the first place amongst the apostles of Jesus. His smiting with the sword looked like devotedness to Jesus, it was the exact contrast to the mind of Him who opened not His mouth, save in testimony to the truth. Verse 25 reveals his real state — he denies his Lord! The crowing of the cock, coming immediately after, must have sounded in his ears like the knell of doom.

Yet gracious love still followed him, and gracious words would yet comfort that broken heart. But what a deep lesson for all, how good intentions and outward activities may hide from view the real state of the soul. The Lord Himself almost forgotten, while His name and glory are continually on the lips! There was not a more failing person in the scene than Peter. There one sees, not only in doctrine, but in a history, what the flesh is, the flesh in one that Christ had chosen, and to whom the Father had revealed Him as His Son. So that you could not imagine a person being in a better position, before redemption was known, and the sealing of the Spirit. But ignorant of self, and walking in his own strength, he found how quickly that turned into corruption.

How great a thing it is to have God's mind dwelling in us ("we have the mind of Christ") and God's affections too ("God's love shed abroad in our hearts"). But the mind of Christ, and God's love shed abroad in, the heart, are blessings which flow from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as His presence is the believer's power also. Poor Peter knew nothing of all this, nor had learned, as yet, what the flesh means, much less to distinguish between it and that new nature, in which he loved the Lord, but did not find strength to follow Him to prison and to death.

Here, for the first time, not doctrinally, but in an historical way, the character of the flesh in a saint is brought fully to light. The presence and grace of Christ had not modified it; the revelation of the Son by the Father, the call to apostleship, and association with the Lord, all this had left him without strength, the flesh (himself, one might say), unknown and unjudged. As he disregarded the Lord's solemn warning, that Satan had demanded to have the disciples, that he might sift them as wheat, and that he himself would deny Him thrice before the cock crew; that is, of the power of Satan, and weakness of man, though born again, when there is nothing more; he has to learn, in

the effectual, but most bitter way of experience, under the power of sin and Satan, not only what the flesh is, and whither its will leads, but what it is to neglect the word of the Lord.

But all is darkness in this chapter, save Jesus, the light of life; nothing but the flesh is in view, deepening in shade as it approached outwardly to Him; darkest of all in Peter, and next in him who, when he had eaten bread with Him, lifted up his heel against his divine Master. Such were the ways of the denier and betrayer — the latter never really knew Him, as Peter did; thus the darkness, when responsibility and privilege are the measure, was less deep in Judas than in Peter's case.

After Judas come the priests, who had not known Jesus, as associated with Him in the days of His flesh, as Judas did; but they had the Scriptures, and they testified of Him, and "the priest's, lips should keep knowledge — he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."

Less guilty than the priests, when measured by the same rule, was Herod. What place had he in God's nation, or city, or house? Yet he had heard the Baptist's testimony, he had feared him, knew that he was a just and holy man, heard him gladly, and did many things (or, was much perplexed). It was evident that his conscience had been exercised, but that "holiday" showed what was in his heart; the just and holy man was sacrificed for the sake of the good opinion of the chief men of Galilee — as Jesus was given up for thirty pieces of silver.

And lastly, we have Pilate listening to the good confession, pronouncing Him to be without fault, a righteous person, and then giving Him up to death. Yet was the Roman governor, judged on the ground of privileges accorded, the least guilty of all.

Peter's history, in this chapter, reminds one forcibly of the dark passages in that of David. Never, since man had taken his own way upon earth, had there been such a contradiction to the very nature of God, as that which was offered by the one whom He had sought, the man after His own heart. God had sought David, the Father revealed the Son to Peter. Where amongst the children of men had there been anything like these sins against light and love seen and tasted — that is, against what God is in Himself, against Him who said of old, "I am holy," "I am gracious," and who now, shining in Jesus, revealed Himself as "Light," and "Love"? These "precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold," how dim they became! like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the earthly potter. How grateful to the soul, after looking at these marred vessels, to turn to Him with,

Thou art the Potter, we the clay,

Thy will be ours, Thy truth our light.

Verse 28. They lead Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium (hall of judgment). The accusations brought against Him (see the other gospels) were, that He was a malefactor; perverter of the nation (as was afterwards charged against His saints, that they turned the world upside down); stirreth up all the people, beginning from Galilee; forbade to give tribute to Caesar; claimed to be a king. The charge of the false witnesses, who were discovered at last by the chief priests, elders, and all the council (the whole religious element in Judaea) was, that He said He was able to destroy the temple of God, and build it in. three days. His own confession, that He was the Son of God, formed the ground of another accusation.

Such were the charges, seven in number, the perfect expression of the deliberate refusal to let "this man reign over us"; of their hatred of the Father and the Son; and of the resistance, like that of their fathers, to the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

How Jesus met these charges is not only written in the book, but thence transcribed and engraven on the hearts of all true believers. The whole chapter is an illustration of that saying, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." The nearer one is to it outwardly, when it is only that, the greater the darkness within. Who but Judas could betray Jesus with a kiss? In the far-off ones the virus of enmity is not evident in the same way; yet the same day that Herod sent back Jesus to Pilate, both Herod and Pilate became friends, and we know what the friendship of this world is. They thought, unhappy men, that that which occupied them (their worldly interests) was established upon a surer basis than ever. They both perished in exile a very few years afterwards, in a far-off land, and, as historians report, like Judas, by their own hands. Herod had commanded the putting to death of John the Baptist; his father, Herod the Great, just before his death, and during his last awful illness, had caused the slaughter of the infants, hoping to destroy Him who was born king of the Jews. "Man being in honor and understanding not, is like the beasts that perish."

How many solemn statements of Scripture touching the vanity and corruption of the creature, are illustrated in the life and death of these men, which show us how far natural conscience and the religion of the flesh may lead, and where they fail, and fail for ever. Herod the Great built the temple at Jerusalem; but sought to kill Him who was worshiped there; his son had listened to the Baptist, and, having heard him gladly, had done many things; but, in the end, had killed him for his oath's sake, with other motives. Such is the religion of the "world which lieth in the wicked one," or of the flesh, in itself a deadly evil, so that they that are in it neither are, nor can be, subject to God.

Pilate's conscience seems to have been troubled, he washed his hands indeed, but not "in innocency."

The pride of careless greatness,
Could wash its hands of Thee;
Priests that should plead for weakness,
Must Thine accusers be.

Yet the threefold testimony of the representative of the fourth kingdom is of the greatest interest. The first he repeated three times, "I find no fault in this man" — thus spoke the fourth beast in him (Dan. 7). His second testimony was, "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me"; the third, the inscription on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews." In substance Jesus' own testimony, "Thou sayest that I am a king"; as, I find no fault in Him," recalls His own words, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Thus was the truth declared by one who knew not what truth is, constrained by a power he knew not of; while the only one in this dark scene who possessed the truth, thrice denied that he knew Him.

Their enemies, the Roman soldiers, having crowned Him with the crown of thorns, Pilate, thinking that might move them, says, "Behold the man!" — their only answer, "Crucify! crucify!" then, "Behold your king!" — their answer, "Take Him away, take Him away; crucify him!" And again, "We

have no king but Caesar.”

In Luke we see, that when it was day, the elders, chief priests, and scribes led Him into their council, where the question was raised as to His Messiahship, and His being the Son of God, and settled for themselves in His rejection. They led Him first to the palace of the high priest, from that to the council in the morning, then to the hall of judgment; after this Pilate scourged Him, and permitted the soldiers to insult Him.

Such was their treatment of Him whose goings forth had been from everlasting. Could any of these “goings forth” have been more glorious than the present? God was glorified in each step, each word. On their part, all was ready for the last dread act of human iniquity — “In truth against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou hadst anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the nations, and peoples of Israel, have been gathered together in this city, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy counsel had determined before should come to pass.” When He was drawing near to and weeping over the city, He had said: “If thou hadst known, even thou, even at least in this thy day . . . but now they are hid from thine eyes.” They forced the sword of judgment into the hands of the weeping Savior. “O Jerusalem, how often would I . . . but ye would not.” To the Father, His word was, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee.”

No! they know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness, all the foundations of the earth are out of course, presently to be replaced by those which cannot be moved, deeper these “than depths beneath.” God’s glory amongst His creatures is now upborne, and the new creation has its immovable basis in the death and resurrection of Him who is its Head. The throne of the Father, and the Holy Ghost Himself, bear witness that the work is finished. Does any one ask, “Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?” The testimony is in the hearts and on the lips of the sons and daughters of God, they shout for joy, a joy as lasting as the foundation itself.

Verse 29. In the details of what took place when they had crucified the Lord, we find a fourfold accomplishment of scripture; in Mark a fifth is given: And he was numbered with the transgressors. “It was not until He had borne the forsaking of God, and all had been accepted from His hand (Why hast Thou forsaken Me?) “I am a worm and no man,” “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel,” that He said to His mother: “Woman, behold thy son,” and to the disciple, “Behold thy mother” — holy human affections are not forgotten even at such an hour.

To the dying malefactor He had spoken of paradise, “today . . . with Me in paradise”; for Mary, who was to remain some time, He provided a home with the disciple whom He loved. All is perfect, and in place. He speaks with as much simplicity of a place with Himself in paradise for the thief, as of a home with John for His mother. The place in paradise and the home with John were alike the result of His gracious will.

And now was come the hour for Joseph and Nicodemus to shine. They come, the first with the precious body of Jesus, and Nicodemus bearing precious spices. Surely, this carefulness, and desire to give all honor to the precious body of Jesus, was divinely ordered. When Moses the servant of the Lord died, He buried him in the land of Moab; but of His holy Servant Jesus, He says: “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

Chapter 20

Verse 1. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene." It is deeply interesting to see that loving ones were near Him in His agony and death. The Marys stood by His cross; Joseph of Arimathaea placed His body in his own new tomb, wherein never yet man lay. Mary Magdalene and another Mary visited the sepulchre very early in the morning of the first day of the week; they had bought spices for the purpose of anointing the dead body of Jesus. Mary Magdalene is distinguished among these loving ones: she had stood by the cross when He was dying, and now she seeks His body in the sepulchre to anoint it with the precious spices. The hidden ones show themselves, the timid become brave. Peter is the first to enter the sepulchre.

One would seek in vain for proofs of intelligence and power in the saints at this period (the Holy Ghost was not yet there), but the divine nature was manifested in their attachment to Jesus. Even His dead body was more precious to Mary than all the world beside, and his new tomb is given up for its reception by Joseph. But all this time they were seeking the Living amongst the dead, for they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God; they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

But Mary Magdalene stood without, weeping, when the disciples had gone to their own home; as she wept, she stooped down into the tomb. She could not as yet talk of the excellency of Jesus Christ her Lord, nor was she thinking of "gaining Christ," counting all "else but dross". The time for such exercises and affections had not yet come; not the excellency of Jesus Christ her Lord was her object now, but only the dead body of the Lord.

"I know," said Jehovah's angel to the two, Marys, "that ye seek Jesus the crucified, fear ye not." In knowledge poor indeed, her heart was divinely right, her tears were already in God's bottle. "Woman, why dost thou weep?" say the heavenly messengers; "Woman, why dost thou weep?" says the risen Savior — did He not know? But the history of that heart's sorrow was to be recorded by the Holy Ghost. Her answer was simple, and beautiful in its simplicity, "Sir, if Thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

The dead body of Jesus was her heart's one treasure, and she had not found that; how great was her sorrow! But blessing beyond that heart's imaginings was near. "Mary!"-- "Rabboni!" Her sorrow is already turned into joy. She had sought the Living amongst the dead, she finds the Living from amongst the dead. Her heart had been true, how great its present reward, how beautiful her own name when pronounced by the lips of her living Lord!

And now the honor, lost by apostles, who went to their own homes, becomes the portion of the poor one, once Satan's captive. Mary Magdalene becomes the apostle of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, sent by Him to announce the blessed new relationships. The God of the risen Man was now to be known as their God, they were, henceforth, brethren of the Son of the Father. Introduced by adoption into the blessed place of sonship, they would soon understand that word by the apostle, "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause

He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Verse 19. “Peace be unto you; and when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side.” Peace had now come unto them, made by the work of the cross; His hands and His side bore the tokens of His sufferings, as afterwards He was seen in the midst of the throne as a Lamb that had been slain. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus says, “Peace be unto you: as My Father,” and so on. “And having said this, He breathed into them, and saith to them, Receive the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

The first announced peace was the blessed fruit of His sufferings in the death of the cross, where God condemned sin in the flesh, that there might be no condemnation for the believer in Jesus, “to them which are in Christ Jesus.” But peace was equally needed for their mission from Himself (they were to announce peace made by the blood of the cross), and the Holy Ghost as power for the accomplishment of it.

And when He had pronounced, “Peace be unto you,” the second time, in connection with the mission, He breathed into them, and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” It was not the Holy Ghost come down in person, as on the day of Pentecost, but the Spirit as the power of life, life in resurrection breathed into them by Jesus, Head of the new creation, as He breathed into Adam the breath of natural life in the garden of Eden. This present breathing was power for their present new position.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost introduced another order of things: the formation of the body of Christ, and union with Christ in heaven, the building of an habitation for God through the Spirit. The study of these dispensational changes is deeply interesting and instructive. So “the law and the prophets were until John,” and “from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens suffereth violence.”

Verse 23. “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” This is governmental or administrative, not the absolute forgiveness of sins (who can do that but God?) but administrative in the hands of man. “Arise,” said Ananias to Paul, “and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” That is an example of what is meant by administrative forgiveness. This is not sovereign grace giving eternal life, but founded on the profession made. If Paul really called on the name of the Lord (as no doubt he did), he had eternal forgiveness, if it were otherwise, it was administrative forgiveness, and nothing more.

According to Matthew 18, the assembly — even two or three gathered (together) unto His name — (His promised presence realized by faith) have the power of binding and loosing; this seems to include the power of remitting sins, as explained above. All that is needed to give validity to the loosing and binding by the two or three, is that they be really gathered (together) unto Christ’s name — the truth of what He is as revealed — not to man’s name or their own, to act for Him according to His will.

Three things characterized that first meeting on the first day of the week: peace brought to them by Jesus; the presence of Jesus in their midst; and, thirdly, the Holy Ghost breathed into them — the power of life in resurrection. He had promised them peace before, “Peace I leave with you, My

peace I give unto you”; but here He brings it to them, fruit of His finished work. In Acts 2 we have the coming of the Holy Ghost personally. “Jesus, being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

This is, clearly, different from merely breathing into them the Spirit. In this second case, the sending the Holy Spirit, He first receives Him from the Father, as He receives all from Him. The Holy Ghost, the kingdom, the word, words, life, love, glory — sevenfold blessing, to be communicated to and shared with His saints.

Verse 24. But Thomas was not with them at that first meeting, when Jesus was in their midst, and gave them their mission. And thus he represents, not the church position, as presented to us in verses 19-23, but rather the Jewish remnant, who believe only when they see. How blessed all these last words of their divine Comforter, ere He left them for the Father’s house!

“Comfort My people,” found as perfect a response in His spirit, and latest ministry amongst them, as before the cross, and, as when in glory, He girds Himself to serve them, a servant indeed for ever. “Let not your heart be troubled,” He had said unto them, when the power of darkness was already at work, the enemy having entered into Judas (who went out, “and it was night”), and coming again as prince of this world, only to find nothing in Him. The cross too, with all its measureless depths, was all but reached, yet the whole of His ministry, as recorded in that chapter, is devoted to comforting and strengthening His people — not a word of His own sufferings. The Father’s house on high, and not the cross, is the goal there, and even Satan’s coming was to issue in his finding nothing in Him. Even on the cross, He comforts the soul of the poor thief — “Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise”; and cares for His mother, saying to John, “Behold thy mother.” Is all this “the manner of man, O Lord God”?

And even here, when it was but a moment, and glory with the Father would mark His triumphant place, we see the same character of service maintained to the last. Thus whether glory with His Father, or the forsaking of His God, were to be the next event in His wondrous course, He pursues His path of loving service without a pause or break, in the constancy of divine purpose and love. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

See how He meets each troubled soul, His mother, and the dying thief; Mary, and Thomas, and Peter; and the two going to Emmaus, whose hearts He made to burn; and how, when He was separated from them and carried up into heaven, their sorrow was turned into joy. They “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.” In Acts we read, “These gave themselves all with one accord to continual prayer.”

It would seem that His service of love was continued even during the ascension, for it is written, “as they were gazing into heaven, as He was going, lo, also two men stood by them, clothed in white, who also said . . . This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld Him going into heaven.” He had just told them of the coming of the Holy Ghost, they would be clothed with power then; but they were not thinking of power as they gazed up into heaven after their beloved Lord, but of Him, so the angels are present in a moment to answer what He knew was passing in their hearts. So, when they were, ignorantly but lovingly, seeking the precious body of Jesus, the angel of the Lord, whose clothing was white

as snow, and His look as lightning, descends from heaven and rolls away the stone, saying to the women, "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus the crucified." Those who care for Jesus may confidently expect comfort from above, angelic ministry unseen but real, or a word through the Comforter, now present. These last expressions of His lovingkindness will not be forgotten by those who can say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul."

The word of admonition to Thomas is an important and precious word for us all, "Blessed they who have not seen and have believed."

Verse 31. "But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in His name." In 1 John 5 he writes to those who believe on the name of the Son of God, that they may know, and happy are they who both believe and know! Faith, knowledge, and certainty were to characterize the saints henceforward. We walk by faith, renewed unto knowledge, and possess the certainty of the things revealed, in the presence of the Spirit of truth Himself.

Chapter 21

And now we come to what happened “after these things.” These things would terminate with the departure of the heavenly saints, when a new testimony would be sent forth to the nations, to declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. “Say among the heathen, the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad . . . before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth” (Psa. 96:10, 11, 13.)

But this judgment will be preceded by the preaching of the everlasting gospel to those settled on the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue, for the hour of His judgment has come, and they are summoned to fear God, and give glory to Him, the great Creator. To the Jews, the glad tidings, in connection with His coming to judge the earth, will be, “He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel” (Psa. 98:3).

Verse 1. Attention is called to the manner in which He presented Himself. Peter, followed by some of the disciples, had gone a-fishing — his old occupation — but that night they took nothing. It was very different in the former scene (Luke 5), when at Jesus word he let down the net; then the net could not contain the great multitude of fishes — it broke through. Man failed again in what was committed unto him, the commission to go to the nations in Matthew 28 was never carried out; Paul alone took that up.

But we have now come to the foreshadowing of millennial actings. When morning comes, Jesus stands on the shore, and asks if they have anything to eat. At His command they cast the net on the right side of the ship, and now it is completely filled and yet does not break — the dispensation does not fail as the former one had. The gospel of the kingdom reaches the nations, the everlasting gospel awakens man everywhere, he had forgotten God the Creator. “Judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it” (Psa. 194:15). Then the heavens will rejoice, and the earth be glad.

Verse 7. It was the disciple whom Jesus loved who first perceived that it was the Lord, but there was no delay in Peter, when he heard it, in springing forth to meet Him.

Verse 8. The disciples come now, dragging the net with all the fishes, but find a fire of coals and fish laid thereon. The Jewish remnant seems to be set forth here. Jesus says, “Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.” However we may seek to interpret it, there are evidently two parties represented, in the fish which they had caught, and the fish which Jesus had provided. Jesus says, “Come and dine,” and then gives them both the bread and the fish; He had told them to bring of the fish which they had caught before He invited them to dine.

This was the third time that Jesus showed Himself to the disciples after the resurrection; it is evident that these were remarkable epochs in the history of the Lord's last communications with the disciples. The first time we have in John 20:19-23, which gives us church position, in figure, at least. The second time was His showing Himself to Thomas, who represents the Jewish remnant,

who believe when they see; the third seems to present the Lord in millennial times and associations. In the beginning of the gospel, we have three days definitely marked off; the first in John 1:35, John's testimony, which gathers them to Christ; the second day in verse 43, Jesus own ministry; the third day, John 2, the marriage in Cana of Galilee, when the water of purification is turned into wine, this sets forth the millennial joy. Nathanael's owning Him as Son of God and King of Israel, reminds us of Psalm 2. These titles are found there; Christ's answer to Nathanael gives His millennial position according to Psalm 8. Psalm 2 gives us the kingly place in Israel of the Son of God; Psalm 8 the headship of the Son of Man over all things. The marriage in Cana of Galilee is, in figure, a millennial scene. The third day of John 2, and the third time of John 21, when Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, point in figure to the same time, the commencement of the millennium.

Verse 15. "When therefore they had dined, Jesus says to Simon Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He says to Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee." The wound needed to be thoroughly probed, but he had first been invited to dine with his divine Master, whom he had thrice denied. Let us mark the way He took to reach the conscience of His poor servant; there is no verbal reproof whatever, the matter was too deep for that. It was a question of Peter's present relation to Jesus. The man who said, "I am ready, to go with Thee to prison and to death," had denied Him with cursing and swearing.

First, He puts the question, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" referring to Peter's boast; the next time He simply says, "Lovest thou Me?" but Peter always uses another word, "I am attached to Thee" — appealing for confirmation simply to Jesus knowledge of him. He could have said, in the words of the Psalm, "Thou hast searched me and known me," "There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." The third time, Jesus used Peter's word, "attached" — "Simon, son of Jonas, art thou attached to Me?" Peter was grieved at the third question; but the work was done, broken to pieces, the flesh exposed, his consolation in that trying moment was, that Christ knew what was in his heart — beyond that he did not attempt to go: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I am attached to thee."

Nothing more now of, "I am ready to follow thee to prison and to death." How much happier for Peter to hear this from the mouth of Christ! His word at any rate could not fail, and it was about Peter himself. "But when thou shalt be old . . . another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not," desirest not, the will broken, not in his own strength (he had proved what that was); strength would be given him from above, and in that strength he would glorify the Lord in his death. Now Christ can say, "Follow Me." He knew all along what was in Peter's heart, and Peter now learns far more than he had ever known. before, of the depths of the heart of Christ.

These are the deep lessons to be learned by all who seek to feed the lambs and sheep, and take care of the flock, or to follow the divine Shepherd Himself. How little Peter knew, in the day of his boasting, of the humbling path that lay before him; yet it was to be through the Lord's dealings with him in. connection with that path, that he was to learn how to strengthen his brethren when converted: "when once thou hast returned back, confirm thy brethren."

And mark these last expressions of His love to His people, "Feed My lambs," "Feed My sheep"; and, "Shepherd My sheep." Who can do that but one who seeks to follow Him in whom neither flesh nor will wrought, who had indeed no "flesh" to repress, and whose will was to do always the

things that pleased the Father. We may learn from this what it is to follow Jesus, and who they are who do it.

Peter then, seeing the disciple that Jesus loved following, says, "Lord, and what of this man?" Jesus says, "If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." John's ministry does go on (as has been remarked) "to the coming of Christ," (and then) after that, the Antichrist in the epistle, and then the (false) "church spued out of Christ's mouth." It is a beautiful picture of the triumph of grace; the Lord calling him who had denied Him to the care of that which was dearest to Him upon earth; the weakest He mentions first, "My lambs." It was now but a step to the glory of the Father's throne, but His love for the little flock burns brightly as ever, "having loved His own . . . to the end."

On the fleshy tablets of Peter's heart the Holy Ghost engraved these his Master's last thoughts and commands. They are found again in Peter's closing testimony: "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 . . . And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:2, 4).

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