

WRITINGS OF J T MAWSON

by J.T. Mawson

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by J.T. Mawson, compiled for study and devotional reading.

72 Chapters

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01.00. Concerning Himself

Concerning Himself

J. T. Mawson.

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01.000. Preface

Preface The Word of God With the true Church of God on earth, I believe in God and the Word of His Grace, and I am persuaded that if "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," He would see to it that we should be in no uncertainty about it, else how could any man have said, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift"?

If the only-begotten Son of God, divinely perfect and blessed, came into the world and lived and died and rose again from the dead for the blessing of men, God must of necessity give men a record of this, also divinely perfect and blessed, that those for whom He came might have a divine and perfect assurance of it. Admit the former and the latter follows in logical sequence. To suppose that God would send His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him, and having done that allow an imperfect, contradictory human record to be the only record of His life and death and resurrection would be to suppose Him guilty of colossal folly. The record must be as perfect in its sphere as the One whose life and mission it records was perfect in His, or else we have no sure knowledge, no certainty about these things upon which our souls' eternal welfare depends. The Holy Scriptures are God-breathed; the men who wrote them were moved by the Holy Ghost; they had the things they wrote, not from hearsay, nor from their own imperfect observation, though they did declare what they had seen and heard (1 John 1:1-10), but they did this as guided and instructed by the Holy Ghost, for, said their Lord, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God to us; to them we turn for light and instruction as to Christ and His work. Old and New Testament bear their united testimony to Him, and the revelation that they give is wholly satisfying. In this small volume I have endeavoured to open up the Scriptures that speak of Him. He did this Himself on the day of His resurrection. When walking with two of His disciples who did not recognise Him, He said to them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:25-27). The Word of God is the only authority upon which I base the assurance with which I have written of these things, and by the Word of God alone what I have written must be tested and judged. J. T. Mawson.

01.01. The Miraculous Birth: The Fact and the Reason for It

The Miraculous Birth: The Fact and the Reason for It

Men who have pledged themselves to preach and testify to "the Faith once delivered to the saints" have become bold and more bold in rejecting the truth as to our Lord's entrance into the world. To quote from one of them: "I cannot help including the birth stories among the things that do not matter. There are some things that matter a great deal. There are some life and death matters, if it comes to that, but this is not one of them. It does not matter."

It is my purpose to show that it does matter, that it is one of the foundation stones of our faith, and that, apart from it, the whole edifice of the truth must collapse and fall.

Many are the names and titles that describe the person and glories of our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He is the Word who was with God in the beginning, and who was God; the Creator of all things, the Giver of universal life and the Light of men; He is the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, His Beloved, in whom is all His delight; He is the Resurrection and the Life; He is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person, who upholds all things by the word of His power; He is the wisdom of God, the power of God and the Lord of glory, the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, having an everlasting throne and ruling with a righteous sceptre; He is the Same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; He is the Root and the Offspring of David, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End; He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, the Bread of God and of life, the Door of Salvation, the Son of Man with power on earth to forgive sins; He is the only Saviour and universal Judge, the Lord, having a Name which is above every name, before whom every knee must bend, and in whose hand lies the destiny of every creature; He is the One who liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore and hath the keys of Hades and of death; He is Emmanuel, God with us, and in Him dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily; He is the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; the bright Morning Star, the true God and Eternal Life, and the I AM.

Some of these names belong to Him as having become Man, and as having died and risen again; others describe what He was before He set the pendulum of time in motion, or ever the world was made — what He is in His own uncreated, unchangeable and eternal Being. To these latter belong "the Word," "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father," and "the Son" whom the Father only knows. By these names He is distinguished as to His personality in the Godhead, but being one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the Godhead, He shares in every title that belongs to God, such as "the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen or can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:15-16). The Father has decreed "that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23). We do this when we own His equality with the Father, and bow before Him as our God. "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

We are to consider the entrance of this august Person into the world and to enquire what manner of birth was His who bears all this glory. That He was born of a woman is not disputed; He was a true and proper Man and not a phantom. Every other man born into the world began to be at his conception, and came into the world as a personality that had had no former existence; but our Lord Jesus Christ was rich before His poverty in Bethlehem; He thought it not robbery to be equal with God before He was found in fashion as a Man; He was the Word before He became flesh; He was God's own Son who was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, made of a woman, when the fulness of time had come (Galatians 4:4). This glorious pre-existence surely means that the birth of our Lord into this world was not as the birth of any other man that had ever been born. His birth was an incarnation, the coming of a Divine Person into a condition in which He had not been before, to carry out all the will of God and be the Saviour of us men. His birth was a unique event — the greatest, the most amazing that had ever happened; greater by far than the creation of man at the beginning, and unless our minds are darkened to the true meaning of it, we should certainly expect that it would be brought about in some other way than by the ordinary laws of nature; we feel that a Divine Person coming into manhood must have a supernatural birth, and this feeling is established and confirmed by the Word of God.

We open the New Testament and find on the first page of it the story told in simple language, and in about 250 words. It is a subject on which the imagination might have run riot, as it did in the numerous fables and legends that gathered about it as spirituality declined and superstition advanced in the early centuries of the Christian era; but in this God-breathed account of it, the imaginations of man's mind are excluded, and every sentence of the story bears the imprimatur of God. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins." This is the beginning, the door through which we enter into the New Testament and into the realm of infinite and eternal blessedness that it reveals to our souls. It is the beginning of the full and final revelation of God to man. We cannot advance to the climax and completion of this revelation, if we refuse the beginning of it; we must enter into it by the door or be thieves and robbers of the glory of God. The fulness of time had come, and the voice of the Son spoke and said, "A body hast Thou prepared Me . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7).

It is said that only two of the New Testament writers make mention of the Virgin birth. Well, two witnesses are enough, and at their mouth every word shall be established; but does not this saying, "A body hast Thou prepared Me," give a third witness? It surely involves the miraculous conception; and it proclaims the fact that neither the will of the flesh nor the power of man had any place in it, but that the will and wisdom of God combined to prepare that holy incorruptible body within the womb of the Virgin-mother.

Matthew's Record

There are two accounts of this great event. Matthew's Gospel records the communication to Joseph by the angel, and Luke tells us of the annunciation to Mary. And when we discern the respective characters of these two Gospels and the way the Lord is presented in them, we have no difficulty in seeing how perfect these records are, each in its own place. Matthew unfolds the glory of the Lord as King. His Gospel is "the book of the generation of JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF DAVID, the Son of Abraham." He came as the Heir to the throne of David and to establish and fulfil all the promises made to Abraham. But here was a difficulty; while Jesus Christ was the long-promised Heir, Joseph stood in the direct line of succession and was the legal heir, as this genealogy proves. And this was recognised by the Lord's messenger when he saluted him as "Joseph, thou son of David." He was an obscure village carpenter, proving the truth of the words of the prophet that the tabernacle of David had fallen down and lay in ruins (Amos 9:11), and yet he showed traits of true royalty according to God, in that he was "a just man" and in his compassion and merciful intention toward the weak, and as he thought, failing woman, and in his trust in the Word of God and obedience to it.

It was right that he should have been addressed by the angel not only because of his own personal concern as to the condition of his espoused wife, but also because of his care for the integrity of the succession to the throne of David. It might appear a foolish and futile thing to have been concerned about the latter, seeing that six centuries had passed since the sceptre had departed from the house of David, but faith holds on to the promises of God, even when human strength has failed and every visible hope has fled; and Joseph was a man of faith. And being a man of faith, he did as he was bidden by the angel of the Lord and took Mary unto him as his wife, without hesitation or further misgiving; and by so doing, he cast the protection of his name about her, and made her first-born Son his Heir — the legal Heir to David's throne. But there was a matter of even greater importance than what was due to Joseph and the integrity of the Royal line and the necessity of Jesus Christ being the legal Heir to the throne; there was God's own integrity and His faithfulness to His Word. And these were made good and revealed in the words, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." That was the most astonishing prophecy that God ever gave through a prophet's lips; it means, as we hope to show, the intervention of God in a new and personal way for the deliverance of His people; it foretold something that would be outside and apart from all the power of man, and, impossible as it may seem to be to men who have no faith, it was fulfilled when the espoused wife of Joseph brought forth a Son, whose name was called JESUS, the Saviour of His people from their sins. In that lowly Babe, the Virgin's Son, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, the two Testaments are bound together; the hopes of the Old and the faith of the New unite in Him, and we can with exultation take up the prophetic word and join with Israel and say, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be on His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth for ever. THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL PERFORM THIS (Isaiah 9:6-7);

Luke's Record The Gospel of Luke was written to a Gentile believer and has the world in view rather than Israel; consequently there was not the same necessity as in Matthew's Gospel to show that the birth of the Lord was in accordance with the prophecies made in the Old Testament to Israel. In it the Lord is presented as true Man, born of a woman, come in grace to all men, and there was not the same need to give Joseph the prominence that he has in Matthew's Gospel, where the true heirship to David's throne was a vital matter. But there was need that all people to whom "the good tidings of great joy" as to the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, were brought, should know from whence He came and how, that they might understand and appreciate the fact that His coming was not by the power of man, but entirely of God and in sovereign grace. The annunciation to Mary, a lowly daughter of David's house, and espoused to a working man, brings out this grace in its unsurpassable richness and charm.

Gabriel's message from God to Mary is divided into three parts. First, the salutation which proclaims the greatness of the favour that God was to bestow upon her. Unknown and poor though she was, she was chosen by sovereign grace from among all women to be the vessel by whom God would bring about His great purpose. Second, there was the revelation of what this purpose was. "Fear not, Mary," said the angel, "for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." He that was to be born to her was to be the Son of David, and to have His father's throne: that she might have understood, seeing she belonged to the house of David, but how could He be JESUS Jehovah — the Saviour? How could He be called the Son of the Highest? The Highest is the title of God in His supremacy over all the earth, and in heaven; the One whose word and ways none may challenge, and who will manifest Himself thus in the coming Millennial Kingdom. How could the Son of her womb have the right to be called His Son? We do not wonder that she asked that question; it was a right and proper question to ask, and it brought out the third part of Gabriel's message from God which enlightened her as to how it was to be brought to pass. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, the power of the Highest shall over-shadow thee; therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." This last utterance of the angel "who stands in the presence of God" requires no comment. It most surely drives away all doubt for those who will believe. The birth of the Saviour was miraculous, it was by God's power, it was God's work. Man and his corruptible seed had no part in it; the Son of Mary was holy and undefiled. He was the Son of God. Of this J. N. Darby has written, "It is not here the doctrine of the eternal relationship of Son with the Father. The Gospel of John, the Epistle to the Hebrews and that to the Colossians, establish this precious truth and demonstrate its importance, but here it is that which is born by virtue of the miraculous conception, which on that ground is called the Son of God." And if unbelief says it is contrary to every law of nature and impossible, faith answers in the words of Gabriel, who knew God's power so well, "with God nothing shall be impossible." The necessity for the virgin birth The fact that men need a Saviour, a Deliverer, is evident everywhere, and has been all through their history since the fall. And the first promise that one should appear followed swiftly upon Satan's triumph over man in Eden, and it came forth from the mouth of God. "The Seed of the woman," said He to the victorious serpent, "shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel." If Adam had been able to recover himself and bruise his tempter and conqueror beneath his feet, God would have stood

aside and let him do it, but there could be no hope from him or from any that he could beget. If he had fallen a prey to Satan's subtlety when he stood erect in the plenitude of his powers, how could he by any means recover what he had lost now that he was defeated and fettered by Satan, and lying under the sentence of death by God's just decree? All his progeny were powerless like himself. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12). The hope was not in Adam but in the woman's Seed. It was He, whoever He might be, who was to destroy the great destroyer of our frail and fallen race, and deliver us from his power. The New Testament tells us plainly who He is. "For this purpose," says 1 John 3:8, "was THE SON OF GOD manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." And Hebrews 2:15 tells us that THE SON — in whom God has spoken in these last days — because "the children were partakers of flesh and blood, also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It is plain from these Scriptures that the Seed of the woman is the Son of God, and we are told that "all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him Amen." The first promise prepares us for the Virgin birth and we are not surprised to read, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel." And if unbelief persists in declaring that to be impossible, faith answers, Yes, with men it is impossible; and that is the great and solemn fact that this God-given sign throws into prominence, it is the very lesson that God would teach by the manner of His intervention. Men are unable to save themselves and unable to find amongst even the best of Adam's fallen children one man who can redeem his brother, or give the just ransom for him. Every man needs a Saviour for himself, and because of that, God has stepped in and has provided the Man — the Kinsman-Redeemer, but He has done it in a way that humbles the pride of man and sets him aside. "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." The Virgin's Son would owe nothing to man; His very presence in the world would be independent of man. His coming into the world would be God's work. It would be God's intervention in miraculous power and sovereign mercy — the salvation of the Lord. So we read that in due time, Mary brought forth her firstborn Son and "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Thus came Emmanuel, apart from all the power of men and outside the abodes of men, for not only could not men produce the Deliverer, but they did not want Him when He came. Does it matter?

Like produces like. This is one of the fundamental laws of nature as established by God. It is stamped upon the Creation chapter — fish, fowl, and flesh were all ordained to bring forth each "after his kind." And man could do no other than this. "Adam," we read, "begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image" (Genesis 5:3). And so it has been throughout all the generations of men. Sinful men beget sinful children. Therefore it is written, "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Psalms 58:3), and "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6), and "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In the great penitential Psalm, David confesses, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me," which simply means, "I have come of a sinful stock, my very nature is sinful," and this is true of every man born into the world. Does it matter then or does it not, how the Lord was born into this world? Had He come by natural generation, would He not have been as every other man? To deny the Virgin birth is to deny His pre-existence in the Godhead, and to deny the holiness of His Manhood, and to rob mankind of the one and only Saviour.

It is said that nothing is based upon this great truth in the New Testament. But everything is based upon it; it is the foundation of everything that follows. I stress the fact that it meets us on the first page of the New Testament, that it is the door through which we enter into the full revelation of God. Apart from it, we have no intervention of God for His own glory and our salvation; Jesus is not the great I AM, but a mere man like the rest of men, and we have no sinless Saviour. How, apart from the miraculous conception and the Virgin birth, could the Lord have said, "I know whence I came . . . I proceeded forth and came from God . . . Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am (John 8:1-59); or how could Peter have applied to Him the words of the Psalm, "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27): or the Apostles have spoken of Him as God's Holy Child, Jesus (Acts 4:30). Or how could Paul have spoken of Him as "Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5), or as "the Second Man, the Lord out of heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47); or how could John have insisted with such persistence on the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the great object of faith, the true God and Eternal Life? For ourselves, we linger with the shepherds as they gather round the Babe in the manger; we press into the house with the Magi from the East and worship the young Child with them. We own Him to be truly Man — sinless and holy; but more, for we confess Him, as did Thomas, when he saw His wounded hands and side after He had risen from the dead, OUR LORD AND OUR GOD. And we say as we consider the manner of God's intervention for His glory and our eternal blessing, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

01.02. The Deity of the Lord Jesus: The Necessity for It

The Deity of the Lord Jesus: The Necessity for It

"I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Saviour. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. . . . Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." — Isaiah 45:1-25.

We can understand the envy with which the kings of Egypt would view the rise and progress of Israel. They had held that nation as slaves for many generations but had been compelled by the power of Jehovah to release them, and had seen Jerusalem become the most magnificent and wealthiest city on earth under the rule of David and Solomon. Small wonder that at the first evidence of weakness Shishak came up against that city with a great army and pillaged the Temple and the king's house, and took away the priceless treasure of them, including the shields of gold that Solomon had made. Then Rehoboam, that feeble and foolish son of a great father, does not appear to have put up any resistance; he let the glory of the city go without protest. What did it matter? He could substitute brass for gold, and brass looks like gold, almost; peace seemed cheap at the price. And so it was when he went up to the house of the Lord, brazen shields went up before him instead of shields of fine gold, and when his religious duties were done they were committed to the guard for safe keeping as though they were the real thing (1 Kings 14:1-31).

What the king of Egypt did to Jerusalem, the devil, who is the god and prince of the world, has done for Christendom. For ages he had held mankind in darkness and bondage, but deliverance came at the advent of the Lord Jesus, who lived among men and died and rose again. Then "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Multitudes were delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, and there was established on earth the kingdom of heaven which was enriched by heavenly treasure: the pure gold of God's truth concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. But with the decline of living faith and the rise of profession without reality in these modern days, the devil has seen and seized his opportunity, and has laid his envious and ruthless hands upon these treasures and has robbed an indifferent and faithless church of its shields of gold. He could not have done it if there had not been traitors within who were pledged to hold and fight for these treasures — "the Faith once for all delivered to the saints." They have been his allies in this. The truth as to the person of the Lord is the finest of the gold of our faith; what He is in His own eternal Being gives character to it all. It is declared in the following great texts: "God was manifest in the flesh," not, "Jesus was a manifestation of God," as some say, but that He is Himself, in His own person, God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-14). But this fine gold has been surrendered by many leaders in Christendom, who ought to have defended it to the death. They have surrendered it with other priceless treasures for popularity with the world

and in fear of "modern scholarship." They seem to be well pleased to let these great truths go, for their insubject minds prefer their own investigations to God's revelation, and man's effort to uplift himself is more to them than God's intervention for his redemption and they have seized the opportunity to substitute their own base brass for God's fine gold. A Christ of their imagination is more to their liking than the Christ of God, a Christ who is stripped of the glory of His eternal Deity, and being stripped of that supreme glory is stripped of every other glory that could be acceptable to God and of use to men. And they think that they are the gainers by the change. "We are rich and increased with goods," they boast, "and have need of nothing," and they know not that "they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" and need to turn again to our Sovereign Lord and buy of Him gold tried in the fire that they may be rich (Revelation 3:17-18). The pretence of approach to God is kept up, but the brazen shields go before them instead of shields of gold, and God will not have their counterfeits. "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me," are our Lord's own words, and they are recorded for us in that Gospel which reveals to us the glory of His divine and eternal Being, which indeed is not absent from any part of Scripture; and nothing less than this will do for God. The brazen imitation may suit and fascinate men, but it is an abomination to God, nothing but the pure gold can He accept, and in vain is their worship of Him as long as they teach the doctrines and opinions of men for the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And nothing but the pure gold of this gospel will satisfy the soul of a man when he is fully awakened to his deep need. When the light of God streams into his conscience and he sees the exceeding sinfulness of his sin, and the greatness of his peril and how far his sin has removed him from God, he will spurn the brass of man's imagination as a mockery and a sham, and confess that there can be for him no salvation in any other Name, but the Name of Jesus — Jehovah the Saviour. As to this, the late Handley Moule wrote, "The human soul, once fully awakened to its needs, to its mysterious greatness and to its mysterious but awfully real sinfulness, can find rest only in the Saviour, who is, in equal truth, one with man and one with God. Such a Saviour bridges as with living adamant the gulf of doom and sin which severs creature from Maker. A saviour who is not quite God is a bridge broken at the farther end."

It is here I would begin; before endeavouring to show that all Scripture bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the eternal Word, "The Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever," I would urge the necessity for it. It is a necessity to God, if He is to be known by His creature, and to find His delights in the sons of men, redeemed from all iniquity and purified unto Himself as a peculiar people, zealous of good works; it is a necessity to man if he is ever to know God as his God, to be forgiven, and at peace, and find his soul's everlasting satisfaction in Him. The human soul would grope in vain for light if it were not so; it would cry out hopelessly in its misery, for there would be none to help; there would be "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded," as it was when the prophets of Baal cried all the day long to their false god (1 Kings 18:29). We should be a lost race, wandering stars cut off from our central Sun without hope of restoration to our true orbit and with no outlook but the blackness of darkness for ever, if Jesus were not God: "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father."

Consider the cry that broke out of the awakened soul of that pagan jailor at Philippi, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" What answer could satisfy that bewildered man, trembling on the brink of a lost eternity? There was but one answer that could satisfy him. Suppose instead of that one and

only answer Paul had said, "Believe in Adam, or Abraham, or Moses, or John the Baptist." What a mocker of the man's misery he would have been; or suppose he had said, for he was a greater man than them all, "Believe on me and thou shalt be saved." Would not the soul and conscience of the jailor have revolted against the outrage and have turned from him as a blasphemer and an impostor? But how fitting, how satisfying was the answer that he did give, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The whole gospel of God was involved in that answer; it put that seeking sinner into vital contact with Him who of old had said, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none beside Me" (Isaiah 45:22), it satisfied him, for it gave him a perfect, because a divine Saviour. The necessity for the Word to become flesh did not arise only when that great event took place, it was there from the beginning when sin entered into the world. The patriarch Job felt the necessity and voiced it in memorable words when he said, as he searched for a way by which a man could be just with God: "He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let Him take away His rod from me, and let not His fear terrify me: then would I speak, and not fear Him; but it is not so with me" (Job 9:1-35). It is not difficult to interpret what his feelings were, for they are the feelings of all who have been awakened by God's Spirit to their need. He said in effect: "I know that I have sinned against Him, and if He were a man as I am, I could, having the feelings of a man, understand how I have offended Him; I could go to Him and make restitution for the wrong I have done to Him and so be at peace. But He is not a man as I am, and I cannot measure the demands of His justice against me. The gulf between us is unmeasurable from my side; He is almighty, holy and just, and I am weak, sinful and unholy, and there is no one that I know of to stand betwixt us, who could speak from Him to me, and from me to Him." See how accurately his awakened conscience had gauged the situation: he desired one who could stand betwixt God, infinitely holy and just, and the sinner, guilty and afraid, and put his hand upon them both: He must be equal to God and equal to men. And says Job, "I do not know such a one. I have felt the need for Him, I have longed for Him and sought for Him but I have not found Him." And Job, be it noted, who expressed his soul's deep longing in these words, was the man who came nearer to perfection than any man of his day; and if he was hopeless and despairing because he had no Daysman, it is plain that the Daysman, the Mediator, could not arise from among men such as he was. If He is to come at all He must come from above, and when He comes, He must be able to put His hand upon God: He must be God's equal; pure as God is pure, holy as God is holy, great as God is great: no one less could intervene, or be of any use in this supreme matter to Job or to any other man. Yet He must come low enough to put His hand upon men. He must pass by angels and be one of us, yet sinless, or His touch would defile the throne of God and be unavailing for us. He must represent God and yet be able to identify Himself with us, or He could not take up our vast indebtedness and speak for us. He must be God and man.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity, and the One whom Job could not find on earth has come from heaven, and JESUS, the Virgin's Son, is Emmanuel: GOD WITH US. Being God, He knew according to God's perfect estimate what the effect to the universe of man's sin was. He knew how the majesty of God was challenged by man's disregard of His will, and what the demands of the eternal throne were in regard to the violation of its just decrees. He knew how man's pride and self will had made him the lawful captive of Satan, and how great was the gulf that separated him from his God, and how powerless he was to right the wrong. He knew the penalty that had to be paid

and the work that had to be done, and knowing all this He came, saying, "A body hast Thou prepared Me . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). He became the Son of Man, that He might stand in the place of men, and be lifted up as their substitute and representative and meet the bill of their indebtedness. This involved Him in all the sorrows of Calvary, and there "He gave Himself a ransom for all." If He had not become man He could not have died, if He had not been God His death would have been without value, but now His death accomplished and the ransom paid, He is "the one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

He stooped from His eternal glory and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man He put His hand upon us, degraded though we were, and He did it tenderly, graciously so that we are not afraid. He is full of grace and truth and there is no terror for us in His hand; we do not shrink from Him, for He has touched us with the hand of a man, yet He was never less than God, and God has touched us in Him. He has put one hand upon us and the other He has placed upon the throne of God. With the one hand He has offered the fullest satisfaction to every righteous claim of God, and with the other He bestows fulness of grace upon men. He brings us to God and gives us a place in His presence without fear, and in everlasting peace, a place established upon an infallible and immovable foundation of divine righteousness laid down by Him who is God and Man in His own blessed person. But if the necessity on man's side was great, it was even greater on God's side; the fulfilment of His purposes and the revelation of the deep love of His heart towards men as well as the glory of His Name all depend upon the Deity of the Lord Jesus. How could God reveal Himself to men who were cut off from Him by their sins? How could He win their hearts from their fear and hatred of Him and deliver them from the darkness in which they groped? How could men love God if they did not know Him, and how could they know Him, since no man hath seen God at any time unless the only-begotten Son which is in His bosom came forth to declare Him? It was certainly necessary that these things should be done if ever that great word was to be fulfilled, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

Before all this could be an accomplished fact the sin of the world must be borne away, and who could do that? It is recorded that, "John (the Baptist) seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We are familiar with the words, so familiar that we are but lightly impressed with their immensity and meaning. "The sin of the world!" Think of it! Think of the sin of one city, what man could take that away? or of one street in a city, or of one house in that street, or of one man in that house? Could any man take away his own sin and stand before God, "holy and without blame before Him in love"? for nothing less than that will suit Him. The questions have only to be asked to prove to all who are not wilfully blind that this work could only lie in the hands of the eternal God. Yet as John saw that lowly Stranger from Nazareth moving towards him among the multitudes of Israel, he proclaimed Him to be the Taker-away of the sin of the world, and in that word he proclaimed His Godhead power and worth. No wonder that he was compelled to add, "This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me." That which is written in Revelation

21:1-27 shall come to pass, for "the words are true and faithful" (Revelation 21:5). The same voice that cried, "It is finished" on the cross at Golgotha shall be heard saying "It is done," and God shall rest with the multitude of His redeemed sons in His own love that has been declared by the Son, and shall be all and in all to them for ever. Meanwhile He declares, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life." God Himself is the Fountain, and the thirst of the human soul can only be assuaged and satisfied with God, and God is fully revealed to us in JESUS. For "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

01.03. The Deity of the Lord Jesus: In the Opening of the New Testament

The Deity of the Lord Jesus: In the Opening of the New Testament

Here, then, is that which the Spirit of God sets before us: Jesus, the Son of David, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; Jehovah, the Saviour, to deliver Israel from their sins; God with us: who could comprehend or fathom the mystery of His nature in whom all these things combined? His life, in fact, as we shall see, displays the obedience of the perfect Man, and the perfection and the power of God. — J. N. Darby.

It was not the work of earlier writers of the New Testament to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. To them this great truth was not a matter of question or debate, it was their whole faith, and the standpoint from which they made their inspired-by-the-Holy-Spirit records. It has been said that just as the golden threads were inextricably woven with the blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen of the High Priest's ephod and girdle (Exodus 18:1-27) so is the Deity of Christ woven into all that these men wrote; and that is true, yet the type is feeble and inadequate, as all material types of what is infinite must be. The Deity of Christ is more than interwoven into the Gospel records, it is the warp upon which all that is recorded in them is wrought; it is the root out of which all truth grows; it is the fountain from which all blessing flows. If it could be torn from these four Gospels they would be meaningless shreds, and the glorious faith of the Son of God would be compelled to take its place along with other vain, worldly philosophies, having some interest perhaps to scholars, but void of all saving value for sinners. Those who reject it, reject the only hope, the only way of deliverance for men, for all Scripture shows that if men were to be saved, God must come down to them to do it, and also, if God does come down to men, He must come as their Saviour. And it is with this that the New Testament opens. Upon the first page of it, in our Authorised Version, the Name of JESUS appears in capital letters, and it gives us the title and the great subject of the Book. That Name means Saviour, and He had come to save. The New Testament is the Book of God's salvation, and it shows us that God Himself is the Saviour, and He only. He might delegate great works to His angel-servants, and speak in divers ways to men by His prophets, but this work of salvation He must undertake Himself, or it would never be done.

Let us now consider this, "Fear not," said the angel of the Lord to Joseph, "to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." He did not say that He would save sinners, Jew and Gentile, though that is most blessedly true, and comes fully to light as the truth unfolds, but to "save His people." His people were Israel, and they were in view in the angel's announcement, and the fulfilment of the word of God by His prophets to them. They were Jehovah's people, a people chosen of God as His own peculiar possession, even though they had departed far from Him. Their sins had separated them from Him, but He would not abandon His rights in them. He could not if He was to be faithful to His word and promise. He must undertake their salvation. And Jesus was to appear to do this, because, as the angel said, these

people chosen of God were His PEOPLE.

There are many Old Testament passages addressed to Israel which bind up their salvation with God's personal intervention on their behalf and that prove conclusively that He only could save them. I will quote a few of them, "I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isaiah 43:3). "I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Saviour" (Isaiah 45:11). "There is no God else beside Me, a just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah 45:21). "All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isaiah 49:26). "I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but Me; for there is no Saviour beside Me" (Hosea 13:4). The name Jesus carries divine glory with it; that it means Jehovah the Saviour; and it is certainly clear from these great texts that none but God could be the Saviour, and if any others pretended to be able to do this, their pretence only proved them to be thieves and robbers (John 10:1-42), but of Jesus, the angel said, "He shall save His people from their sins." Then who else could He be but God? The first quotation from the prophets As we apprehend the force and meaning of the words of the angel of the Lord to Joseph we are prepared for the statement that follows, "Now this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." When Mary brought forth her first-born Son the Saviour-Messiah had entered the world, He who had said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel I AM hath sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14), was not now sending a servant with a message but He had appeared Himself to be their Saviour. This mystery of God-incarnate must ever baffle all intellectual investigation, but it does not stumble faith; for faith expects that God will perform His word. If He had spoken of this by the prophet, what He had said must come to pass. And faith knows that when God moves He moves in a way worthy of Himself. He confounds the wise and the proud and the mighty by that which is apparently weak and of no account. It was even so in this matter. He came into manhood and in great humility, not to condemn and consume a sinful people, but to offer Himself to them as their Saviour and Lord. The second quotation from the prophets The coming of the wise men from the East to enquire where He was who was born King of the Jews, gave Jerusalem the opportunity of not only beholding its King but of seeing its God manifest in flesh. The chief men of the city were gathered together by Herod, the Idumean usurper, and they showed that they were well acquainted with the Scriptures that spoke of His birth. But in citing Micah 5:2, why did they omit that part of it that declares His eternal Being and activities? The omission seems to indicate that they had no desire for a close acquaintance with their God, the idea was not acceptable to them; an alien tyrant seems to have been more to their minds than Jehovah their Saviour. But the prophecy which they quoted not only foretold the place of His birth and the dignity of His office, but the glory of His Person. Micah wrote, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" an extraordinary prophecy; but actually fulfilled when they took the reed that they had put in His right hand as a mock sceptre and smote Him on the head (Matthew 27:30) — "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet 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 (or the days of eternity)" (Micah 5:1-2). Who could have conceived this strange thing, that He whose goings forth were from eternity, who in divine, creative energy had cast the stars before Him as a golden pathway for His glorious feet, should have come forth in obscure Bethlehem, born of an obscure virgin-mother, in all the apparent weakness of human babehood, to be the Servant of the Godhead and to tread the

filthy streets of those eastern cities in His search for the diseased and distressed and devil-possessed, and to go forth at last bearing His cross to Golgotha to save His people from their sins? What goings forth were these! Yet these were the ways of divine love, made known in the Son of Man, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. It was the only way if God was to be known as the Saviour, and if Jesus was to make good His title to that glorious Name. The third quotation from the prophets

Passing over other quotations from the prophets that do not bear on our subject we come to Matthew 3:1-17. John the Baptist was a man full of the Holy Spirit, and by the guidance and power of the Spirit he bore testimony to Jesus. He refused to talk of himself; his mission was to "prepare the way of the LORD," according to the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3. And of Him whose forerunner he was, he said, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11-12). With the Lord close upon his heels, this faithful Forerunner declared his own limitations; he could baptise the people with water; he could bring them down into that which signified death and no more; but at the same time he proclaimed the might of his Lord. He would lift them into the sphere of life and endue them with the power and intelligence that belonged to that life, or — dread alternative — baptise them with fire. He would gather His wheat into the garner and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Israel was His floor, and He the Lord would discriminate between His wheat and the chaff. Who but the Lord could do this? It is written, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." He had come in grace, the Lord in whom is salvation, but He had come to a recalcitrant nation, a remnant only of which would receive Him; and since He is a just God as well as a Saviour, His judgment must fall on the rebellious. "For the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1). "The Father . . . hath committed all judgment to the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:22-23). "What a fact of immeasurable greatness was the presence of the Lord God in the midst of His people, in the Person of Him who, although He was doubtless to be the fulfilment of all the promises, was necessarily, though rejected, the Judge of all the evil existing among His people." (J. N. D.) The fourth quotation from the prophets The next quotation from the prophets which has a definite bearing on our subject is in Matthew 4:1-25. John had been cast into prison. He had been a burning and a shining light in the darkness, but as the stars fade away when the sun rises, so he passed out of sight that all eyes might be fixed upon the One who was greater than he; "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region of the shadow of death light is sprung up." The quotation is from Matthew 9:1-38 of the prophecy and it declares the greatness of the One in whom this great light shone, and we must not fail to notice this. "Unto us," says the prophet, "a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and

with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

How great are the glories of this five-fold name! too bright indeed for mortal eyes, if it were not in Jesus that they shine, but in Him they reach us as softly and sweetly as the dawn, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Here is meekness, gentleness and love. We are not afraid of a babe; we do not shrink in terror from a son. "Fear not," said the angel to the Shepherds, "for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger." And His Name — the name of that Babe upon whom the Shepherds looked with wonder and whom the wise men worshipped — has a five-fold glory. Can we discern it in the Gospels? I think we can, indeed it pervades them and diffuses its fragrance from every page of them. His name shall be called WONDERFUL. The devil owned it when he was compelled to leave Him, having utterly failed to allure Him from the path of righteousness (Matthew 4:11). The people confessed it when they were astonished at His doctrine (Matthew 7:28); the soldiers who were sent to take Him were compelled to own it when they said, "Never man spake like this Man" (John 7:26); the people confessed it again when they said, "He hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37); His disciples felt it when they asked, "What manner of man is this?" (Matthew 8:25); the devils were forced to the confession of it when they said, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth?" (Matthew 8:29); and the Father proclaimed it when from the excellent glory He said, "Thou art My Son, (even) the Beloved, in whom I greatly delight."

COUNSELLOR. "Learn of Me," He said, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls" (Matthew 11:29), and "Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24). THE MIGHTY GOD. This is the name of God as the Omnipotent One, the mighty EL, the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, Who disposes of men as He will, and is the strength and refuge of those that trust in Him. This is the central glory of the five-fold Name and it shone from the lowly Nazarene when He stilled the storm on the midnight sea (Matthew 8:26); thrust back and controlled the power of death (Matthew 8:23); multiplied the loaves and fishes to satisfy the hungry crowds (Matthew 14:15); claimed the undivided allegiance of the hearts of men (Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 19:21); forgave the sins of those that sought Him (Matthew 9:2); and said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). THE FATHER OF ETERNITY. Our minds can travel back through the ages of time, but they halt at the frontiers of eternity; yet this fourth beam of this all-glorious Name carries us into eternity whether we will or not, and tells us that every age of it proceeded from Him, and that He controls them with all their issues. If I may be permitted to go outside this Gospel of Matthew I will quote from Colossians 1:1-29, where it is said of "The Son of the Father's love" (Colossians 1:13), "for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17). And turning back to our Gospel I read of this Creator-Son, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matthew 11:27), and there shines a beam too bright for creature eye, a glory that no man hath seen or can see. THE PRINCE OF PEACE. There is not much said about peace in Matthew's Gospel — it belongs more to Luke's and the latter part of John's — but the reason is not far to

seek. As the Prince of Peace, He sent forth His messengers preaching peace in every house into which they went, but the people were not worthy of that peace, for they rejected the Prince of it, and the peace they would not have returned to those who carried it (Matthew 10:13), and the Prince of Peace had to say in view of this stubbornness and blindness, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Nevertheless He was the Prince of Peace, and Peter proclaimed this when He told the first Gentiles that ever heard the gospel, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36). And all who owned His Lordship entered into peace then as they also do even unto this day. The glory shone in vain for Israel then, for they stumbled at the lowliness of their great Messiah; but the day is surely coming when He will dispel their darkness, and lift the veil that covers them and open their wondering eyes and they shall say in that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). Then of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, and He will establish His kingdom with judgment and justice for ever. And He will swallow up death in victory and wipe away tears from off all faces, for He is the Saviour of His people, JEHOVAH-JESUS.

Thus we see Him in the early chapters of Matthew, who is the Son in the glorious Trinity (Matthew 28:19), co-equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, enter into the world as man, yet Emmanuel, to be the Saviour of His people, and their Ruler, who was not a child of days, but the Lord of Eternity; and their all-discerning and righteous Judge, and the One who will drive before His victorious feet all darkness and the power of death and fill His kingdom and the whole earth with the light of the knowledge of God which shines even now in His face for all who believe.

01.04. The Sinlessness of the Lord Jesus: Why it Must Be

The Sinlessness of the Lord Jesus: Why it Must Be

Never once did He confess sin; never once asked for pardon, though He enjoined both upon all others. Indeed, for all others this returning as prodigal, humble and repentant, was the one way that He set forth to the peace and rest of the Father's forgiveness. Yet He never gave a hint, He never breathed a prayer, that implied that He needed this. He challenged His enemies to convince Him of sin. He declared positively that He did always the things that pleased His Father. He had power on earth to forgive sin, but needed no forgiveness Himself. — ADAPTED.

Three words are given in Scripture to define sin; they are brought together in Exodus 34:7, Psalms 32:1-11 and Psalms 51:1-19 — they are transgression, iniquity and sin. These words are not mere synonyms that could displace one another and nothing be lost, for each has its own terrible meaning. TRANSGRESSION is revolt from, it means a tearing of oneself away. God has declared His will for men, but they prefer their own wills, and in pursuit of their own wills they tear themselves away from God. INIQUITY means twisted, crooked, perverse. God has laid down a road for the feet of men to tread, and that road is as straight as His everlasting sceptre, but men have made for themselves crooked ways (Isaiah 59:8); they are a crooked and perverse generation (Php 2:15). SIN means missing the mark. God has set up His mark, the end at which every man should aim. God Himself should be the end and aim of every man's life, but every man has substituted self for God, and set up his own mark to displace God's; and has missed the very mark and purpose of his existence. Along with sin in this threefold character goes GUILTY; it permeates the life of every man who has not been honest before God. His effort is to appear different to what he knows himself to be, to cover up and hide his sinfulness and even to imagine that he can deceive God Himself as to it. Then the New Testament gives us a striking definition of sin in 1 John 3:4, where we should read, "for sin is lawlessness," and that covers all that sin is; it is not a mere yielding to the sudden and capricious impulses of our nature, but the determination that lies deep in a man's will, though perhaps seldom expressed, to go his own way and be independent of God. As we consider what sin is as it is defined for us in the Scriptures, we are conscious that we must plead guilty before God to transgression and iniquity and sin, and confess that it is not only in practice that we are sinners, but that we are sinners in our very nature; that what we have done springs out of what we are; the fruit reveals the nature of the root. But we are equally conscious that in this respect our Lord stands out in complete contrast to all that we are; our minds recoil from even the suggestion that there was sin in Him; our spiritual instinct tells us that He was not as we are, that He would be of no use to us if He had been, and we find that these instincts are confirmed by the plainest possible statements in the Word of God. The flesh and blood that He took was wholly apart from sin. His body was a holy body prepared for Him by God. As a man He was "holy, harmless and undefiled." He was as holy in His manhood nature and life amid the sordidness and sin of the world as He was in the beginning, when by His divine power and glory He created the heavens and the earth. This holy manhood could not have been apart from the miraculous birth. In no other way than that supernatural way could the everlasting Word

have come in flesh. Hence in announcing His birth to the Virgin-mother, the angel of the Lord declared, "That holy Thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." And from the moment that the Holy Ghost came upon the most blessed of all women, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, her Firstborn Son was wholly for God; His own words were, "Thou art He that took Me out of the womb; Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts" (Psalms 22:1-31).

Heaven and earth and even the nether regions confessed His holiness; God and men and demons bore witness to it. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him at His baptism, not as a burning flame, but as a dove, indicating surely that there was nothing in Him that was obnoxious to the holiness of God's Spirit, but everything in absolute harmony there with Him; and the Father declared that His eye had searched, and found only that in Him that delighted Him. At the very beginning of His public service to God and men, the demons recognised Him and confessed Him as God's holy One (Mark 1:1-45), and His Apostles, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and in the full light of His life and death and resurrection and ascension to glory, bore witness again and again to this essential fact of our Faith; this fact apart from which our Faith is a delusion and a lie. The sinless sacrifice for sin

It stands out in the Epistles as a thing to be noted and cherished, that when the question of sin and the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus as our substitute in regard to it arises, His sinlessness is emphasized. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made Him to be sin for us, but adds that He "knew no sin." 1 Peter 2:24 tells us that He "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," but assures us that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). 1 John 3:5 tells us that He was manifested to take away our sins, and adds, "in Him was no sin." Surely nothing could be clearer than that no sacrifice but a sinless sacrifice could meet the claims of God's holiness against sin, and if Jesus had not been sinless He could not have stood in the sinner's place; He would not have survived the judgment, and we should have had no Saviour. The necessity for this sinless offering was foretold in the types and shadows of the Old Testament. The passover lamb had to be without blemish, a male of the first year (Exodus 12:1-51); and every sacrifice that was offered to God had to be of the same unblemished sort. "If there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 15:20). "But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you" (Leviticus 22:20). If God could not accept a blemished sacrifice as foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ, how abhorrent is the thought that He who was the Substance of all the shadows and the Fulfiller of all the types, had a blemish or the taint of sin in Him! And that such a thought might have no place in our minds, we are told that when the time for the offering up of the sacrifice came, He "through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). Was that offering accepted? It could not have been if it had not been a sinless offering. It was accepted. The Word of God declares that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins," but that this Man's one offering hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." That one offering was so free from all taint of sin, so essentially, inherently and intrinsically holy and excellent that He having made it has sat down at the right hand of God, never to arise again for such a work; and so complete and efficacious is it, that the Holy Ghost can bear witness that God will remember no more the sins and iniquities of all those that believe, and that through it they have the title now to enter into the very presence of God

(Hebrews 10:1-39). Not sinless only but wholly good

Now absence of sin would not have been enough, and we cannot stop at the fact that there was no sin, either in the nature or acts of the Man Christ Jesus; we look for positive good, and we are not disappointed. We read, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17), and we find this positive goodness in Him at all times and in every circumstance; it was His glory. "He went about doing good, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38), and for this He was anointed with the Holy Ghost. He was conceived by and anointed with the Holy Ghost. There is a beautiful type of this in Leviticus 2:1-16, where the unleavened cakes mingled with and anointed with oil tell of the life of Jesus, permeated and empowered by the Holy Ghost, of which the oil is a well-known type. The absence of leaven teaches that there was no evil in Him, for leaven is everywhere in Scripture a symbol of evil. Upon these cakes frankincense was put, typical of the fragrance of that goodness that God ever saw in Him. Where every other man transgressed and revolted from the known will of God, He could say, "I do always the things that please Him" (John 8:29). Where every other man had sinned, and missed God's mark, He could say to His Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4); and where every other man had loved iniquity and turned out of the right way, it is said of Him, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" (Hebrews 1:9). And there was no guile in Him, He was even the same that He said from the beginning (John 8:25). From the first breath that He drew in the manger until He committed His spirit into His Father's hands at the cross, He was holy unto God. No adverse will within Him ever warred against God's will for Him. No sinful thought or selfish desire ever spoiled the fragrance of His life; there was no fly in that sweet ointment. He was the well-beloved Son in whom was the Father's full delight, doing always the things that pleased Him. He was in the world that reeked with moral putrefaction, surrounded by sin, hated by sinners, assailed by the devil and tested by every trial and He suffered as no other man had suffered or could suffer because of it all;

"Yet spotless, undefiled and pure

Our great Redeemer stood;

While Satan's fiery darts He bore,

And did resist to blood." The more deeply the life of Jesus is studied, the more impressive does His holy dependence upon God and His obedience to His Word and will appear. And He was obedient without murmuring, though the will of God involved Him in a life of suffering and a death of shame. His heart went out with all that He did. This is beautifully set forth in Isaiah 50:1-11, where the Spirit of Christ speaks in the prophet, saying, "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 My ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." In this connection I would quote a beautiful series of the Lord's own sayings that we might contemplate them with wonder and joy.

"My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

"I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30).

"I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38).

"The living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father" (John 6:57).

"I and My Father are One."

"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John 11:41).

"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" (John 12:49-50).

"That the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John 14:31).

"I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

"I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4).

"It is finished" (John 19:30).

I might quote many more of these sayings of His, but these are enough to prove to us that He was "the blessed Man" of Psalms 1:1-6, that walked not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful. But His delight was in the law of the Lord, and in His law did He meditate day and night. In nature and life, in thought and word and deed, in spirit, soul and body He was always and altogether the holy One of God.

Finally think of the testimony that was borne to Him when He was condemned as a malefactor to a cross of shame. Judas the traitor said, "I have betrayed innocent blood." Pilate the judge said, "Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him," and again, "I find no fault in Him." And he saith unto them the third time, "Why, what evil hath He done? I find no cause of death in Him." The dying thief said, "This Man hath done nothing amiss," and the centurion who carried out the execution exclaimed, "Certainly this was a righteous Man," and again, "Truly this was the Son of God."

01.05. The Temptations of the Lord Jesus: What Their Character Was

The Temptations of the Lord Jesus: What Their Character Was

"The righteous and holy Man, the Son of God, enjoying the privileges proper to such a one, He must undergo the trial of those devices through which the first Adam fell. It is His spiritual condition which is tested. To maintain His position He must have no other will than that of His Father, and fulfil it whatever might be the consequences to Himself. He must fulfil it in the midst of all the difficulties, the privations, the isolation, the desert where Satan's power was, which might tempt Him to follow an easier path than that which should only be for the glory of His Father. He must renounce all the rights that belonged to His own Person, save as He should receive them from God, yielding them up to Him with a perfect trust." — J. N. Darby.

Some people do not seem able to understand any other sort of temptation than the incitement to do evil, and they argue that temptation can have neither force nor meaning to a man unless there is within him the desire, or at least the liability to yield. We are all familiar with that character of temptation, and it is recognised in the Scriptures, where we read, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed" (James 1:13-14). Yet we are also told in the same Scriptures, "God did tempt Abraham" when He bade him offer up Isaac (Genesis 22:1). This must have been some other kind of temptation than that of which James speaks; it was certainly not an enticement to do evil; it could not have been, for it is as impossible that God should tempt a man in that way, as it is impossible for Him to lie. It was a testing of what was in Abraham; his faith was put into the crucible and it came out of it, as we know, as gold tried by the fire. And this character of temptation is spoken of more often in the Scriptures than that of enticement to sin. The two kinds of temptation

There are two kinds of temptation. Peter speaks of both. He says, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1). That means that when the enticement to sin assails the Christian, instead of gratifying the desire within that answers to the temptation without, he resists it, and suffers in the flesh. He says, "No, Christ suffered for my sins. I will not allow and gratify that which caused Him to suffer the Just for the unjust to bring me to God." But in 1 Peter 1:6-7, he speaks of "manifold temptations"; these are not enticements to do evil, but the trial of the Christian's faith. They are tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, perils, sword, pain, bereavement, tears and other burdens and vicissitudes of life (Romans 8:35), by which Christians are tested, and which discover whether God is greater to them than their sorrows and adversities, and nearer to them than their circumstances, and whether they can wholly trust in Him at all times. Plainly, then, temptation is often used in Scripture when enticement to do evil is not the subject at all. Enticement, if yielded to, betrays the bad that is in us, but this other kind of temptation tests us and brings out the good if we really rely upon God, or it may reveal to us our self-confidence and folly, as it did in Peter's case.

Because people do not distinguish between these two kinds of temptation they argue that since the Scripture says that the Lord Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15) — He had to resist the assaults from without, and to watch a traitor within, though He ever fought this two-fold battle successfully. We have heard it said by earnest though unenlightened Christians that in their conflicts with evil they have been comforted by the thought that the Lord had to struggle as they struggle, and that because He overcame in the struggle so may they hope to do. He did indeed overcome in every temptation, but the temptations were entirely from without and never from within as ours so often are; and they certainly may be more than conquerors through Him that loved them, but it will be on other ground entirely from that that they suppose. The Lord tempted apart from sin This popular teaching is not the truth. It means that there was liability in the Lord to sin even though He did not yield. Such a view of Him is not found in Scripture; it is false; it is derogatory to His holy person and damaging to the faith of His saints. This false idea is chiefly built upon the passage already quoted from Hebrews 4:15; but there is no doubt on the part of those who are able to judge in these matters that the words, "yet without sin," in the Authorised Version, are a faulty translation and should be "sin apart," or "apart from sin." Those who have a Scofield Reference Bible will find it so given in the margin; see also J. N. Darby's New Translation. He was tried by every kind of temptation except that kind. He was never enticed as we are, for there was nothing within Him that answered to sin without, except holy suffering because of it. Our Saviour, High Priest and Leader was and must ever be beyond the possibility of sin. This is the truth that must be emphasised. The difficulty that some find in understanding any other sort of temptation than enticement to sin may be because they have known no other. Their conflicts have only been with the evil that is within them, the conflict described in Romans 7:1-25. They have hardly started on the heavenly pilgrimage, and know little or nothing of the trials of the race of faith: of the discouragements and difficulties of it, and the assaults of Satan in his endeavours to drive those who are in it back from it or turn aside into an easier path. But it is this that is in view in the Hebrew Epistle where we read so much of the way the Lord endured temptation. Christians are not there viewed as struggling in the Slough of Despond, they have got beyond that, and are pilgrims, and warriors, and worshippers; partakers of the heavenly calling, leaving the world behind them and pressing onward to the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Now Jesus is the author and finisher of this way of faith. He began at the beginning of it and trod every step of it to its completion, and He knows every trial and difficulty in it, and how Satan besets with many wiles and threatenings those who are following Him in it, for He has experienced them all, and was tempted in all points on that road and in that life of faith, apart from sin, and consequently He is able to sympathise with them and succour them in their hours of weakness and distress and in every time of need.

I quote from Lectures on Hebrews, by S. Ridout: "We read of one of Bunyan's characters that at the close of his life said, wherever he had found the footprints of the Lord Jesus, there he had coveted to put his feet. How beautiful that! but sweeter far is the thought that our blessed Lord, when here on earth, searched wherever the feet of His weary saints would have to tread, and He not only coveted to do it, but He did put His feet just there. He has gone through all the circumstances of the wilderness, He knows what all the testing and trials of it mean in a way infinitely beyond the experience of the ripest saint, for He has passed through it, apart from the

deadening, dulling, wasteful experiences of sin. We pass through the wilderness, alas, too often yielding to sin. Our blessed Lord passed through, never yielding in thought for one moment to a thing that was not in accordance to His Father's will." The Lord Jesus led the way in this path of faith and testing and suffering; and this is the meaning of such statements as, "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). And again, "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). That does not mean that He learnt to obey, He never needed lessons of that sort; His very nature was wholly subject to God, but He learnt what obedience entailed in a world that was ruled by the devil, the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. He who is the Lord of hosts, came down into a life of obedience and dependence on God, and He was thoroughly tested in it. As every girder in a great bridge is tested before it is put into its destined place in the bridge, so was our Lord tested under the utmost pressure and He was never found wanting. There was no resistance to God's will in Him, no resentment, no murmuring, no fault, no flaw; the will of God did not chafe his Holy soul, He delighted to do it both day and night, and having passed through every test, and graduated in the school of suffering, He has fully qualified to be the author of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). The temptation in the wilderness But now leaving that phase of temptation in which we have a part and in which we may have the succour and sympathy of the Lord, we come to the great conflict in the wilderness, when He in whom was all goodness, and who was the God-ordained Leader of the forces of Light met the spirit of evil, the Prince of the powers of darkness. We may learn many lessons as we contemplate these temptations of the Lord; and as we watch His ways we may see how we may overcome, though we must always remember that if we meet Satan at all we meet a defeated foe. Jesus met him when he was flushed with four thousand years of triumph over men. But our subject is not what He was as a pattern for us, but rather what was involved in the conflict for God and men, for Himself and the great adversary. The Lord had appeared according to the ancient word to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," but these whom He had come to bless were the devil's captives. He held them as prisoners in his palace, and was "the strong man" who was determined to keep his goods from all molestation. Moreover, he trusted in his armour and thought himself invincible — it is all described by the Lord in a few terse sentences in Luke 11:21-22. For forty centuries he had bound men as captives; he had forged many weapons to effect this and apparently he had done as he wished among them, no one had appeared who could spoil him of his armour or dispute his right to the children of men. The question had been asked by the prophet in former days, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? and shall the lawful captives be delivered?" so hopeless did it all seem to be. But Jehovah had answered, "Even the captive of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered . . . and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am the Saviour" (Isaiah 49:24-26). But this deliverance of the devil's captives awaited the coming of the One who was "stronger than he," and against whom his most subtly forged weapons would utterly fail. That Jesus was He, we know, but He had to prove Himself in direct conflict with the devil. Before He could do one public work of mercy or speak one public word of grace this issue had to be tried.

Then further the devil had claimed the kingdoms of the world; he dominated them and arrogated to himself the right to dispose of them as he pleased, but Jesus was the destined and rightful Heir,

and the devil knew it; could he out-manoeuvre Him and deceive Him and bring Him under his dominion as he had done Adam? He was to be permitted to try, and to tempt the Lord to the utmost of his power, and by his efforts bring into manifestation what was in the heart and mind and will of the Lord, and prove whether He loved righteousness and hated iniquity or not, and whether He was able and worthy to wield the universal sceptre. And there was still another matter at issue, this second Man had come as the image of the invisible God: as His representative could He hold the ground for God against all attacks where the first man had basely surrendered his trust? Was God to be glorified in and through man? Would He be able to look upon One, who would sacrifice every worldly advantage, and Himself also, for His will, and overcome the adversary by complete dependence and absolute, unquestioning obedience to the One who had sent Him? This was a great issue, everything in the age-long conflict between good and evil, depended upon it. In this encounter with Satan, Jesus was alone and wholly dependent upon God; no disciple was near to cheer Him and no angel ministered to Him until the fight was finished. This isolation from all aid from others is emphasised by the fact that He was carried into the wilderness by the Spirit to meet the foe: away from the abodes of men to the haunts of the wild beasts. And the fact that the temptation is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and not in that of John, would teach us that it was in His manhood-weakness and dependence upon God that the fight was waged, and not by the Godhead power that dwelt in Him; for John's Gospel is the Gospel of His divine glory, the glory of the Son brought down into Manhood while the Synoptic Gospels show us the same Person, truly, but as "the woman's Seed," the lowly Man of sorrows, who had no resources but in God. The first temptation

It has often been said that in these three temptations of the Lord "all that is in the world: 1, the lust of the flesh; 2, the lust of the eyes; 3, the pride of life" appear; and I have no doubt that this is true, for these three phases of the world are the weapons in which the devil trusts in his enslavement of men, and it is in this order that they are recorded in Luke's Gospel, which gives us the moral and not the historical order of them. In the proposal that Jesus should make the stones into bread there was a subtle suggestion of kindly interest in His welfare as well as a reflection upon God, as there had been when he tempted Eve in Eden. Are you the Son of God and hungry? Surely God has forgotten you, or is indifferent to your need! Use the power you possess and relieve your hunger. Thus might the temptation be paraphrased. It was met by a perfect answer, "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of GOD." God and His word were all to Jesus, He would not use His power on His own behalf or to take Himself out of the place of dependence upon God. He could endure hunger but not independence of God. He sought no ease or comfort for Himself, His meat and drink were the will of God and to finish His work. The lust of the flesh had no place in His heart nor was there a joint in His armour where a doubt as to God's goodness could be thrust; and where Adam and Eve were overthrown and wounded to death, Jesus stood firm and unscathed. The second temptation In the second temptation the world's kingdoms were set before His eyes, with all the power and pomp and splendour of them, which dazzle and fascinate men, and for which they will sell their souls and deny their God. And these kingdoms all belonged to Jesus, but God's way, and the only way by which He could secure them in everlasting righteousness was by suffering and death. "You shall have them," said the tempter, "by an easy way. I will give them to you if you will but worship me; acknowledge me as greater than yourself and God; take them from my hand and all shall be yours." But those glittering kingdoms had no attraction in that hour for the holy One of God. He would not take them from any hand but God's

hand, He could trust God to put all things beneath His feet when the due time came, but that time was not yet. His eyes were upon God, and He met the temptation with an uncompromising answer, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." The third temptation The third temptation was the most subtle of the three, and the devil backed it up by a partly quoted text. He proposed that the Lord should cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple, and by such an exploit gain a double advantage — put God to the test, and prove Him, as to whether You are the special object of His care according to the word quoted, and at the same time convince the multitude in the courtyard of the temple that You are the Messiah, the Son of God. The trap was laid in vain, and His answer, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," showed how thoroughly Jesus perceived the devil's purpose. It was no business of His to put God's word to the test to see whether God would honour it or not, no doubt as to it ever entered His mind, it did not need to be proved to Him; nor was it His business to vindicate Himself before the people. "My times are in Thy hands" was the whole spirit of His life and activities, and He would not take them out of God's hands.

GOD was the answer of this ever dependent and so ever victorious Man. He looked to GOD for His sustenance; GOD filled His heart to the exclusion of all other glory; His whole confidence and trust was in GOD; God's will was His law, God's way was His delight; He set the Lord always before Him and He was not moved. It was thus that He was tested and came through the testing stronger than the foe. By resisting all the efforts of "the strong man" to turn Him from His devotion to God, He bound him fast and went forth in the power of the Spirit to make his goods His spoil; for the grace and mercy of God showed themselves in Him and He went about doing good and delivering all that were oppressed of the devil. He was in the midst of men as a living Deliverer, the Master of Satan who had oppressed them so long.

How miserable and inadequate and dishonouring to the Lord is the teaching that He met no personal devil in the wilderness, but merely retired into it to consider various schemes by which He might press His claims upon men and prove His Messiahship to them, and that the temptations were nothing more than plans of campaign that He considered and rejected. The final temptation But the overcoming in the wilderness was not the end of the conflict, the devil wielded the power of death and by it kept men in bondage all their life-time for fear of it. And Jesus had come to wrench that power from him, and He could only do this by dying. It was not a living Deliverer that could emancipate men from the tyrant's power — blinded by the devil they rejected Him in that character — but a dying Redeemer. He had come to die, this only was the way of obedience to God and of love to men. And it was as the shadow of that death crept darkly over His path that Satan returned to the attack, to tempt Him to draw back from that way of suffering. The horror and shame and woe unspeakable that lay before Him pressed heavily upon the spirit of the Lord, and He began to show to His disciples that it was to a cross and not to a throne that He was progressing. And Satan seized the occasion, and using the impetuous and unwary Peter as his spokesman he endeavoured to turn the Lord from His fixed purpose to do the will of God even to death. "This be far from Thee (pity Thyself), this shall not be unto Thee." But the Lord detected the foe in that friendly guise, and the temptation to think of Himself was met with stern rebuke, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," and then to Peter, "thou savourest not the things that be of GOD." As in the wilderness before He entered upon His public service so now at the end of it, GOD was the sole object of His life.

It was in this same spirit of dependence and full subjection to the will of God that He went through the agony of Gethsemane, when Satan marshalled all the powers of darkness to appall Him and drive Him back from making the great sacrifice; but He came out of the trial saying, "The cup which My Father hath given Me shall I not drink it." And so onward to the cross. In the days of His flesh He "offered up prayers and supplications with a strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him out of death, and was heard in that He feared" for His piety His whole-hearted dependence upon God and His trust in Him (Hebrews 5:7). Satan was utterly foiled, he was beaten at every point in the field, and Jesus, whom he could neither decoy nor drive from the path of God's will, through death has destroyed him that had the power of death, that He might deliver them who through the fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage, and become the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. He went down into death, committing Himself into His Father's hands, and the Father's glory has raised Him from the dead, and now He can say to all who bow down before Him, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." And the devil is a defeated foe. He has no authority or power over the saints; he

"trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees."

They have but to resist him and he will flee from them, for they are no longer his prey, but the blood-purchased possession of the Saviour who has delivered them, and they are to share in all the results of the great victory of the Lord over him for "The God of peace shall shortly bruise Satan under their feet" (Romans 16:20).

01.06. The Miracles of the Lord Jesus: What They Prove

The Miracles of the Lord Jesus: What They Prove

Each discourse, each miracle, nay each word and act, is a fresh ray of glory streaming forth from the Person of the Word through the veil of His flesh. The Incarnation is the one great wonder; other miracles follow as a matter of course. The real marvel would be if the Incarnate Being should work no miracles; as it is they are the natural results of His presence among men, rather than its higher manifestation. — Liddon. A miracle is an act of superhuman power. All the miracles of the Lord Jesus were such, and were the attestation of His person and mission. He had come forth from the Father, and come into the world, and His miracles were the proof of this. They were His Father's works, as His arresting and challenging words to the Jews declared, "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John 10:37-38). The Holy Ghost speaking through Simon Peter on the day of Pentecost described these works as "miracles, wonders and signs which God did by Him." They were works of power that amazed the people, and were signs to them that God had come down to them in mercy.

Modernists refuse to accept the miraculous. They hold that there are "laws of nature" that are immutable and cannot be overruled or suspended, and that what appeared to be miracles in former days were simply the operations of certain of these laws which were unknown to the majority of people at the time. They would instance the fact that the solemn tramp of the soldiers' feet at the funeral of King George was heard in the uttermost ends of the earth as plainly as in the streets of London. One hundred years ago such an idea would have been laughed at as the conception of a madman. Yes, but the works of the Lord were not on such a plane as that; they were wrought in another realm; they were addressed to the needs and miseries of men, which were the result of sin having entered into the world. They were not a challenge to immutable laws but the revelation of infinite mercy in the One to whom all the prophets bore witness. When doubts assailed the imprisoned Baptist and he sent his disciples to Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another? He answered, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (Luke 7:1-50).

He who did these things was the One who had created all things, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by Him and for Him . . . and by Him all things consist," and amongst the "all things" were these laws of nature that bind the universe together for its good. They are His laws and must surely be subservient to Him, for He who made them controls them, they all subsist in Him. In them is declared the wisdom of the Creator. They have been there from the beginning of creation for men to discover and make use of, and, when discovered, they ought to have had the effect of turning men into worshippers of the One who created them, and making them ashamed of themselves

that they had not discovered them before. Instead of which, men are puffed up with pride as though they had invented them themselves. And yet what an immeasurable gulf the ability to discover and make use of these laws puts between man and the beasts.

Whatever laws there may be in the physical universe, one thing is certain, the law of man's relation to his Creator and God was disturbed by his disobedience in Eden. Then there entered into his being and his relations with God and with his fellows and with nature what had not been there before. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:1) "The law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-39) began then to exercise its inexorable power in the lives of men; they were affected by it spiritually, morally and physically. Tears, death, sorrow, crying and pain (Revelation 21:4), as well as enmity against God, and the curse which fell upon the whole earth, were the result of this invasion of man's life by sin; these things affect him in this life, and "after this the judgment." It was to this state of things that the Lord addressed Himself when He came into the world. The object of His coming was to deliver men from all oppression; to reveal what God is in His very nature; to restore the broken relationship with God, and to bring men back into full suitability to God, as the Scriptures declare, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). If miracles were a means to this end, which was God's great purpose, what power could prevent them? This reconciling men to God was the greatest of all miracles.

It is against the intervention of God for the blessing of men that modernism opposes its subtle forces. And with this in view it must explain away the miracles. I give an instance of this. In a paper entitled "The Spirit of God and the Healing of Disease" appearing, regrettably enough, in an evangelical magazine, we are treated to the following: —

"It is recorded by St. Luke in Luke 13:1-35. A woman came to the synagogue suffering from an infirmity or weakness. The complaint was of long standing eighteen years. Jesus described her as a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound. With our present knowledge we should say, 'In the grip of a false idea, making weakness instead of health God's will for her.' The cure was not easy even for Jesus. When He saw her, He called her and said, 'Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.' But she was not cured. Then Jesus evidently came down from the platform into the body of the synagogue where the woman was, and laid His hand upon her. In this way His vision of perfect health inspired her. His mighty faith overcame her timidity and she was healed."

Passing over the obvious distortion of the Divinely-given record, which says nothing about the cure not being easy, nor the woman not being cured at the word of the Lord, nor His having to step down from the platform to accomplish it — to that which is worse, we must conclude, if we accept this author's view, that we, with our present knowledge, know more than the Lord did about infirmity and disease, and that what He accomplished in the healing of the woman He did as a clever psychologist or Christian Scientist and not as the Sovereign Lord, "the Son of God, manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

It is all of one piece with the general attack upon the glory and the person of our Lord, His infallibility and omniscience, and upon the character of His mission to men. It is worse than that. If the Lord wrought His miracles by suggestion, and by using powers that are available to any who care to exercise them and not by Divine power, He must have known this, and consequently He was a deceiver when He said, "the works that I do in My Father's Name, they bear witness of Me"

(John 10:25). "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works . . . believe Me for the very works' sake" (John 14:10-11).

All the Lord's miracles were works of mercy, with the exception of the cursing of the fig tree, and some great significance lay behind that act. It was with the fig leaves that Adam and Eve endeavoured to clothe their nakedness after their disobedience and fall in Eden, and the Jews' religion had degenerated into the effort to secure by ritual and works of the law a covering for their moral and spiritual nakedness, while remaining alienated from God and disobedient to Him. That whole system of the Jews' religion that had no room for Christ and refused to yield to Him the glory that was His due, was condemned by God, as are all the efforts of men to cover their sin and obtain righteousness by works. We, who believe the Scriptures, know that the only covering for sin and the souls of sinners is atonement by blood. The word translated atonement in the Scriptures means, a covering. I suggest that the cursing of the fig tree was a symbolical act, teaching us these great and fundamental facts. The time and circumstances in which it was done seem to confirm this. The beginning of His miracles was in Cana of Galilee, and by it He manifested His glory — "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light sprang up" — and His disciples believed on Him. It was a remarkable miracle, this turning the water into wine at the marriage feast. He had ordained the marriage tie at the beginning, and though it had become sadly marred by sin, He hallowed it by His presence. They were not great or rich, this couple who called Jesus to their marriage; indeed the fact that they had no wine would indicate that they were very poor; but Jesus was the Friend of the poor, as He is to this day, and He manifested His glory by caring for them in their need and raising the joy of their marriage day to a level they could not have known if He had not been there. "He provided a fit accompaniment, provided it of the best, and in such large measure as has alarmed and amazed the moralist. The quality and the greatness of the gift were worthy of God; and we see the generosity all the more clearly when we remember that this bountiful Creator had a little while before refused to create bread to relieve Himself of hunger." (Nicholl.) The glory that began to shine at Cana shed a greater brightness at the close of those eventful years, when His foes pressed about Him to arrest Him. Malchus, the servant of the high priest, would hold a commission from his master to go with Judas into the garden and lead the multitude that went out to capture the Lord. How astonished Peter must have been when he saw Judas step out of the crowd and put the traitor-kiss upon his Lord. He did not know how to deal with Judas, but he had no hesitation as to how to treat Malchus, when he, vaunting his temporary authority, laid hands upon the Lord, and in the name of the high priest directed the band to make Him prisoner. At such audacity Peter's indignation flamed hotly, and drawing his sword, he aimed one mighty blow at the dastard, meaning to lay him dead at his feet, cleft through the skull.

It was new work for the fisherman, he had not been trained to wield a sword, and his misdirected energy only resulted in the loss of an ear to Malchus, and the exposure of his own impetuous folly, and, shall we add, his true love for his Master. But there was yet another result. The Lord had said, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world." The gloom of night was gathering thickly upon the world, but He was still its light, and there was one more work of mercy that He must do before the devil and men had their way, a work not to be wrought upon a friend but upon a foe, who had come against Him with murder in his heart. Hence, with a word of gentle rebuke to

Peter, He stretched forth His hand and touched the severed ear and healed it. Here was the miracle of all miracles, of good triumphing over evil, of Divine and infinite mercy pouring out itself upon men in the very height and venom of their sin.

"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business" are the first words that are recorded as having come from His mouth in the Gospel of Luke, in which Gospel alone is the healing of the ear recorded. That business was blessing and not judgment; it was healing and not a sword. The audacity of Malchus and the impetuosity of Peter only served as an opportunity for the continued goodness that was in Him, and, having done that work, He submitted Himself to His foes, and they bound with cords His hands that had only been stretched out to bless, and led Him away to mockery and shame and crucifixion. The works of the Lord were such as no other man did (John 15:24) and they left those who saw them without excuse. What wonderful works they were! but the way in which they were done was even more wonderful than the works. And how the hearts of those who were the subjects of them must have been moved by them, unless they remained dead in spite of them. Consider what the feelings of the leper must have been when the Lord, moved with compassion, stretched forth His hand and laid it upon him saying, "I will, be thou clean." Could any other man have done that? If the leper had come near to Peter, he would have cried, "Keep away from me." If he had approached to John, he would have said, "Away, don't come near to me." The leper's touch would have contaminated any other man, but the hand and word of Jesus drove the foul disease away. What must have been the feelings of Jairus and his wife when the Lord took their dead daughter by the hand and said, "Maid, arise," and showed, not His power only, but His consideration for the child when He commanded them to give her meat. Think of His care for the people who were faint by the way, when He provided them with such a meal as they had never had before, and that out of five loaves and two small fishes. Yet, though He created by His divine power, He would permit no waste. The fragments left over from that meal must be gathered up for another.

Stand by and behold Him when He said to the widowed woman, bereaved of her only son, "Weep not," and then, turning to the dead son, said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." He might have claimed the life and service of the young man, and added, "Follow Me," but He did not, He delivered him to his mother. What heart could have remained unmoved that saw His cheeks wet with tears as Mary of Bethany bowed down in her sorrow at His feet or remained unthrilled with a hitherto unfelt triumph when He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." We can easily conceive the astonishment and excitement of the crowd when the dead man answered that loud command and came forth from his tomb but Jesus was not excited. His quiet word to those that stood by to loose him from the grave clothes and let him go, showed how calm He was, and how considerate for Lazarus in his strange circumstances. It is not easy to say whether the compassion of His heart or the power of His word, or His gentle consideration for His friend would command the greatest admiration on that great occasion.

While the people confessed, "He hath done all things well," the motive behind the works they did not understand. Even His brethren misjudged Him: they said to Him, "There is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world." They could not understand One who sought not His own glory and would not have the honour that comes from men, and who did the works only that they might believe that the Father had sent Him, for beyond the deliverance from their physical sufferings was the need of

souls of the knowledge of God. Yet His glory could not be hid, it shone in the works that He did, for if they were the Father's works, who could do these but the Son? His works bore witness to the fact that the Father had sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. And because the world was such as it was, only the Father's sent One could be its Saviour, and having come, He must of necessity work miracles in it, for God is love.

We might rightly have challenged His claim to have come from the Father if He had moved with apparent indifference amid the miseries of men, if He had left the leper to his corruption, the blind to his darkness, and the cripple to his weakness; if He had not been moved to compassion by the widow's tears, if He had not wept with Mary, and smiled upon the children. But His words, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" reveal the indissoluble oneness that existed in all things between the Father and the Son; and these works of mercy for the blessing of men were among these all things. They were the Father's works. His miracles all declared what the feelings of God were towards His creatures in their miseries, and though they were wrought in vain as far as the nation in which they were done was concerned, they abide for us in the record of them in the Holy Scriptures that we may read of them and meditate upon them and rejoice in that great salvation, "which first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness both by signs and wonders and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:1-18).

01.07. The Deity of the Lord Jesus: In the Gospel of John

The Deity of the Lord Jesus: In the Gospel of John In the four Gospels, says St. Augustine, or rather in the four books of the one Gospel, the Apostle John, deservedly compared to an eagle by reason of his spiritual understanding, has lifted the enunciation of truth to a far higher and sublimer point than the other three, and by this elevation he would fain have our hearts lifted up likewise. For the other three Evangelists walked, so to speak, on earth with our Lord as Man. Of His Godhead they said but few things. But John, as if he found it oppressive to walk on earth, has opened his treatise as it were with a peal of thunder; he has raised himself not merely above the earth, and the whole compass of the air and heaven, but even above the angel-host, and every order of the invisible powers, and has reached even to Him by whom all things were made, in that sentence, In the beginning was the Word." — Liddon. In the history of the Church on earth no greater theologian than Athanasius ever arose to champion the truth of God against error, yet great and faithful as he was, he confessed that "whenever he forced his understanding to meditate on the Divinity (Deity) of the Logos (the Word) his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought the less he comprehended; and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts" (Gibbon). We do not wonder at that when we consider the immeasurable greatness of the Subject and the limited capacity of man's understanding. This inability of the human mind by its own effort to discover and know God was clearly recognised by men of intelligence in ancient times. Zophar the Naamathite challenged Job as to it, when he asked, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" (Job 11:7). And Agur the son of Jakeh appealed to Ithiel (whose name meant, There is a God) for help when he confessed his ignorance of God. "I have neither learned wisdom," said he, "nor have I the knowledge of the Holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven and descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists; who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established the ends of the earth? What is His name and what is His Son's Name, if thou canst tell?" As far as we know Ithiel had no answer to that appeal. The modern mind is not more capable in itself of grasping the things of God than were these great men of old, for "It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And if the things of God are outside man's range, how infinitely above him must God Himself — the Father and His Son — be! And yet we must know Him; the awakened soul is conscious that all its blessing lies in the knowledge of God, and pants for this knowledge as the hart pants for the water brooks. When "the Word became flesh" and dwelt among men, He revealed the great secret as to how God was to be known when He said, "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" (Matthew 11:25-26). These words from the lips of the Lord Himself declare that the knowledge of God cannot be gained by laborious and brain-wearying investigation, no matter how sincere the labour may be, but only by revelation; they strike at the root of the pride of the human intellect and prick the bubble of those who, "vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds," reject the revelation and think to find out God by their own searching; they shut out the reasonings and imaginations of the

self-confident mind, which always, alas, since man is fallen, and "alienated in his mind by wicked works," exalts itself against the true knowledge of God (Colossians 2:18; Colossians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 10:5). They show that there are two sides to the fact of revelation. There is activity on God's part and receptivity on ours. God is revealed and the babes receive the revelation. The light shines and there are eyes that admit it. The truth is declared, but it is also believed. God must speak and men must hear, for "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." And we are as dependent upon God for the babe-nature and the opened eyes and the believing heart, and the listening ears, as we are for the revelation that these perceive, appreciate and appropriate. In Old Testament times there were certain limited revelations of God's attributes and ways. The heavens declared the glory of His power, and firmament showed His handiwork. The law given at Sinai announced the uprightness of His kingdom and the justice of His throne. He showed Himself often in His providential care for men and as the covenant-keeping God; and proclaimed His Name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." But these partial revelations, rays from the eternal splendour, only served to make those who received them cry out for a fuller, a complete knowledge of His heart and nature, as when Moses said, "Show me Thy glory" (Exodus 33:1-23), and David pleaded, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles" (Psalms 43:1-5) Those soul longings have been answered in a manner that neither Moses nor David could have conceived. The glory has appeared and the light and the truth have come in the Son of God, for "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son . . . Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). And the Son in whom God has spoken and who has declared what God is in His very nature and has glorified Him on the earth, said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

We are dependent upon the Holy Scripture for all our knowledge of this full revelation, for we were not on earth when the Son of God dwelt among men, but the Father sent forth the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide the men who companied with Him to bear an infallible witness to what they heard and saw. "That which we have heard," wrote one of them, "Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life . . . declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3).

There is a peculiar dignity and authority about the Scriptures. It could not be otherwise, since they are the words of the living and almighty God. For instance, they do not set out to prove that God is, they state the fact and show the effect of His presence and power, and they tell us that it is only the fool — the man void of all understanding that says in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalms 14:1). They open with that majestic statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The New Testament is more than the equal of the Old, in this dignity and authority. It does not set out to prove that the One we know as Jesus is God, equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost, it states the fact and shows the effect of it. So that the Gospel which I think may be justly called the greatest book in the New Testament, opens with the sublime statement, "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God." The "beginning" of Genesis signifies the moment when the voice of God called the worlds into being, and the

pendulum of Time began to swing, but the opening words of John's Gospel carries us further back than that and tell us that when the first creatorial word was uttered the Word was there. Whatever may have been the activities of the Godhead anterior to creation, He had His part in them, for then He was with God, His delight and companion (Proverbs 8:1-36), and He was God, His equal, "His Fellow," in all things purposed and done — in His existence He is eternal, in His nature He is divine; in His person, He is distinct. "All things were made by Him." His was the voice that commanded and it was done. That creative life-giving energy which abides only in God, wrought with divine power and wisdom through Him; "and without Him was not anything made that was made."

Two other passages in the New Testament definitely and fully predicate the creation of all things to Him. In one of them, words are taken up from the Old Testament (Psalms 102:1-28), "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hand: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years fail not." This ascription to Him, who creates for His own purpose and dissolves what He has created when it has served that purpose, but who abides, unchanging and eternal in His person and being, occurs in an Epistle addressed to Hebrew Christians, that they might be properly impressed with the glory of their Lord and the greatness of the salvation that they had in Him. The other passage was written to Gentile believers and tells us "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1). Jew and Gentile alike must recognise and acknowledge His glory, and none who believe, whether Jew or Gentile, must have any doubt as to the greatness of the One whom they have confessed as Lord and Saviour. He is God the Creator: as to power almighty; as to wisdom infinite; as to authority, supreme; as to being, eternal. The opening of John's Gospel could not be plainer in its statements than it is, and they are framed by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to meet every opposition to the truth that might arise in the human heart. Interest is awakened by these statements as to whether any on earth would believe and confess the truth of them as they were known and confessed in heaven, and we may be sure that heaven was engrossed in this same question. As we pass from page to page of the Gospel, we see a ray of the light break first into one heart and then into another; here a man and there a woman is brought to bow in worship at the feet of the Sovereign Lord of all, and so to confess that He is indeed God; but it is not until the end of the Gospel is reached (John 21:1-25 is a beautiful postscript to it), that His disciples behold Him and own Him in His full glory. On that second "first day of the week" the disciples were gathered together, and Thomas the unbeliever with them. In disposition and temper he was a veritable materialist and had declared that he would believe nothing that he could not see and handle. Then Jesus stood in the midst, and showed to the astonished eyes of his obstinate follower the wounds that He had sustained in His death and which remained in His incorruptible body. It was enough for Thomas; he was an infidel no longer, but falling down before his Master, he voiced the faith and adoration of all his brethren in those true and memorable words, "MY LORD AND MY GOD."

If the Lord Jesus had not been what Thomas confessed Him to be, but only a good and true man, He would have rebuked him for uttering foolish words, for it would have been an unspeakable

wickedness for one man to accept from another man that adoration which only belongs to God; but He did accept it, because it was His right, and He went further and declared the blessedness of all those throughout the ages who should perceive His glory and confess it and render like homage to Him: saying, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed." In this great and convincing incident we see how the end of the Gospel answers to the opening word of it. The place that the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Father, has in the thoughts and affections of the Father and the Holy Ghost is instructive. I will quote certain passages from the Gospel of John which show that He was the worthy and adequate Object of the Father's love when on earth and the One for whose glory the Holy Ghost labours now. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father" (John 1:14); "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18); "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands" (John 3:35) "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John 5:20); "The living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father" (John 6:57); "The Father hath not left Me alone" (John 7:29); "Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life" (John 10:17) "I and My Father are One" (John 10:30). And that we might know that this love that the Father had for Him and the delight that He had in Him were not confined to His life on earth, He said, "Father . . . Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). But now that He has gone back to the Father we learn that the Holy Ghost has come from thence to bear witness to Him. As the Father once looked down upon Him, so now the Holy Ghost looks up to Him, and would turn the eyes of all His disciples in the same direction. We read, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26). "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.

He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-15). The revelation of God is complete, and we know God now as Father, Son and Holy Ghost: three Persons yet one God. It was this that came into full manifestation when Jesus was here, for "in Him all the fulness (of the Godhead) was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:19, see also Colossians 2:10, Darby's N.T.), and "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). The Father is the source of all blessing for men. The Son has brought the blessing to men. The Holy Ghost makes the blessing good in men.

Each Person in the Godhead is engaged in making the revelation a reality in the souls of men, for we read, "No man knoweth the Father save THE SON and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but MY FATHER which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). "God hath revealed them unto us by His SPIRIT: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer, a power commensurate with the love that moved the Father to send the Son, and works in the hearts of those who have humbly yielded to the Lord, so that they are not now groping in darkness, or wearying themselves in a vain search after God

by human effort, for the true light is shining and "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we should know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:20-21).

01.08. The Death of the Lord Jesus: Atonement by Blood

The Death of the Lord Jesus: Atonement by Blood

It has been truly said, there is nothing like the cross. It stands and shall stand for ever in all its solitary greatness and grandeur, the wonder of every intelligent creature, and the pillar upon which is indelibly inscribed the evil and hatred of fallen man and the goodness and love of God. There appears the greatest sin that man ever committed and there is the mightiest display of mercy on the part of God that ever came to light. It is the place where man was tested in every spring of his moral being, and it is where the compassions of God were sounded to their depths. There man lifted up impious hand and struck at his Creator with deadly intent, and the answer of God was given in unspeakable, infinite and victorious love.

"The very spear that pierced His side Drew forth the blood to save." — Boyd.

"And behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne, and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone" (Revelation 4:2-3). It is my conviction that if the glorious and eternally blessed Occupant of that throne had appeared only as the jasper stone — the clear, unsullied crystal — no created being could have stood before Him, but because the blood-red rays of the sardine blend with the light of the jasper, the worst of sinners may have a footing there in everlasting righteousness and peace. To understand what the symbol illustrates take the great Christian message which is declared to us in 1 John 1:5, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." There is the clear shining of the crystal, but if that had been all could any man have abode in the searching brightness of it? But there follows at once the fear-dispelling, peace-giving word, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." How perfectly that great fact harmonises and blends with the light! Indeed it is part of it. What confidence it gives to the soul, and what uprightness! For in the light nothing can be hidden, yet all is covered by the blood, it is the perfect atonement, equal in its efficacy to the full shining of the light. In the knowledge of this the one who believes walks in the light even as God is in the light and can rejoice in the supremacy of the throne that shines as the jasper and the sardine stone. Had sin never entered into the world there would, of course, have been no need for atonement by blood, and according to our estimate of what sin is will be our appreciation of it. If a man thinks that sin is merely "the survival of the tiger in humanity" which evolution will most surely destroy, as some divinity professors have asserted, he will deny all need of it; if he thinks that a man's sin is nothing more than weakness, or a mere negation that he may overcome in time, he will resent the word that tells him that he needs a Saviour such as Jesus is; but if he discovers that his deeds are the outward evidence of a corrupted inward nature, and that his "sin is lawlessness" as the Bible says it is, "for every one that doeth sin doeth lawlessness" (1 John 3:4, R.V.); if his soul bows down before the truth that "by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and death passed upon all men for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12), then atonement by blood will become a necessity to him and his awakened conscience will be satisfied with nothing less.

Atonement by blood is as necessary to God as it is to us. Apart from it His true and full nature and character could never have been known by any of His creatures, least of all by sinful men; but by it His ways are revealed and justified, for it is by the way He has dealt with this question of man's sinfulness that what He is has been fully declared.

We must face the question as to what God is as well as what we are. Would we have Him to be other than the gospel says He is? In the gospel His righteousness is declared and His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Could any creature have security and peace if it were not so? There are those who cavil at God's right to execute justice; would they care to live in a land where crime was strong and law weak? No, they are ready enough to support the law of the land in which they live, and to justify its penalties for their own protection, but deny the right to God to govern and to judge in His universe. Of them the Bible says, "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that commit such things." How daring and how unreasonable is that spirit in a man which insists upon his neighbour obeying the laws of the land and yet refuses to be subject to the law of God!

Others plead that they are weak and cannot resist temptation to sin, and because of this God must be merciful. But if

"weakness may excuse

What murderer, what traitor, what parricide

Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?

That plea

With God or man will gain thee no remission."

If the judgment of God were not according to truth and justice, if He winked at sin, and were the indulgent, spineless and weak-fatherly being that the modernist would have Him be, then an awakened conscience of a man would be morally greater and better than He, and the devil would take advantage of His weakness and seize His throne. But we may be thankful and rejoice that God is God, and that His Justice will "never descend from her sceptred royalty" and compound with sin. God will maintain His supremacy and abide for ever and without change in His infinite and unsullied holiness, and all His ways will be in absolute and unchallengeable righteousness.

Since that is so, what of men who are sinful and who have been guilty of rebellion against Him, and as a consequence are lying under the sentence and power of death? There could be no hope for them apart from atonement by blood. Hence the Bible, which is God's Word to men, is full of it; it is, as someone else has said, the diamond pivot upon which the New Testament turns, and it is the burden of the Old. It is woven into the very fabric of the Holy Scriptures and is the basis of all relationship between God and sinful men; apart from it there is no light, no peace, no hope for men. If we reject this the Bible has neither message nor meaning for us. The Old Testament declares, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11), and the New Testament adds its witness by saying, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). The coats of skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve in Eden first proclaimed the fact that a victim not chargeable with the offence must suffer in the place of the guilty if he is to go free.

Abel's lamb, the ram that was caught in the thicket and offered instead of Isaac, the paschal lamb in Egypt, and all those offerings that were consumed upon Israelitish altars, taught to all who had ears to hear and hearts to understand that there was no other way by which a man's sins could be covered and his transgressions forgiven.

Yet in those countless altars and sacrifices God had no pleasure. He had no pleasure in Israel's offerings because of the character of those that brought them. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks." There was no sincerity in the hearts of those who brought them; but the great, the fundamental reason for God's displeasure with them was that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. Hebrews 10:1-39 is the great chapter which shows us the futility of these offerings. There we learn that they called sin to remembrance every year, for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, and nobody could suppose that they could please God. Then why were they offered? They were a shadow of good things to come, and they filled up the period of waiting until the Substance appeared. The substance is Christ; it was to Him that all these ancient sacrifices pointed and of His coming they spoke with tongues that were eloquent to the ear of faith. Theories are wearisome, and doctrines are of no value unless they centre in Christ. IT IS HE whom God hath set forth, a propitiation through faith in His blood (Romans 3:25). He is the propitiation for our sins, but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world (1 John 2:2). The word atonement does not occur in our New Testament, except in Romans 5:11, and it is well known that in that passage it is a wrong translation, and should be "reconciliation." It is an Old Testament word which means "to cover" and does not mean "at-one-ment" as theology declares. It means that the offence is blotted out by the offering; an equivalent is rendered to the aggrieved party which covers the crime. Yet at-onement, or to use the fuller, New Testament word, reconciliation, is very closely allied to it, for reconciliation is the result of the atoning sacrifice and death of Christ. By it men are reconciled to God. "For when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10). This reconciliation is realised when there has been awakened in our souls a sense of need and our eyes are turned upon Him to whom God Himself looks, His Son who died for us, and in Him we have a common object with God.

What an hour that was when the Son of God rose up and coming into the world said, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). We are sure that all heaven was stirred, and the attention of every creature in those realms above was entirely concentrated upon that great event, but who shall tell what it meant to God? His holy will, His glory, the vindication of His character, the revelation of His love were all committed to His beloved Son, to Jesus the Babe in Bethlehem. And to Him we must look, for the words of the Baptist are as much for us as they were for the crowds that heard them on the banks of Jordan, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

It has been argued that the doctrine of the atonement is an immoral doctrine, for, according to it, the innocent is compelled to suffer in the place of the guilty. But that is a perversion of the doctrine. When the Son of God came forth to suffer for guilty men, there was no compulsion but that of love. The love of God was the spring and motive of His coming. The well-known John 3:16 would be

enough most surely to decide that, but we draw upon other texts not so often used, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the World." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:1-21). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). And when the Father sent the Son He did not send One who was unwilling to go at His command. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," proves beyond question that His coming was voluntary. He was one with the Father in this, and He took up that body which was prepared for Him by God — He became Man that He might accomplish in manhood all the will of God in regard to men. Nor did the innocent suffer for the guilty when Jesus died. We cannot attach that word to Him, for it means without knowledge of good and evil, and He had full knowledge of all things. He was holy and not innocent; He knew what the sin of man was in its exceeding sinfulness and hated it, and was Himself sinless though a Man; and He knew what the righteousness of God was and loved it, and was God's righteous Servant to manifest and establish it.

Yet He did suffer for the guilty; the Bible tells us this in the plainest language, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Yes, that is it, "the Just for the unjust," and in that suffering He bore the judgment that the unjust deserved. Atonement is made by the blood which flowed forth from the spear-riven side of Jesus. In virtue of it the sinner is brought to God and by it God is glorified. The love of God and His mercy and grace are exercised in the sinner's salvation in absolute accord with His holiness, righteousness, justice and truth; the majesty of His throne is upheld and His heart flows out in blessing to men; He is a just God and yet a Saviour.

There is the Godward aspect of atonement and the usward who believe aspect of it. The Godward aspect of it is propitiation, which is brought out in Romans 3:25. It was typified in the sin-offering that was consumed without the camp of Israel on the great day of Atonement. The fact that it was consumed outside the camp indicated in figure God's abhorrence of sin, and the great anti-type of that comes out in those solemn words, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Here, we must confess, is a holy mystery, as deep and impenetrable as was the darkness that for three hours enveloped the cross. But having taken the sinner's place Jesus endured the judgment that was against the sinner, even to being forsaken of God. There was no mitigation of the judgment for Him, but because of who He was, the holy Son of God, He was able to endure and exhaust the judgment, and cry, "It is finished." The blood of the sin-offering that was burnt without the camp was carried by the high priest into the holiest in the Tabernacle and sprinkled there upon the golden mercy seat and seven times before it, and that was the propitiation, and that was the place where God could meet with His people. Romans 3:22-23 gives the antitype of this shadow. It says, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." The word "propitiation" as used in Romans really means "a mercy seat" or meeting place. And God has set forth Christ Jesus to be this "through faith in His blood." There God in His holiness can meet the sinner in his guilt. God is there in free grace, but not apart from righteousness, and the sinner may draw near in faith. The usward who believe aspect of the atonement is redemption and reconciliation. In Christ, who has so blessedly glorified God about the sin question, "we have redemption through His blood, even the

forgiveness of sins," and we "have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Could it be otherwise? All enmity must die out of our hearts as we see God's great desire for our blessing as it has been displayed in the death of His Son, and the more we consider His death the more we are filled with wonder at its suitability to the situation. Nothing else could have met God's claims, nothing else could have met our need; Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God and the present and eternal boast of all who are saved.

It should not be difficult to understand that the carrying out of this great work depended wholly upon what the Lord is. If He had not become Man He could not have been our substitute and representative; but having become Man, He was lifted up for us, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; and if He had not been the sinless Man He could not have stood for us, for how could one who had sins of his own to suffer for, be a substitute for others? But if He had not been more than man, if He had not been God in His own eternal Being, His sacrifice would have had no atoning value. Who could measure and meet the claims of God's eternal justice but God? Who could understand how sin had challenged the very majesty of God and threatened the stability of God's throne but God? Who could put one hand upon God and one hand upon a guilty sinner, and glorify the One and bless the other, and bring the two together in righteousness and peace, but One who in His own Person was God and man? If He had not been man He could not have died, if He had not been God His death would have been without value.

We rejoice in a full atonement great peace fills our hearts as we consider it, for what He our Saviour God has done will abide for ever, His blood can never lose its value. We know that by His "one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and we know that all things in heaven and on earth are to be reconciled to God on the sure foundation of that same offering. And when that has been effected the throne of God and the Lamb shall be the great centre from which streams of blessing and life will flow to multitudes of men who own the authority of that throne. Thus we return to our beginning, "And He that sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone."

01.09. The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus: God's Seal upon His Work

The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus: God's Seal upon His Work

"The literal resurrection of Jesus was the cardinal fact upon which the earliest preachers of the gospel based their appeal to the Jewish people. Paul, writing to a Gentile church, expressly makes Christianity answer with its life for the literal truth of the resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain also." Some modern writers would possibly have reproached Paul with offering a harsh alternative instead of an argument. But Paul would have replied, first, that our Lord's honour and credit were entirely staked upon the issue, since He foretold His resurrection as the sign that would justify His claims: and, secondly, that the fact of the resurrection was attested by evidence which must outweigh everything except an a priori conviction of the impossibility of miracle, since it was attested by the word of more than five hundred persons who had actually seen the risen Jesus." — Liddon.

Never had brighter hopes been buried in any grave than in the grave of Jesus, and never had hearts been more bereft than the hearts of the disciples and of those women that loved and followed Him. How they must have shuddered in their sorrow as the great stone was rolled to its place at the door of the sepulchre, and shut from their tear-dimmed vision the body of their Lord. The night that followed that last Passover feast was a woeful night for them, and for all who loved the Hope of Israel; it was a night unrelieved by any solace from without or faith from within, for having, as they supposed, lost their Lord, they had lost their all and could do nothing but mourn and weep. Yet there was one thing that kept the broken hearts of those women from refusing to perform their office: they would go on the first day of the week and anoint His body. His Kingship had been rejected by the Jews: His claim to it was the charge upon which Pilate had condemned Him to the cross; the multitude had gone to their homes saying, He was no king at all or He would have come down from the cross and saved Himself; but to those women He was King, and more; and though He had lost the kingdom, yet He should lie in His tomb as like a King as they could make it possible. By some means or other they would force their way into that sealed and guarded grave and fill it with the fragrance of the spices that they had prepared, and with the sweeter fragrance of their love; this should be their last tribute to Him, and then they would return — yes, but how, and where, and to what?

Mark tells us that they reached the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. Were they blind to the golden glow of that wondrous morning? It is more than likely, for a grave was their goal, and to pour their best upon the dead their purpose; this was the only balm they knew for their death-stricken and hopeless hearts; and what charm could a sunrise have for such as they? But what a sunrise that must have been, though their eyes did not appreciate it! Let no man tell me that the day dawned as other days, or that all nature did not exult in that great hour. There must have been a triumph and a fragrance in it that never rising of the sun had known before. If when He died — He, the Creator become flesh — the sun drew a veil across its face, and all nature wrapped itself in sable

garments, and the earth trembled to its very heart in horror at the deed that men had wrought, there must have been a corresponding joy when the conquering heel of life was placed upon the neck of death, and the shame of the cross was answered by an empty tomb. "HE IS RISEN." The glad news had sung its triumphant music to the ends of creation, and "the sun, moon and stars," "the mountains and hills, the fruit trees and cedars," the heavens and the earth were the glorious orchestra that accompanied the angel's proclamation.

What wonders greeted those women when they reached the sacred spot. The stone was gone, and instead of Roman soldiers, brutal men who would have found a wretched joy in casting insults at them, they found a heavenly guard in possession, a messenger from God in white apparel. Heaven was not in mourning; its messenger wore the garments of victory and joy, and only waited for human ears to listen to his story. And these women were the first to hear it, and as they heard, the silent chords in their hearts awoke to song, and they turned their backs upon the empty grave, and forgot their useless spices and themselves also, and with fear and great joy did run to tell the tidings. Blessed women, they were the first of ransomed sinners to be swept by the rapture of the resurrection triumph, the first of that countless host whose singing shall be sweeter and more joyous and more prolonged than any raised by sun, moon and stars, or even angels. The proofs of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are so many and infallible that nothing but blind unbelief would deny it; but the modernists deny it, they think, like their fathers, the first century Sadducees, that it is an incredible thing that God should raise the dead. The fact is it does not fit in with their evolution doctrines, which doctrines reveal their wish to be free from all responsibility to God. "The wish is father to the thought." The solemn fact of death, not as the debt of nature, but as the wages of sin, the judgment of God upon man because of sin (Genesis 3:17), and resurrection from the dead, which is God's intervention in a scene of death, put an impassable gulf between man and the beasts, and show clearly, in spite of all the efforts of these men to prove the opposite, that their pedigree cannot be traced to a common ancestry. These great facts prove that man was created entirely apart from the beasts, a being accountable to God, and that he has fallen from the high estate in which God set him, and that God only can deliver him from the death that has passed upon him by and through resurrection. But these men rather than bow to the truth of God as to their hopeless sinful state, and receive from Him the life, through Christ, which He as the God of resurrection gives, reject the truth and love the lie. As to resurrection, say some of them, the idea sprang up in the mind of Zoroaster, the Persian philosopher, and that the Jews brought it back from their exile in Babylon, and that the Lord and His disciples incorporated it into their teaching, and that He never rose from the dead. But the resurrection of the Lord was "according to the Scriptures," Scriptures that existed centuries before Zoroaster breathed. Take the words of David in Psalms 16:1-11 "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol): neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." We might well ask, Of whom spake David this, of himself or some other man? Not of himself surely, for he was not God's Holy One. Simon Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, answers our question. "Men and brethren," said he to the assembled Jews, "let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell (hades), neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:29-32). The resurrection of Christ from the dead which we have most surely

believed was predicted by the prophets in the Scriptures and proclaimed by the Apostles who were chosen of the Lord to be the witnesses of it. How interesting and convincing are these witnesses cited by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. The women are not called, for their evidence in those days would not have greatly counted, but says Paul, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that He was seen of Cephas." It was like the Lord to appear first to Cephas; by that act He not only proved that He had risen up from the dead but He showed that He was unchanged in His unwearied grace towards the most failing of His beloved disciples. He was the same Jesus. And this fact had impressed itself upon all the disciples, for we remember how they said when gathered together on the evening of the Resurrection day, "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon." "The Lord is risen," that was the revelation of His glory, "And hath appeared unto Simon," that was the revelation of His grace. His grace is as great as His glory.

"Then of the twelve." Could they be deceived, who knew Him so well? They evidently did not expect to see Him, for when he appeared in their midst they were troubled and affrighted and thought that they had seen a spirit, but His well-known voice dispelled their fear, and when He showed them His hands and feet and side they were glad, for they knew and recognised their Lord. And would they ever forget the peace that filled their hearts in that upper room, when He had said, "Peace unto you"?

"After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." This appearance is probably that recorded as having taken place in the appointed mountain of Galilee, where they bowed in worship before Him, though some doubted. But worshippers and doubters alike had become witnesses, and the greater part of them remained witnesses to the day when Paul wrote of them, at least twenty-five years after.

"After that He was seen of James," who was one of the Lord's brethren, who did not believe in Him in pre-Calvary days, but that sinful unbelief was atoned for by the Lord's death, and dispelled by His appearance in resurrection, so that James delighted to speak of himself as the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Then of all the Apostles." This may not have been that occasion when phlegmatic, unbelieving Thomas fell down at His feet and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" but it was an outstanding appearance to which all the apostles bore witness and of which all the Christians talked.

"Then last of all He was seen of me also," not on earth but in the glory of God, exalted to the Father's right hand, but the same Jesus of Nazareth whom men despised and slew, and whom Saul of Tarsus persecuted. What a change that sight of Him made in the persecutor! For him from henceforward the world's prizes were but dross, and his risen living Lord became the sole object of life and love and service for him.

"Christ was his end, for Christ was his beginning

Christ his beginning, for his end was Christ."

Need we go beyond the witness that Paul added to that of those who were in Christ before Him? except to confirm and seal it all by the Lord's own words to John in the Isle of Patmos. "When I

saw Him," said John, "I fell at His feet as dead, and He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, 'Fear not: I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and death'" (Revelation 1:17-18).

Now consider the alternative that Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit sets before us. He says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain also. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not . . . And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:1-58).

"If Christ be not raised," the Bible has deceived us, the Gospel is a myth and salvation a dream.

"If Christ be not raised," all faith is vain, there is no forgiveness, we are yet in our sins.

"If Christ be not raised," we who live have no hope, and those who have died have perished.

"If Christ be not raised," sin has prevailed; death has triumphed, and we mourn a defeated Christ.

"If Christ be not raised," the waves of death will flow on without challenge, until the whole race of sinful men has been swept into endless woe.

"If Christ be not raised," God has lost His Son, and men have no Saviour.

"If Christ be not raised," the devil has triumphed, the throne of God is shattered, all light, joy and blessing are blotted out, there will be no peace on earth and no song in heaven.

"If Christ be not raised," those who have prayed, "Thy kingdom come," have prayed in vain; that kingdom will not come, for the kingdom of darkness has won in the great fight, and prayer is a delusion, and faith is folly and there is no true God, and no living Christ, and we who have believed are of all miserable men the most miserable.

"But now is Christ risen," "who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification."

"But now is Christ risen," who had power to lay down His life and had power to take it again, for this commandment He had received of His Father.

"But now is Christ risen," and now the forgiveness of sins is preached to all men, and in Him all that believe are justified from all things.

"But now is Christ risen," and has proved that He was worthy of the trust that God reposed in Him, and has finished the great work which God gave Him to do, and has become the Author of eternal salvation to all who believe.

"But now is Christ risen," and death is defeated; the devil's power is annulled.

"But now is Christ risen." He has made a way through death for His ransomed people, and they no longer fear it; they can cry, "O death, where is thy sting? grave, where is thy victory?"

"But now is Christ risen, and become the First-fruits of them that slept." Every man in his own order: Christ the First-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

"But now is Christ risen," and "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY (1 Corinthians 15:1-58). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the great witness to His greatness and glory, and to the Father's approval of His life and work on earth. He came forth from the Father to declare to men the great love wherewith He loved them; but they gave Him hatred for love; they despised and rejected Him; they could not endure His presence in the world, and though He was the Lord of glory the princes of this world crucified Him. He was numbered with the transgressors; the cross of a malefactor was the sentence passed upon Him and duly executed by the world. What was God's answer to that? Again and again the Apostles declared God's answer to man's crime. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," said Peter to the Jews, "and you desired a murderer to be granted to you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."

We do not wonder that "God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), having exalted Him to His own right hand. The marvel of redeeming love is that thus exalted He should be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31), not to Israel only, but to every sinner that bows at His feet.

We rejoice and are glad that the Prince of life could not be holden by the power of death. We look within that empty tomb and behold with the wondering disciples the perfect order of it and learn thereby how complete is Satan's defeat, and how signal is God's victory over all the power of death; and we bow in adoration before Him as we believe "the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ . . . declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

01.10. The Exaltation of the Lord Jesus: The Answer to His Humiliation

The Exaltation of the Lord Jesus: The Answer to His Humiliation

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." This tells us the boundlessness of His sovereignty. In His works, His journeyings, His triumphs, the highest and the lowest regions are visited by Him. He has been on earth and into the lower parts of the earth. He has been in the grave, the territory and the power of death. He is now in the highest heavens, having passed by all principalities and powers. He was received up gloriously, or in glory, as well as into glory. He entered the light of the highest heavens, but He entered it glorious Himself. The real manhood is there; but it is glorified. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The body that was pierced is that which all eyes shall see. He shall be the eternal object of divine glory and praise and worship. — J. G. Bellett. The Old Testament Scriptures hold a riddle that the Jew cannot solve. They looked for and — still look for — a glorious Messiah, the Son of David, but there are many arresting passages in these Scriptures that tell of One who should come in great humility and suffering; who should not be glorious in the eyes of men, but who should in fact be despised and rejected by them. Who could He be? They revelled in such exhilarating prophecies as, "My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high"; even the disciples of the Lord looked earnestly for the outshining of that glory, but what could be the meaning of "His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men"? It was easy enough to discern the voice of Israel's Deliverer and God in the words, "I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering. At My rebuke I dry up the sea," but Who is it that says, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheek to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:1-11)? Of course, we find the key to the riddle in the New Testament; we know and believe that it is Christ and Him crucified; but this to the Jew is a stumbling-block; he will not have a suffering Messiah and abides in ignorance and unbelief.

It is clear from all Scripture that since man became a sinful, self-centred creature, and death lay upon him as God's judgment, the way to the glory is through suffering; it is "he that humbleth himself that is exalted." I should hesitate to apply the saying, "No cross, no crown" to the Lord Jesus personally, for all the crowns were His according to His rights as the Creator-Son and Heir of all things; yet having descended from the place of His eternal glory and become man for God's glory and our redemption, even He could not reach the joy that was set before Him apart from enduring the cross. He took the downward way of suffering to do the will of God and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; it was the only way to the crown. The disciples of the Lord were as blind to the fact that the way of suffering was the only way to the glory as the rest of the Jews, for when He told them that He "must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and raised again the third day," Peter took Him and rebuked Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee." He had no

conception of God's ways though he understood afterwards when he wrote of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. The exaltation of Christ cannot be separated from His humiliation. It is God's answer to all that He suffered in a world dominated by the devil, and as a sacrifice for sins. His own words to His disciples unfolded the story that we love to tell, and which, indeed, had been the burden of all Scripture, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things," He said, "and to enter into His glory," and Peter took up the same theme and enlarged upon it in his Pentecostal witness, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." And Paul gives the full measure of that exaltation, as the consequence of the descent from Godhead glory to the shame of the cross. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow: of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:9-11). That Christ is in heaven, a real living man, raised up from the dead, is fundamental to our faith and must be maintained and proclaimed. The Scriptures are so definite about it, that it may seem needless to stress it, but the fact is that multitudes have no knowledge of it at all, they think of Him as a spirit, and not as a man having flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). A young man, a true but unstable Christian, said to me after we had listened to an address on the exaltation of the Lord, "I never knew that Christ was a real, living man in heaven before, I always thought that He was a spirit." I need not say that the knowledge he gained that day changed his life. I think it would be right to say that even as the disciples of the Lord during His life with them thought only of the glory, and in spite of His own words, had no thought of the sufferings, for they were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken"; so now many sincere Christians think only of the sufferings and do not realise the glory to which Christ has been exalted; they sing, "Simply to Thy cross I cling," and have a very feeble conception of Christ "crowned with glory and honour" at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But our faith is not complete without this, it is the crown of it, and a full, robust and joyful Christian life is impossible if it is not known. From whichever way we view the ways and counsels of God, whether for His own glory, the blessing of men, or the overthrow of all evil, we see that the exaltation of Christ is a necessity. Take these ways of God on their most simple and elementary ground; that of our blessing. The answer to the challenge, "Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" is "It is God that justifieth." But everything that He does must be according to eternal justice, and how can He justify the ungodly? The answer is "It is Christ that died"; by His death a full expiation was made for all our offences. But how do we know that? "Yea, rather, that is risen again." His resurrection is God's seal upon the value of His death; the proof that the price paid in it was sufficient. Had it not been, death would have held Him as its prey for ever and even the power of God could not have raised Him. But there is more than resurrection. "Who is even at the right hand of God." His exaltation is the declaration of God's entire satisfaction and delight in His work which He accomplished for us. The believer's Substitute and Representative is at the right hand of God. Could He have been there if one sin had remained on Him? Impossible! Yet on the cross He was delivered for our offences; there He was made sin for us; there the Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. Nothing else like His exaltation to the Father's right hand could prove how completely He has borne away "sin's heavy load" for us. The devil himself could not prevent that exaltation and can say nothing against it, and consequently he cannot bring any charge against us for whom Christ suffered and died. But further, "Who also maketh intercession for us." If He died

and rose again for our justification, He lives and intercedes for us that we might live as justified people.

It is in Christ that we have redemption; in Him we are justified from all things; in Him we are sanctified, and in Him we have an everlasting, inalienable acceptance with God; but it is in Him who is exalted and crowned in glory, beyond the reach of question or challenge. "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Hebrews 10:1-39). The value of His death abides; His victory over death by resurrection abides; but He is in the glory and the glory is the answer to the suffering, it is the measure of God's approval of His work, and the pledge of our blessing. The vindication of the Lord and the subjugation of all evil are involved in this exaltation. Let us consider the words of David in Psalms 110:1-7 "The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." The Lord used this great saying in His conflict with the Pharisees as a challenge and a warning, giving them thereby an opportunity of discerning who He was and of repenting their enmity towards Him. The words declare His Deity, for they tell us that He was David's Lord, but they also proclaim His exaltation consequent upon His humiliation and rejection by men. Peter takes them up in this way in his Pentecostal appeal to the nation, and his appeal was most powerful; he set two ways open to his hearers, the one was that of surrender to Him whom God had set at His right hand, but refusing that, the other was to be crushed beneath His victorious feet. And it must be one or other for every soul of man.

One most precious feature of our Lord's obedience to His Father's will was His complete committal of Himself to the Father. No thought of self-vindication entered His mind. "He is near that justifieth me" was always the spirit in which He moved onward to the cross. When one of His disciples drew a sword to defend Him in the garden, He said to him, "Put up again thy sword into his place . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And when at last His enemies had done their worst and He hung rejected and put to shame upon the cross, and the chief priest with the scribes and elders mocked Him saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God," He sought no deliverance, and died apparently unheard by heaven. But He was heard. "Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns," and His exaltation to God's right hand is God's answer to that complete obedience and perfect trust. In His life of humiliation He proved Himself worthy to command all things for God; and the Father has given all things into His hands. He has set Him "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and has given Him to be head over all things to the Church." And woe be to those who refuse to own His supremacy, be they men or devils. God's will and purposes shall be carried out to the last letter of them and all are centred in Christ in the glory of God.

It is clear that God created the earth as we know it for man's habitation, for His delights were with the sons of men. He crowned Adam as the head of it, giving him a glorious dominion which he was to hold in fief for God. How soon he handed over his dominion to the devil and lost his crown and became subject to death, and every member of his race is like the head of it. Struggle as they may to regain the lost crown, and no matter how great their ambitions and powers, they cannot do it; all their efforts are brought to naught by death, and the crown lies beyond death. Was then God's

purpose that man should have this dominion to be frustrated? That could not be; but we must look away from the first man to the Second, from the first Adam to the Last Adam, even as God has done. And we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.

He has gained the crown, but He could only do it through death. By the grace of God He tasted death for everything. He came down into a ruined creation, groaning beneath the curse and the power of death, to remove the mortgage that was on it; He became Man to stand in the place of man who had ruined himself, and to take up all his liabilities and to taste death in all its bitterness that He might destroy its power; and having humbled Himself to the lowest point He has been raised to the highest and all things have been put in subjection under His feet. But not yet is this manifested. This is the "not yet" period, the period of faith. But faith has eyes that see things that are to come, and is assured that they must be, and has the present pledge of them in Jesus crowned with glory and honour.

01.11. Our Great High Priest: His Qualification for the Office

Our Great High Priest: His Qualification for the Office

"Christ at God's right hand unwearied

By our tale of shame and sin,

Day by day, and hour by hour

Welcoming every wanderer in.

On His heart amidst the glory,

Bearing all our grief and care;

Every burden, ere we feel it,

Weighed and measured by His prayer." — Bevan. The closing words of Luke's Gospel are most notable. They tell of the Lord Jesus being carried up into heaven and how His disciples "worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." It is this "great joy" pouring itself out in worship and praise that arrests the attention. What was the cause of it? These men were distressed and troubled when they knew that their Lord was going away, and He had to comfort them by telling them of His Father's house and of His coming again to take them there. But when He had actually gone they showed no sign of being bereft, they were not sorrowing orphans, but men brimful and overflowing with confidence and joy. This must be accounted for. It is interesting and instructive to see that this Gospel by Luke opens with a dumb priest in the temple, and closes with these happy worshipping men in the same place. Clearly they were the true priests, offering up spiritual sacrifices to God, even though they were not sons of Aaron. Nothing but a great, and to them unexpected, event could have achieved this miracle.

It is not hard to discover why the official priest was dumb; an angel had brought good news from God to him, and he did not believe it. His dumb mouth was the outward sign of a dumb heart. A sad beginning to the Gospel, but what a joyous close! We catch the spirit of it, and share its gladness as we enquire the reason of it. The understanding of these men, beloved of the Lord, had been opened to understand the Scriptures. They saw with hearts that believed that the road that Christ had taken was the only road, "it behoved Him to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day." He had fulfilled the infallible Word and glorified God in doing it, and God had given His righteous answer to His suffering and death by exalting Him to His own right hand. They had seen Him go into heaven and they exulted in His triumph, but the way that He had gone must have added to their joy. "He led them out as far as to Bethany" — that showed their willing subjection to His control, He was their Lord and Leader — "He lifted up His hands and blessed them" — those uplifted hands and that benediction declared Him to be their great High Priest who had entered into the heavenly sanctuary for them. We must see the meaning of the place into which He has

gone and the manner of His going if we are to understand His present High Priestly service. Highest exaltation was His, His going up showed that, but in that exalted place He would not forget them, the manner of His going showed that. No wonder they were filled with joy!

We were not there when He was parted from them and "carried up into heaven," yet the fact is recorded that we might believe it, and vision has been given us by the Spirit's indwelling, and "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour," and we are exhorted to consider Him, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. This we will now do. But first we must see what our profession, or confession, is. We are addressed as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." This is our confession. We know that if He had not tasted death by the grace of God for us, and purged our sins by His own blood, and come triumphantly out of death, such a designation and confession could never have been ours. We owe it all to Him. He is our Sanctifier, "for He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," He has set us apart for God, even as He has set Himself apart" (John 17:19), and we are one with Him; "for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren." If we are His brethren we are sons of God and the glory of God is our destiny. This is the revelation of God's grace to us, and being received by faith it sets us in motion towards the glory, and Christ is our Leader in that homeward march; He is the Captain of our salvation. But we need to be sustained and succoured in this way of faith, for we are beset with infirmities and the road is not always easy to travel; we need a great High Priest, to sympathise with us and to succour us and to save us to the uttermost as we come to God by Him; and this great office has been bestowed upon Jesus, our Saviour.

"Lord, in all Thy power and glory
Still Thy thoughts and eyes are here;
Watching o'er Thy ransomed people
To Thy gracious heart so dear."

It is in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the Lord is shown to us in this attractive way, and it opens with the declaration of His Divine glory: He is the SON. None less than He could have made purgation for our sins, or could lead us to the glory of God. But He had to come down to us and take part in flesh and blood for this, and Hebrews 2:1-18 plainly teaches the truth as to His coming into manhood. There was nothing lacking in Him as to His eternal Deity. He was the SON. There was nothing lacking in His complete manhood. He was JESUS, and what He was He ever will be. This truth as to His Person is necessary for us; He only, who is God and man in one blessed Person, could be our Saviour, and He only could be our great High Priest. We have trusted Him as our Saviour; we have committed the eternal welfare of our souls to Him, we may with the same confidence rely upon Him to carry us right through to the glory of God by His intercession for us as our great High Priest.

We are dealing now, not with His finished work of atonement, which cost Him those unspeakable sufferings on the cross, but with His present service towards us in heaven: that of being our great High Priest. His finished work on the cross was for sinners, His present work in heaven is for those sinners who have become saints through faith in Him: it is for all who have believed. We read, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a

merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining unto God . . . for in that He Himself suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18). "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (sin apart)" (Hebrews 4:15). And again, "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience, by the things that He suffered and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). "But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Here is a theme for our meditation, it is a theme that might well fill volumes printed in gold, but it were better to have it deeply written in our hearts. In pursuing it we are permitted to speak of our great Lord as JESUS, for this precious personal Name occurs many times in this epistle. It is Jesus, who is "the author and finisher of faith" (Hebrews 12:2), which means that He has trodden every step in the way of faith. There is not a trial, temptation, or difficulty in that way that He has not encountered and overcome. That way lay through a world in which all that are godly shall have tribulation, but He overcame the world (John 16:33). He "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself" (Hebrews 12:3). "He hath suffered being tempted" (Hebrews 2:8), and this because He was obedient. Everyone who will be obedient to God shall suffer in a hostile world of which Satan is the god and prince, but His obedience was absolute. Nothing, neither allurements nor terrors, diverted Him from finishing the road upon which He had set His feet for God's glory, and that He might succour us. That road started at the manger for He said, "Thou didst make Me to hope when I was upon My mother's breasts, I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother's belly" (Psalms 21:1-13), and it ended at the cross, when He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." Of course, there is nothing strange in a servant being obedient, it is his life and duty to obey the word of his master, but the wonder here is "though He were SON, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." The Son in the Godhead, whose prerogative it was to command and uphold all things by the word of His power, took the servant's place, but He did not cease to be the Son when He did that. He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9), but He was always the Lord of the angels, and they must always worship Him (Hebrews 1:6). Though He took the subordinate place for the will of God, there could not be any question of inferiority as to His Person. How emphatic is the word that the Son is God: "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). And in Hebrews 3:1-19 we learn that Christ is "Son over His own house," which He has builded, and that "He that built all things is God." I stress this that the wonder of His path of obedience and suffering may grow upon our souls and that we might have a deeper appreciation of the outcome of it.

"Being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." He has fully qualified for this, there is not a test that He has not endured and triumphed in. Hence He is able to sympathise with those who are enduring trials and testings — for that is the meaning of temptations — and to succour them. He is able to save them to the uttermost . . . seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Here is the revelation to us of His unchanging, unwearying love. It has been said, that if it were necessary He would come again from heaven to die for us, so great is His love. That is not

necessary, "for by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14), but it is necessary that He should live for us, and intercede for us and succour us; and we should be overwhelmed by the difficulties of the way if He did not. He does this as being moved by the same love that made Him die. The birth pangs do not exhaust the mother's love for her babe; she would be willing to lay down her life for it any time.

"Yet she may forgetful prove;

He will never cease to love." To all who obey Him it can be said, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities." He is Jesus, that carries us in thought down to the depths of humiliation and death into which His love carried Him. He is the Son of God, that presents His glory, His magnificent greatness, the splendour of His Person and inheritance. He is Jesus, that tells us of the tender sympathy of His heart for us. He is the Son of God, that tells us of the power of His arm. The tenderest love and the greatest power in the universe abide in Him. He is Jesus, that tells of His preciousness to us. He is the Son of God, that tells us of His preciousness to God. Since He is Jesus, He loves us so well that there is nothing that would be good for us that He will not ask for when He intercedes before God for us; since He is the Son of God, there is nothing that He asks for us that God will deny.

Having such a great High Priest we are exhorted to draw near to God with boldness. First for the help we need in all the ups and downs of life, and second, to be worshippers before Him. We must not confound these two drawings near; they are distinct, and separated one from the other by five chapters in our Epistle. First having such a sympathetic High Priest, we are exhorted "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for timely help" (Hebrews 4:16). We are put into contact by our High Priest with the inexhaustible resources of divine grace, and we have but to ask at the throne of grace, and that succour that we need in the hour of trial will be supplied. We could not have a better illustration of this than Paul, when the thorn in the flesh oppressed him so sorely. Should it be taken away? that was his desire; or would he give way under it? that was Satan's desire, but it was unthinkable. The Lord soothed his spirit with infinite sympathy and succoured him with all-sufficient grace.

We see how Simon Peter missed this wonderful sustainment because of his self-confidence. He did not cry to the Lord in the hour of trial as Paul did, and he fell. Yet even he was preserved from despair by the intercession of the Lord. "Simon, Simon," said the Lord, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Paul and Peter were the objects of the tender solicitude of the Lord, as all His saints are. He interceded for them before the trial seized them. Paul was preserved from failure, and Peter was preserved in spite of failure. Grace to keep and grace to restore came to them through the Lord's priestly activities on their behalf. We might take another illustration from Peter's experience. He walked on the water to go to Jesus, and found that the circumstances were such as he could not overcome, and he began to sink. But when he cried out in fear and need the Lord stretched forth His hand and held him up, and he walked on the waves by His support. No picture could set forth more beautifully the gracious succour that is ministered now to those who are conscious that they have no help outside the Lord. He stretches forth the hand of a man to their aid, but in that hand is the power of God. But He is not only our great High Priest to succour us in our weaknesses, He is over

the house of God, and He would have us draw near with boldness, not to the throne of grace only, but into the holiest, into the very presence of God where, not our needs are in question but where God's glories shine forth. We have the title to enter there, and we may do so with hearts full of thanksgiving, without any fear, being fully assured that it is God's delight that we should be there, having our conscience clear of all sense of guilt through the one efficacious offering that Christ has made, and our whole beings consecrated to Him whose love has won our hearts. This is the great present end of the service of the Lord as our great High Priest, and we ought not to be indifferent as to it. It is sad that we would so often avail ourselves of the means without reaching the end, glad to have the relief that the grace gives, but not pressing on to have God as our exceeding joy and the object of our hearts' adoration.

Those men of Luke 24:1-53 were in the joy of this in spirit, they do not seem in that glad hour to have had anything to pray for, it was all overflowing praise and worship with them. They had to pray later, and they did pray with real purpose, and we shall need to pray every day, but there is this other side, so near to the heart of God. He would have us draw near for His own sake and not simply because we have needs. He would have us near Himself because He loves us greatly and He desires that our love should flow out to Him in response.

Time and space fail us to pursue this great subject now but "of the things we have spoken this is the sum. We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," and this glorious person is Jesus the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us. May we be stirred up to know the Lord and His present gracious activities on our behalf in a fuller measure.

01.12. The Deity of the Lord Jesus: In the Later Epistles

The Deity of the Lord Jesus: In the Later Epistles

"The Son is true God, seated on a throne of divine perpetuity, and maintaining a moral government of matchless and inflexible rectitude, Himself immutable and eternal. He must remain in peerless majesty when the material universe shall have passed away; through all intermediate periods ensuring the triumphs of His church, until every enemy shall be crushed beneath His feet."

— Treffry.

It is not in Paul's later Epistles only that the truth of the Deity of our Lord is emphasised, it is the fountain from which all his ministry flowed. "It is taken for granted all through his Epistles, and is the very soul and marrow of the entire series of doctrines. When this is lost sight of, all is misshapen and dislocated but when this is recognised, all falls into its place as the exhibition of infinite power and mercy clothed in a vesture of humiliation and sacrifice, and devoted to the succour and enlightenment of man" (Liddon). The divine glory of his Lord was everything to Paul. We surely realise this as we read of his heroic life of labour and zeal and endurance and sacrifice, and consider his burning words. From the hour when his astonished eyes saw Him in the glory and heard His voice as he lay stricken by His power on the road to Damascus, the enthroned Jesus was the object of his faith and love and life, and he yielded to Him an allegiance that only God could claim. He delighted to speak of himself as His bond slave; to count the greatest prizes that the world could give as the dust beneath his feet and well lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He preached Him as the subject of the gospel of God, and called upon men to repent Godward, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for their soul's salvation as they would believe in God. He charged the princes of this world with crucifying the Lord of glory, and boldly declared, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema." He spoke of Him as our "great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" and as the "Judge of the quick and dead." How awe-inspiring are his words in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 : "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Of whom could such words have been written but of the eternal God? But it is not difficult to see how necessary it was that the truth should be stated in definite terms in the later epistles, not only for those to whom they were first addressed but for us also. The deity of Christ is the central fact of our Faith; it is the glory of it and that that gives stability to our souls and enables us to endure to the end; and it is that which is the object of the most persistent attacks of Satan. Fierce was the war that raged about it in the early centuries of the Christian era, and to this day the test of everything is "What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?" If He is David's Son, "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord?" How good it is that we are not left to the vagaries of the Fathers, or to the opinions of modern theologians, or to our own deductions and conclusions, but that we have the clear, definite, unequivocal words of Holy Scripture for what we believe. The Hebrew epistle The faith of the Hebrew Christians was being sorely tried; they had hoped that their nation would have accepted

Christ as the Messiah, but only a feeble remnant had done so, and they were between two fires, persecuted by pagan Gentiles and reviled by their own countrymen. And just ahead of them lay the destruction of Jerusalem and their dispersal to the ends of the earth. The time had come for a complete and final break with all that they had held most sacred — priests, sacrifices, temple, city. What could carry them through this time of sore trial and maintain them steadfast in the faith? One thing — the transcendent glory of their Lord and Saviour. Hence their need was the occasion for the Spirit of God to take of the things of Christ and show them to them, and to glorify Him (John 16:14), and to clothe Him with distinctions and glories which belong only to the eternal God. How wonderful are the opening words of the Epistle, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Lack of space and time prevent me from attempting to say anything about this range of glories that could belong to no creature however exalted, but surely the contemplation of them must bow every believing heart in wonder and worship at His feet, and especially so as we realise that it is Jesus, who died for us, to whom these glories belong. But there is one passage in the chapter that we must consider. It is a quotation from Psalms 102:1-28. "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but THOU ART THE SAME, and Thy years shall not fail." Who can this be who creates for His own glory, and who, when what He has created has served His purpose, folds it up and sets it aside like a worn-out garment, but who abides Himself in His own eternal, immutable, unchanging Being? Who can He be? Let the end of the Epistle answer the question. "JESUS CHRIST THE SAME yesterday, to-day and for ever." Consider this declaration of His glory. The words were addressed to Him when as man on earth His strength was weakened in the way and He drew near unto death. It was one Person in the Godhead addressing another, and addressing Him, as the words indicate, as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the One whose creatorial voice called time into being and who will have the last word about every thing; who when former things have passed away and time has ceased to be, will say, "Behold I make all things new." "It is done" (Revelation 21:1-27).

Consider what the effect of the contemplation of this glorious Lord must have had upon these sorely harassed Hebrew Christians; and shall we be less affected? It is He who has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." As He said of old to Jacob the wanderer (Genesis 28:15), to Joshua the warrior (Joshua 1:5), and to Solomon the worshipper (1 Chronicles 28:20), so He says to us, and what strong consolation His word gives, for it is impossible for Him to lie. So that we may boldly say, as those Hebrews could say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Colossians 1:1-29

I have been impressed with the fact that those Scriptures in the Epistles that make reference to our Lord's pre-incarnate being, present Him to our faith as the Son and as the Creator. As the Son He stands in relation to the Father and as the Creator He stands in relation to time and all that He

has created. And I am sure that it would be right to say that the universe was made and is upheld by His power that He might fill it with the blessedness of that love wherewith the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world. In Colossians 1:13 it is said that the Father "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (New Trans.). This is the only time that the Kingdom of the Father's Son is so named in Scripture; there must be a reason for it. The reason for it, and for the divine glories of the Son that follow, is to be found in the danger that menaced the Faith at Colosse. A subtle foe was bent upon seducing the faithful brethren in that Church from Christ. He was insinuating that while it was well enough to have Christ they would be none the worse off for a little of the world's philosophy. Christ and Plato would make an admirable mixture; and if they would borrow from Jewish ordinances and curb their Christian liberty by a discreet asceticism they would be gainers in every way. The best of Judaism ritual, and the best of Greek thought would enrich their faith. But the whole effort was to displace Christ in their souls and blind them to His eternal oneness with the Father, and to reduce Him in their thoughts to the level of a created being. And this also is the trend of modern thought in Christendom. Even the missionary is told that he must no longer go forth proclaiming the Name of Jesus as the only name in which there is salvation, for there is good and truth, say they, in all religions, and the Moslem and the Hindu have also got messages for mankind and they should meet together with the Christian on equal terms and pool their respective wealth. In view of these efforts to degrade the Son of God, how necessary to us is the Epistle to the Colossians.

How necessary it was that Paul should arise in his loyalty to his Lord, and in bold, God-given words declare the peerless, unassailable glory of Christ, for only that could preserve the saints of God from this deadly error in his day, and nothing else can do it in this. The truth of God does not change, Christ does not change: the Son of the Father's love is from everlasting to everlasting, and He is the Head of His body the Church, and must have no rival. In all things He must have pre-eminence.

We read that "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." By Him. The force which has summoned the worlds out of nothingness into being and which upholds them in being, is His; He wields it; He is the one Producer and Sustainer of all created existence. For Him. He is not as Arianism afterwards pretended, merely an inferior workman, creating for the glory of a higher Master, for a God superior to Himself; He is the End of created things as well as their immediate Source, and in living for Him every creature finds at once the explanation and the law of its being. For He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Liddon).

We surely realise the infinite character of His glory and wisdom as the Creator, yet as the Son He has a greater glory, a glory that surpasses all creature comprehension. As the Creator He is supremely above every creature that He has made, and that supremacy will yet be confessed by every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth; but the Name of Son declares what He was to the Father before any creature existed. "The Son of His love"; "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father." "Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." "Having one Son, His well-beloved." How these words move the heart, and bow us down before the Father, especially when we read that it is into the kingdom of His Son that we have been translated through grace. Some have endeavoured to explain the mystery of this eternal relationship

between the Father and the Son, and have made deductions and arrived at conclusions which have been neither wise nor helpful. I will not do that, it is better to accept what is written without asking, How? For "no man knoweth the Son but the Father."

"The higher mysteries of His fame

The creature's grasp transcends.

The Father only that blest Name

Of Son can comprehend."

What is beyond all controversy is that He, the Son, was loved by the Father before the world's foundations, and that the Father sent Him forth, made of a woman. He gave His only-begotten Son, that the love of the eternal relationship might be revealed to us, who without it would have remained in the power of darkness for ever. The kingdom of His Son is a kingdom of light, and outside of it is darkness. It is a kingdom of light because "He is the image of the invisible God," "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person." "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He is the One who represents God to the universe He has created, and He will flood His kingdom with the knowledge of God. Adam was created as in God's image in a minor way, but he was but a figure of Christ. It is THE SON who is the true image, and God is fully revealed in Him, not as Father only, though that surely is the most blessed part of this divine revelation, but all that the eternal God is has found its expression in Him, for "all the fulness (of the Godhead) was pleased to dwell in Him" — the despised Nazarene, and now "all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily" (Colossians 1:9; Colossians 2:9, New Trans.). All the light of God for His universe streams from His beloved Son. All else is darkness whether it be Judaism, Grecian philosophy, Hinduism, Mahomedanism, or that Modernism that while holding to the Christian name denies the Father and the Son. For "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:22-23). And John, inspired by the Holy Ghost, uses strong language of such. He says they are liars and antichrists. He is the true Light, the Light of the world, and shineth for every man, but "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Great and varied are the glories that He bears in this chapter, glories upon which no creature could lay his hands, or claim a title to. He is the Redeemer; the Image of the invisible God; the Creator of all things, and the End for which they were all made, and He sustains the universe that He has made by His almighty and undiminished power. In Him the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and by an infinite sacrifice He has made peace so that He will as a result of it, and by His own divine power, reconcile all things on earth and in heaven to God, and bring them into harmony with the central throne. But these glories belong to Him because of who He is; they are names and renown that none but He could have gained, but before He rose up and went forth to glorify God in any of them He was the Son of the Father's love. He is this in His own eternal Being. And those who have believed have been brought into His kingdom, into subjection to Him, and as being in that kingdom they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God's Son; and they are loved with the love wherewith the Father loved Him, for said He, "I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in

them" (John 17:26).

"Beware," then, since such a glorious Lord and Saviour and Head is yours, O Christian, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:8-10).

01.13. The Son of Man: The Judge of Quick and Dead

The Son of Man: The Judge of Quick and Dead

"Heaven is opened, and a white horse appears, the familiar figure of war and victory. It is upon the Rider that our eyes are fixed. He is called "Faithful and True," and in righteousness He judges and wars: His warring is but itself a judgment. For this, His eyes penetrate as a flame of fire; nothing escapes them. Many diadems are on His head — the sign of absolute authority — and worthily, for His Name in its full reality, expressing His nature, is an incommunicable one, beyond the knowledge of finite creatures. His vesture is dipped in blood, for already many enemies have fallen before Him. And His Name is called — has been and is, as the languages implies — "the Word of God." The Gospel of John shows us that in creation already He was that, and now in judgment He is no less so." Grant.

"The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father" became THE SON OF MAN that He might fulfil the whole will of the Triune God. His title of Son of Man is a glorious title. It carries with it universal dominion, as we should expect, seeing He is who He is, and yet the first occurrence of it in the New Testament is in those memorable words of His. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). It was into such poverty that He who will rule all things for God came for God's glory and the salvation of men. Before taking the dominion and power, He trod the way of service and suffering. He gently rebuked the pride and ambitions of His disciples with the words, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Yet He knew what the result of His sojourn on earth would be, for even in the darkest hour of His life, when arraigned for blasphemy before the high priest of His people, and when "they did spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and smote Him with the palms of their hands" He said, "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:24). As the Son of Man He was lifted up, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. It was a necessity, without which His kingdom would have been a barren kingdom, with never a man in it to rejoice in His glory. He was lifted up as the representative of men to bear the judgment that lay upon them that He might be the Redeemer before He takes the throne as Judge. But as surely as He was lifted up upon the cross, so surely will He fill the throne, for "The Father . . . hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (John 5:27).

He has been "ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." So Peter declared in the first gospel sermon ever preached to Gentile hearers, and I should connect the judgment of the living with His title Son of Man. He will judge the dead also at the end of Time at the great white throne, for "the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father" (John 5:22), but He will do that in His Divine majesty. It is before God that the dead, small and great, shall stand (Revelation 20:1-15). HE IS GOD. As Son of Man He will deal with the living when He comes. Then He will wield the SICKLE, the SWORD and the

SCEPTRE. He is seen with the sickle in Revelation 14:14. "And I looked," says John the Apostle, "and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle . . . and He that sat upon the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."

He came into the world to sow the good seed of the kingdom, for "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man" (Matthew 13:27). That sowing cost Him more than mortal tongue shall ever tell. He fulfilled the word "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed." Aye, not only were "strong crying and tears" His portion, but blood also. "The seed is the word of God," the full revelation of what God is, and He had to die to sow that seed; and He who sowed the seed must reap the harvest; and the latter part of that ancient word will also be fulfilled — "Shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him" (Psalms 126:6). But tares have been sown in the wheat field; this was the work of an enemy, and that enemy was the devil (Matthew 13:29), and the Son of Man must discriminate between wheat and the tares; so we read that "He shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity." As the wielder of the sickle He will execute a discriminating judgment. To use another forceful figure, that of the rugged Baptist, "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:2). That passage probably has Israel specially in view, but this discriminating judgment will be extended to the Gentile nations as Matthew 25:31 teaches. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." It is strange that so many theologians should have interpreted that passage as being the great final judgment of the dead, until which none could know whether they would stand on the right hand of the Lord or the left, saved or lost, say they. It is clear enough that it is the judgment of living nations at the appearing and glory of the Son of Man, and that will take place at the beginning of His reign of a thousand years over the earth, while the final judgment of the dead will take place when those thousand years are finished (Revelation 20:1-15). The Son of Man will bring in the glory and the blessing; the angels of God shall ascend and descend upon Him (John 1:51). He will bring down heaven to earth for "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass" (Psalms 72:6). But note well the figure. It is upon the mown grass that He comes down. The sickle will have done its work first. The sharp sickle in the hand of the gold-crowned Son of Man will be thrust into the earth when God's work and the devil's shall be fully ripe.

We are not surprised that as their Master went up to Jerusalem for the last time His disciples followed Him amazed and afraid. Their forebodings must have been greatly increased when He said to them, "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him and shall spit upon Him and shall kill Him" (Mark 10:33). Could it be the same Son of Man whom John saw in Patmos, shining in His divine Majesty? Yes, it was the same. There is none other who could go down to such depths and be exalted to such heights; and He is the Ancient of Days. Even John's eyes could not look upon such glory as was there revealed in Him, nor could he stand upon his feet before Him. He says, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Nor would he have known Him as his beloved Lord if

He had not laid His right hand upon him with a well-remembered tenderness, and in tones of compassion said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (hades) and of death" (Revelation 1:12-18). The keys of death and hades in His hand declared that He, the Son of Man, is the undisputed Master of the unseen world, even though His authority is challenged by living men. But He is coming to judge the living, for "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword with which He would smite the nations" (Revelation 1:1-20, Revelation 19:1-21). THE SWORD must precede the sceptre because of what men are. How strange is that popular delusion that the world is to be gradually converted by the gospel, or that the kingdom of God will be evolved by men's own efforts out of the world as it is. Hear what the Scripture says: "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Even so. Amen. A converted world would welcome Him with acclamation; a godless world will wail with terror at the sight of Him. The sword first and then the sceptre. That sword indicates resistless justice: the vengeance of God upon unrepentant, wicked men. It will compel every stubborn knee to bend and every rebellious lip to confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and righteousness: and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things" (Psalms 45:1-17).

It seems almost an incredible thing that men should assemble together to make war on Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, yet they will, and such is the delusion with which the devil will delude them that they will hope to achieve their purpose and keep Him for ever out of this world. So we read, "I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war on Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army" (Revelation 19:1-21). They will stretch forth their hand against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty: and in their blind hatred they will run upon Him, "even upon the thick bosses of His buckler" (Job 14:1-22). But the battle will be swift and decisive, for the sword of the Son of Man shall prevail, and the blasphemous leaders of that vast host of men shall be seized by divine power and cast alive into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, "And the remainder shall be slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth, and all the fowls of the air were filled with flesh" (Revelation 19:1-21). THE SCEPTRE of the Son of Man will be an iron sceptre and for it He has been in great conflict. It has been the devil's purpose from the beginning to oppose His wielding it. He must have understood and taken to heart God's words to him in the Garden concerning the woman's Seed. "It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel," and he has spared no force or wile that he hoped would prevent this. He was not ignorant of the times, for the time of the Advent of the woman's Seed had been plainly told in Old Testament Scripture and when that time came, he "stood up before the woman (Israel) which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 12:1-17). Failing in that first onslaught, he changed his tactics, and masked his guns and advanced with a flag of truce and terms of peace. We read, "The devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." But the Lord knew him for the adversary that he was, and answered, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4).

He refused the short and easy way to the throne and sceptre that Satan offered Him at such a price, and took instead the way of obedience to the will of God, and God's will was the death of the cross. He showed Himself worthy to rule by complete subjection. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and the sceptre of His kingdom will be for ever a sceptre of righteousness. But He would take that sceptre neither from the devil nor men, but from the hand of God only. We learn this from Daniel's night visions. Said he, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of the heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14). A corresponding scene to that is found in Revelation 5:1-14 : "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and the four beasts (living creatures) and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne." In John's vision He receives the sickle and the sword from the hand of God, and in Daniel's vision He receives the sceptre. The LORD had said unto Him, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalms 2:1-12). He would have nothing and take nothing except from the hand of God; in this He is in striking contrast to the first man, Adam, who grasped at something that God in His wisdom had withheld from him, and fell into disaster and death.

God intends that the proclamation of His coming kingdom of righteousness shall go out in testimony to the Gentiles. It was announced by Paul to the Athenians on Mars Hill, when He said, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). He is the King that shall reign in righteousness and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever (Isaiah 32:1-20).

Marvel not that the sickle and sword and sceptre should be put into the hands of the Son of Man. He only of all men who have appeared on earth could wield them in undiminished righteousness and power. Every other man to whom power and authority had been given had failed; Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, all broke down when tested, and have had to make way for the Son of Man. He has prevailed and will never fail, for in His absolute dependence upon God He has been upheld, and the word has been fulfilled and will yet be fulfilled. "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, and upon THE SON OF MAN whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" (Psalms 80:17). Again I quote His own words. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

Then will come the final judgment, which John describes in awe-inspiring words. "And I saw a great white throne, AND HIM THAT SAT ON IT, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:1-15).

He will lay aside the sickle when its work is done; He will lay aside the sword when its work is done, and when as Son of Man He has glorified God in His kingdom He will hand back to God the sceptre, for we read, "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

02.00. Emmanuel

Emmanuel which being interpreted is God with us. Matthew 1:23.

J. T. Mawson.

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02.01. Part 1. His Deity and Incarnation.

Part 1. His Deity and Incarnation.

"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet 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" (Micah 5:2).

"Christ, who is over all, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER. Amen" (Romans 9:5).

"Fairer than all the earth-born race,

Perfect in comeliness Thou art;

Replenished are Thy lips with grace

And full of love Thy tender heart.

God ever blest, we bow the knee

And own all fulness dwells in Thee." (C. Wesley.)

"Lord of the heavens, Sovereign, Son for ever!

Lord of the earth, Creator, Increate!

Come in the likeness of our flesh, but never

Tarnished by taint of sin, inviolate.

Come to destroy the power of death, and sever

Man from its terror in His mercy great;

O let us kneel before Him! let us own Him

King of our hearts, and on that throne enthrone Him." (J. Boyd.)

Emmanuel.

God's Sign to Men

"The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The condition of the nation of Israel as it was in Isaiah's day is described in one vivid statement; "The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." History is repeating itself, and the state of humanity could not be more truly described to-day. As it was then, so it is now. The profiteer was busy (Isaiah 5:8); men and women piped and danced, eagerly following their pagan pleasure without a thought of God, or fear of His just judgments

(Isaiah 5:11-12); crime abounded, for men had grown fearless in their godlessness, and gave rein to their wilful passions, sinning "as it were with a cart rope" (Isaiah 5:18); blinded by the god of this world, they called evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20), which thing the advocates of spiritism are doing to-day; men thought themselves wiser than God: wise and prudent in their own eyes, like those who dare to criticize His Word, and substitute their own thoughts for His (Isaiah 5:21); and there were those who were so corrupt themselves that their whole business in life was to corrupt others, hating all righteousness and loving only wickedness (Isaiah 5:23-24).

There were reformers without end; reconstructors; politicians with many promises of better days to come, until men were weary of them; there was a great pretence at honouring God, but the heart was far from Him; and God Himself was weary of their pretentious hypocrisy (Isaiah 7:13). Then it was that He proclaimed that He would intervene; for it was evident that apart from His intervention there could be no blessing or rest for men, or glory to His name from men.

God's intervention was to be entirely of Himself: men were to have no part in it at all, except to receive the good that would result from it. Men cried out for a man, and still cry out for a man, and God replied, I will give you a Man, but He shall be one who owes nothing to man, whose very presence in the world shall be independent of man, for "a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." This was the sign. It was the sign of man's utter impotency for his own redemption; it was the sign that there was no balm in Gilead, and no physician there. It was the sign that when there was no hope for men in themselves then God would undertake their cause; but it was also the sign that this should proceed from Himself alone and not from men — "a virgin shall conceive." Impossible! cries the critic of God's ways, and the poor blind infidel, wise in his own sight. Yes, it is impossible with men; that is the very lesson that God would teach by the manner of His intervention. It is impossible that men should devise or evolve any scheme or system of redemption, or deliver and uplift themselves from the damning effects of sin, or make themselves what they ought to be before the God who justly claims their fear. Their young men might see visions and their old men dream dreams, but dreams and visions cannot help them; they cannot set themselves free from the law of sin and death. With men it is impossible, but not with God.

He stepped into the scene of man's utter ruin, and said, "Stand still, stand aside, and see the salvation of God": and so in due time, Mary brought forth her firstborn Son, and he [Joseph] called His name JESUS.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise; When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins."

"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:22-23).

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger" (Luke 2:8-16).

Thus came Emmanuel, not only apart from all the power of men, but also outside the abodes of men, lying in a manger. For the solemn fact had to come clearly into evidence, that (1) men could not produce the great Redeemer, in whom only rest for men and glory to God could be found, but (2) they did not want Him when He came.

Yes, but the virgin's Son, lying upon the straw of a stable, was Emmanuel — God with us. He was "God manifest in the flesh, seen of angels" (1 Timothy 3:16). And from the lips of God went forth the command, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6).

Angels worshipped Him, but men were indifferent. Only a few, such as those dusky sages from the far off East and the lowly shepherds from the hills near by, were moved by this great event. The blind unbelief of the multitude could not recognize the sign that God had given; Emmanuel was no more to them than "the carpenter's son," and they were as good or better than He.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:10-11).

God saw the contempt with which His Only Begotten was treated and spoke out from His eternal throne in consequence: "I will declare the decree," we read; "the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalms 2:7-8). But not then did He ask for the universal throne; or power to break the rebellious with a rod of iron; instead He dwelt among men full of grace. Emmanuel had come to reconcile the world to God, but His mission seemed to be a failure. He appeared in Jerusalem which He loved, riding upon the colt of an ass, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughters of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matthew 21:1-46). But that city, grown hoary in its presumptuous pride, despised the meekness of its true Messiah, and asked contemptuously, Who is this? Then He said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought." And the Lord, whose servant He had come to be, answered Him, for we read: "And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel be not gathered yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:5-6). And Israel will answer, too, in the day of His power, and will say: "Unto us a

child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7). And the nations also shall own Him. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:3-4). His degradation by men was absolute; He sounded the depths of contumely and shame; but His glory will be as great as His humiliation, and every man that is saved will owe it to Him, for "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Every problem will be settled by His wisdom, every wrong righted, and the groaning creation shall reach the end of its travail and rejoice in the power and presence of EMMANUEL.

God with us. As Moses kept the sheep of Jethro, the Midianite, in the back side of the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God, and there he beheld a strange thing. Upon the rugged sides of that notable mountain there burned a bush with fire, but in spite of the fierce flames that enwrapped it that bush was not consumed. Wonder at this great sight moved Moses to turn aside to discover why this should be, when the voice of God arrested him, and he found that he was in the immediate presence of the great I AM.

Out of that bush God spoke to Moses, and told him of salvation for His people — free, great, and full. He revealed Himself as the Almighty Deliverer. The rationalistic critic declares that for a bush to burn with fire and not be consumed is a physical impossibility, and so relegates this story, along with many another in Holy Writ, to the realm of legend and myth. But that which moves to ridicule the blind but presumptuous "wise and prudent" of the earth yields the most precious lessons to those who love God and His Word. In that burning bush there was foreshadowed the most extraordinary event that could happen in the history of time. The flame of fire tells us of God; "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). And the bush tells us of men, poor, sinful rebellious men — dry, withered, and useless, by whom no fruit was yielded to God. If God, who is a consuming fire, and who must judge all iniquity, should at any time come down into the midst of the dry and fruitless bush of humanity (and He has a right to do this whenever He pleases), what shall the result be? Why, there can be but one result, we should say; the bush will be consumed. Such is the natural thought of men, and hence the desire to keep God at a distance. And in this thought we seem to be confirmed as we read the record of Sinai. There at that awesome mount, the same at which Moses had had his first interview with God, the law of God was given, and out from its cloud crested summit the lightnings flamed forth, and the thunders boomed and rolled, and as God spoke to the people they feared exceedingly and begged that they might not hear that majestic voice again, but that Moses would become a mediator for them.

Yes, it would seem to us, as we contemplate that sight, that men must be consumed if God comes into the midst of them. But such a thought is false, fundamentally and absolutely false, for God who is light is also love, as His "due time" has proved. That due time arrived when the virgin

daughter of David's royal house brought forth her firstborn Son and "laid Him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn." Here was a sight for the angels of God, a sight that moved the whole multitude of them to rapturous praise, for the name of that Babe was called EMMANUEL, which, being interpreted, is, "God with us." The Babe in Bethlehem's manger was the great antitype of the burning bush. "God was manifest in the flesh and seen of angels." God was in the midst of men and they were not consumed. But for what purpose was God in the midst of men? There could be only one reason for this great event. If He had desired to send some message of warning, entreaty, or command, a servant like unto the prophets would have served the purpose, for at sundry times and in divers manners He thus addressed the fathers of old. If He had intended to make an example of sinners by executing His righteous judgment against them for their sins, an angel or two would have sufficed, as in the case of the guilty cities of the plain. But neither men nor angels would do for the purpose and will of God which was now to be unfolded; only Emmanuel, who came, saying, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." When Emmanuel appears, men and angels stand aside, for every ear must be attentive unto Him, for He comes to declare and bring to pass the intentions of divine and infinite love. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17).

If sinners were to be saved God must come down to them to do it, and if God comes down to sinners He must come as their Saviour: His very nature demands this, and His wisdom has found a way by which it can be done, according to the righteousness of the eternal throne. So Emmanuel's name is JESUS. Blessed, precious name! Name of reproach and shame on earth, name of ignominy upon the cross, name above every name in heaven above, name that through endless ages shall thrill a universe with gladness, and blend in harmonious praise the joy of every creature within the limitless extent of the realm of the Redeemer-God.

"Sweetest Name on mortal tongue,

Sweetest carol ever sung,

Sweetest note on seraph song —

Jesus! Jesus! JESUS!" The world opened a stable door to receive Him, and thus advertised its contempt and hatred of Him, but He accepted in infinite meekness the place they assigned to Him, that He might open out before the eyes of the poorest and the least the priceless treasures of divine compassion and love. And so He moved through this world "seen of angels": they rejoiced in that goodness which dwelt in Him; the goodness of God by which He overcomes evil, even though men upon whom it flowed forth did not appreciate it. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, dried the tears upon the widow's cheeks, kissed the children into the kingdom of God, and preached the gospel to the poor. God had visited men, for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). This is a great sight for us to turn aside and see, greater than that which Moses saw, as the substance is greater than the shadow. And in the presence of God made known to us, and brought nigh to us in Jesus, our souls can stay without a fear, (and not as Moses, who "hid his face and was afraid to look upon God,") for "GOD IS LOVE."

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

"WE LOVE HIM, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US" (1 John 4:19).

"He Dwelt among us"

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth." — (John 1:14)

What an amazing fact is revealed to us in this short sentence. He who WAS when time was not, at whose fiat the pendulum of time began to swing, who set all the forces of nature into motion, and made the universe pulsate with life: Who is Himself personally the exact expression of the infinite thoughts and eternal glory of the Godhead — the ever-existing Word — He became flesh and dwelt among us, taking part in flesh and blood that He might come near to us without making us afraid: it is this that fills the souls of those who have received Him with wonder and worship.

He did not come as a king might come to visit His subjects in their cottage homes, speaking a kindly word to them, and then passing on and forgetting them; He dwelt among us. There was no aloofness about Him: He entered into the circumstances of life: He entered into the joys and sorrows of men, as well as into their houses. He came near to them, became infinitely accessible to even the poorest and the worst. He dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

We say with deepest reverence that He took men as He found them: He demanded no special treatment from them: He was full of compassion for their sorrows, He did not grow impatient at their ignorance and weakness, nor condemn them for their sins.

He was ready to set the TRUTH before a man of the Pharisees when he came to Him, and was so full of GRACE that He did not rebuke the cowardice that made him creep out in the darkness for that memorable interview. His GRACE took Him to Sychar's well to talk with a lonely and tired sinner there, and He poured the TRUTH into her soul so abundantly that she returned to her city a new creature, with Himself as her absorbing theme. And mark well His way in that story. The distance was great to where that solitary sinner sighed and sorrowed, yet no camel or ass bore him over the weary miles, for He was a poor man: He must take that journey, every step of it, on foot: and tired and hungry and thirsty He met her — met her as one wayfarer would meet another — and talked with her so gently that she felt neither restraint nor fear in His presence. How truly He "dwelt among us," and how full of grace and truth was He in that dwelling: for let not His lowliness and the poverty of His circumstances, and the way in which He "dwelt among us," hide from our souls the glory of His person. He was "THE WORD," "THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER."

What a never-failing, ever-growing charm this Gospel of Gospels — the Gospel of the incarnate Word — has for our souls! How infinite are the heights in which it takes its rise, how deep are the depths into which it flows. Grace and truth are there in Him who dwelt among us, while He still dwelt in the bosom of the Father as the only begotten Son. He has brought the love of that bosom to us, and revealed it, not as something to be admired on the sabbath day in the temple, but as that which would labour seven days in the week, seeking no rest, in order to relieve the needs of men and fill their souls with joy. And TRUTH was in Him — He came from the highest height of God's glory to reveal it; and GRACE also — He stooped to the deepest depth of our need to meet it; and He has filled the immeasurable distance between the height and the depth with the light of God's love. That which He declared here abides for us. What He was He is, and what He was the Father is: for He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." How infinitely attractive to our souls has the Father become since He has been revealed to us so blessedly in JESUS, who dwelt

among us.

"My Lord and my God"

"And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said Peace be unto you.

"Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing.

"And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and My God.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29) The Unitarian objects to this incident being advanced as evidence of the Deity of our Lord. He contends that Thomas was an admiring enthusiast, and an Eastern withal, having a tendency towards the picturesque and the exaggerated in his speech, and that on this occasion he was betrayed by his feelings into saying what was outside the truth. That this is an ill-considered conclusion is evident from the insight into the character of Thomas, which the brief record of him in the Scriptures gives us. That his affection for his Master was not less than that of the other disciples is proved in John 11:16, but that he was not of an hysterical or credulous nature is equally proved by John 20:25. When his brethren — and there were ten of them — declared to him that they had seen the Lord, he met them with obstinate unbelief, and looked upon them as a band of visionaries. His cold, hard reason kept a tight rein upon his fervour, and his answer to their glad news might have been framed upon the lips of a modern rationalist. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I WILL NOT BELIEVE." As to faith and training he was a Jew, believing in one all-transcendent God, and to address a mere man as God would have been in his eyes a most heinous sin, a sin of which a devout Jew would be morally incapable. For proof of this take the case of Daniel, who chose to face the lions rather than perform an act which would, by inference, ascribe an attribute of Deity to a man. It was not the impulsive Peter, but this man, naturally stubborn and unimaginative, and religiously a stern monotheist, who was convinced as to who his Master really was, and his confession of the truth of this drew forth no rebuke. Instead, his faith was confirmed by the Lord's reply "Because thou hast seen THOU HAST BELIEVED."

It is remarkable that the Spirit of God has placed it on record that homage was offered by men to both Peter and Paul, and that they both immediately and vehemently restrained it. "Stand up: I myself also am a man," was Peter's command to Cornelius when that centurion prostrated himself at his feet (Acts 10:26). And when the people of Lystra brought sacrifices to offer to Barnabas and Paul, they, Barnabas and Paul, "rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14:11-15). These were true men, and they would not permit any to think that they were more than men, nor would they, even for a moment, accept adoration, which was God's alone. From these incidents in the lives of His servants we are taught by inference that Jesus was God when He accepted the adoration of Thomas: if not, what was He? Let the objectors supply the answer.

There is another incident in the Acts of the Apostles that might be well cited by way of contrast in this connection. "And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. . . . And upon a

set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. AND IMMEDIATELY THE ANGEL OF THE LORD SMOTE HIM, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten with worms, and gave up the ghost" (Acts 12:20-23). In his presumptuous and impious pride he accepted the adoration of the people, and immediately he was stricken by the stroke of a just and jealous God, his glory fled away, and he went down to the grave a loathsome mass of putrefaction. But Jesus, whom Thomas worshipped, was carried up into heaven, for we read that He led out His disciples "as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. AND THEY WORSHIPPED HIM, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:50-53).

It is John, who had been restrained from worshipping an angel (Revelation 22:8-9), who records the meeting of Thomas with his Master, and what a meeting it must have been. It seems as though it was for Thomas alone, for twice did his Lord address him by name. He discovered that the very thoughts of his heart were all read by the all-seeing eye of the Lord, and the wounds which he beheld in that incorruptible flesh were to him mute though eloquent witnesses to the fact that He was the One who had laid down His life but who also had taken it again. The scales fell from his eyes, his heart threw off its infidelity, the glory of the Only Begotten was no longer veiled from him, and as his soul was drawn out of the winter of his unbelief, he voiced the worship of his brethren in those true and memorable words, "MY LORD AND MY GOD." This meeting with Thomas is typical of the time, still to come, when the Lord will show Himself to the remnant of His people Israel, and when they shall say to Him, "What are these wounds in Thine hands?" (Zechariah 13:6). And as they look upon Him, they, as did Thomas, will recognize Him, and will cry, "Lo, this is our GOD: we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the LORD: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). They will believe when they see Him, but "BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET HAVE BELIEVED." The Light and the Truth

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God." — (Psalms 43:1-5)

Thus cried the Psalmist as his soul panted after God, and God has answered his cry. He had purposed to do so before time began, and that every one who sought Him might find their full joy in Him, and that in a way that never could have entered into any human mind. The way He has done it is told out in the gospel of John the Apostle: where we see the height from which the light and the truth have come, the greatness of the One who was sent forth to be both: the depths of shame into which He went to save us, and the triumphant way in which He leads us, not to God's altars merely, but to His very home and heart. In John 1:1-51 we learn THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON, who said, "I am the light," and "I am the . . . truth."

"In the beginning was the Word" — HIS ETERNAL EXISTENCE.

"And the Word was with God" — HIS DISTINCT PERSONALITY.

"And the Word was God" — HIS PERSONAL DEITY.

"The same was in the beginning with God" — HIS ETERNAL COMPANIONSHIP WITH, BUT DISTINCTION FROM, THE FATHER. The Word brings Him before us as the One in whom the wisdom of God's infinite mind has found personal expression: hence we read of Him, —

"All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" — HIS CREATIVE WISDOM AND POWER.

Thus is the eternal glory of His Person told, and thus John introduces Him to our faith and adoration. Augustine wrote, "John, deservedly compared to an eagle, has opened his treatise as it were with a peal of thunder: he has raised himself not merely above earth and the whole compass of the air and heaven, but even above every angel host and every order of the invisible powers, and has reached even to Him by whom all things were made, in that sentence, In the beginning was the Word." From the glory of His Person, He proceeds to THE GREATNESS OF HIS CONDESCENSION.

"The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14) — HIS REAL AND PERSONAL INCARNATION.

"And dwelt among us" — HIS ENTRANCE AS MAN INTO ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MANHOOD.

"Full of grace and truth" — HIS SUITABILITY TO ALL THAT MEN ARE WITHOUT COMPROMISING WHAT GOD IS. And in connection with His coming to tabernacle among us, a fresh glory bursts upon our vision: one that creatorial power could not reveal: one that never would have been revealed at all had it not been for the great purpose that was in the heart of the Father in sending Him forth.

And we beheld His glory, the glory as of "the only-begotten of the Father" — HIS UNCHANGING RELATIONSHIP IN LOVE, AND ONENESS IN NATURE WITH THE FATHER. An able and reverent writer has said; "His was the glory of the only-begotten, come fresh from the splendour of uncreated light. Every idea but that of pure Sovereign Deity in this part of the argument is trifling and profane." The same writer, speaking of this wonderful epithet, "Only Begotten Son," said; "When the evangelist would affirm the perfect and eternal intimacy and union between the glorious Persons in the Godhead, and the unspeakable and infinite endearment of our Lord to the Father: when he would convey the loftiest possible idea of the majesty of evangelical truth: when he would impress the minds of his readers with a deep sense at once of the inscrutableness of the Divine nature, and the certainty of the manifestations of God in Christ, he declares; 'No man' (nemo), no being of created mould, 'hath seen God at any time; THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, who exists in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him' (John 1:18): when, again, he would illustrate the benevolence of God with the highest splendour, he says, 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that GOD SENT HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON into the world, that we might live through Him.' And, finally, when our Lord would represent unbelief as the last extreme of human guilt, He finds no stronger argument than that conveyed in this appellation, 'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the NAME OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD.'"

We pass from the glory of His person and the greatness of His condescension to the PERFECTION OF HIS LIFE.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4) — HIS ABSOLUTE DEVOTION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12) — HIS PERFECT MANIFESTATION OF GOD, THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE AND LIGHT FOR MEN.

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1) — HIS UNCHANGING LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS TO THOSE WHOM HE HAD CHOSEN OUT OF THE WORLD.

How great the blessing that comes from the consideration of the fulness of light and truth in the lowly life of this glorious Person: of His suitability to meet the condition and need of every sinner whom He sought: of His patience toward their ignorance: His sympathy toward their sorrows: His mercy toward their sicknesses, and His grace toward their sins. What witness to His fulness is borne by Nicodemus, the Sychar sinner, the Bethesda cripple, the storm-tossed disciples, the hungry multitude, the guilty adulteress, the blind beggar, the stricken Bethany sisters, and all who were not too utterly blinded by their love for their own evil deeds to behold His glory. It was thus amid weariness and hunger and thirst, despised and rejected by men, that He labored amongst them that the Father's heart might be made known, His words declared, and His works performed: and He that hath seen Him "hath seen the Father." He is the light and He is the truth. HIS SUFFERING AND THE SHAME THAT MEN PUT UPON HIM.

"And one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand" (John 18:22).

"Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber" (John 18:40).

"Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him" (John 19:1).

"And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote Him with their hands" (John 19:2).

"They cried out, Away with him, crucify him" (John 19:6).

"Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away" (John 19:15-16).

Thus He, whose glory the Gospel unfolds before us, was smitten, scourged, mocked, buffeted, execrated, and crucified.

Along this path of sorrow and shame the Man of sorrows trod His stedfast way to accomplish the will of God. Rising up above all the contumely and the hatred wherewith the men, whose very breath was His, hated Him, He took up the question of God's glory in regard to sin, and became the bearer of it. HIS GREAT SACRIFICE.

"And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha" (John 19:17).

He upholds "all things by the word of His power," we learn from Hebrews 1:3 : but heavier than the universe was the burden that He carried that day, for then and there He was "THE LAMB OF GOD WHICH BEARETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD."

"They crucified Him and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (John 19:18).

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, IT IS FINISHED: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost."

How incomparable the dignity of the holy Sufferer amid the shame of that cross! How triumphant that word ere He gave up His life! The will of God accomplished: the prince of this world utterly confounded: the great sacrifice made that would fill the universe with the glory of the light and the truth that He went even into death to fully manifest.

One more passage from this most solemn chapter we must quote: —

"One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34). The last act of man's hatred brought out the love of God in all its fulness.

"The very spear that pierced His side

Drew forth the blood to save." And now through the infinite, eternal, and ever-abiding efficacy of that blood, we are in the light, i.e., we are brought to full revelation of what God is that our joy may be full. "If we walk in the light, as He is IN THE LIGHT, we have fellowship one with another" (IN THE TRUTH). And the never-failing basis of both is "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). As we consider the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are not surprised at anything that may flow therefrom. We are assured that God must have had some great purpose in sending Him forth, and in this we find that we are not deceived, for when risen from the dead the Lord sends this message to His disciples; "Go unto MY BRETHREN and say unto them, I ascend to MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER, TO MY GOD AND YOUR GOD." He has brethren now, to whom He can declare His Father's name, and lead them, not to a Jewish altar upon which smokes an impotent sacrifice, but having Himself sanctified them for ever by His one offering, He leads them to the Father that they may worship Him in spirit and in truth. We accept in deep humility this place and relationship which eternal love first planned, and then made possible, and while we find our joy in fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, we own Him who leads us into it as our Lord and our God.

What the Gospels Prove

It is asserted by some who hate the truth that Jesus is the Son in the Godhead, that the Gospel of John alone declares it. This is false: the fact is stated very definitely in the other Gospels, but what is even more arresting and equally convincing is that this great truth is woven into the very texture of them all. Just as the gold was woven with the blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen into the ephod of the High Priest (Exodus 28:1-43), and could not be separated from it without destroying the whole fabric, so the Gospels must be reduced to torn and meaningless shreds if there is taken out of them the words and works in which the Deity of Jesus shows itself. To take this away is to tear the sun from the spiritual heavens, and to take away His true humanity is to rob us of the atmosphere by which the light of the sun reaches us. The Gospel of Matthew opens with

— "Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," but before we reach the end of the chapter we read, "His Name shall be called EMMANUEL, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US" (Matthew 1:23).

"Thou shalt call His Name JESUS," said the angel of the Lord to Joseph when explaining to him that the child that Mary would bring forth was conceived of the Holy Ghost. And this name is of infinite preciousness to us because it is His personal, human name: the name which tells us of His grace and tenderness, His lowly life, His sorrow, and His death: but this name also carries with it divine glory, for it signifies JEHOVAH THE SAVIOUR. Yes, the very name of His humiliation, that which was written in derision on His cross, declares to us the greatness of His person and the love of His heart: He is Jehovah the Saviour. This name of eternal sweetness to all who believe, was given to Him because He would "save His people from their sins." They were "His people." The great I AM THAT I AM who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, and sent him to deliver Israel, His people, from Egyptian slavery, had appeared Himself to deliver them from a greater bondage. He had come to lead them into a more glorious liberty with an outstretched arm of power: but He had come in this lowly form so that they might not be afraid of Him: He had come to be the Lamb of God: the Son of Man lifted up: to suffer for their sins: and finally to take from their hearts that strange perversity that made them hug their chains and prefer their misery and bondage to God's mercy and care. He must be wilfully blind who does not see that He must be Divine and yet a man, a man who must Himself be sinless if He was to save others from their sins, a Divine Person having life in Himself if He was to impart life to others and bring them out of the bondage of death. The wise men came saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him." Did ever a star in the heavens flame forth at the birth of a child either before or since? These princes brought their gifts, gifts such as nobles from afar would bring to a king, but "when they saw the young child with Mary His mother," they recognized first His divine glory and they "fell down and worshipped Him." Then they acknowledged His kingship and brought out their gifts; gold and frankincense and myrrh. They worshipped God and gave gifts to the King. How great is this mystery of love! The One "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," who was "to be Ruler in Israel," had come forth out of Bethlehem Ephratah (Micah 5:2), but in such meek and lowly form that the world passed heedlessly by, yet to the anointed eye His glory shone: the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. In the Holy-Ghost-inspired record "the young child" always has the precedence of His mother. Five times in Matthew 2:1-23 we read of "the young child and His mother," in striking contrast to that blasphemous system, Rome, which paints her pictures of "Madonna and Child." But had He not been greater than the mother that bare Him, the Spirit of God would not have thus given Him the precedence, for He it was who founded the law which said, "Honour thy father and mother": and it may be here remarked (though this belongs to Luke's Gospel and not Matthew's), that when the aged Simeon came into the temple and took "the child Jesus" in his arms, recognizing in Him "God's salvation," he blessed Joseph and His mother, not the child Jesus (Luke 2:34). Had Jesus been as those other children gathered in the temple that day, what more natural than that Simeon should have blessed Him? But this could not be, for the lesser cannot thus bless the greater.

It will be noticed that whenever the angel of the Lord addresses Joseph, who, being the husband of Mary, was the young child's legal guardian, he never makes the mistake of calling Jesus "thy

son." The people make this mistake, and their mistake is recorded for us in Luke 4:1-44, but the Scriptures guard this matter with the utmost care, and in this connection the prophetic word is quoted regarding the sojourn in Egypt; "Out of Egypt have I called MY SON." Turning aside to Luke's Gospel again, it is important to notice that when Mary, only dimly recognizing who He was, or forgetting it for the moment, seemed to question His loyalty and obedience to Joseph and to her, saying, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," He replied at once, "wist ye not that I must be about MY FATHER'S business" (Luke 2:49).

It has been said by some who will seek out any subterfuge to break down the truth that Jesus is not of the first man, who came out of the dust, and sinned, and goes back to the dust again from which he came, but is the Second Man, the Lord out of heaven, that He did not realize His Sonship to the Father until His baptism. This passage exposes that falsehood, and shows us clearly that as He emerged into a responsible age the Lord knew who He was, from whom He came, and what His business was. The fact that He was the Son of the Father was publicly declared from heaven by the Father's voice at His baptism (Luke 3:17), where for the first time the truth of the Trinity appears. The prophets of old had come before the people with "Thus saith the Lord" on their lips, for in times past, and in divers manners, God spoke to the fathers thus: but in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus stood forth and said, "I SAY UNTO YOU," and those who heard Him were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as One having authority (Luke 7:29). This authority was the authority of the Lord, for this He declares Himself to be, having power to exclude from the kingdom of heaven all those who do not do the will of His Father which is in heaven. See how intimately He connects the kingdom of heaven with Himself. Some whose lips had owned Him, but whose hearts had not yielded to His Father's will, will desire to enter that kingdom: He will say to them, "Depart from ME": and He will say this, as being able to look behind the profession and all that is external, and read the heart, which none but God can do (Luke 7:21).

Later on in the Gospel He stretches out His hands to mankind and cries, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Luke 11:28). He knew the miseries, the burdens, the toilings, and the sins of the world: every groan and sigh and tear He noticed, and knowing all, He proposed to relieve all. What man, however mighty in influence, great in intellect, or broad in his sympathies, would dare to make such an appeal as that to men? But Jesus made it, and still makes it: and a countless host of ransomed saints will bear eternal witness to the fact that His deed is as good as His word. The Speaker is the Son, eternal, infinite, omnipotent: the mighty Creator who opens His hand and satisfies the needs of every living thing: the fountain of life and of mercy whose compassions fail not: hence He is able, being in Himself sufficient for the whole creation and every man within it, to remove every burden from every human soul and satisfy every craving within every one of them.

He is the Son into whose hands the Father hath delivered all things, whom only the Father knows, and who knows the Father and reveals Him to whomsoever He will (Luke 11:27). He showed Himself to be the Master of the elements when He rebuked the winds and the waves and hushed their raging to a great calm (Luke 9:26): He had power on earth to forgive sins, which is God's prerogative (Luke 9:6). He claimed the absolute allegiance of the hearts of His disciples, before father or mother or son or daughter, which only God can claim (Luke 10:37). He declared Himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 12:8), plainly indicating that though the Son of Man, He was the One who had ordained the Sabbath for His people. As Creator of the abundance of earth and

sea, He multiplied the five loaves and two fishes so that a multitude were fed to satisfaction, and twelve basketfuls remained (Luke 14:15-21). He walked triumphantly upon the heaving waves at midnight, and by his power enabled His servant Peter to do the same (Luke 14:25-31). He unmasked the Pharisees by the question of all questions. "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" "The Son of David," was their ready reply. Then He quoted the Scriptures which they knew so well. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." He asked, "If David, then, call Him Lord, How is he His Son?" They were silenced, for they had no answer to this great mystery. The whole Gospel of Matthew is the answer to the question: and we glory in the knowledge of this great mystery: the Son of David and Son of Man is the Son of God, and though His enemies refused His rights as David's Son, He has been raised up and made Lord of all. He sits at the right hand of God on God's very throne, and none but God could do that: and He is coming back again to the very place where His enemies cast Him out of His inheritance. He is coming back as the root and offspring of David, David's Lord and David's Son. The Gospel closes with His place in the Godhead fully declared, for all nations are to be baptised in the Name (not "the names," the word is in the singular) of THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY GHOST.

Finally, when the dispensations of time have served their purpose and run their course, and God shall dwell with men in a redeemed creation, every intelligent creature will rejoice in a Triune God fully revealed —

as FATHER, the source of all blessing for men:

and SON, the One who brought the blessing to men:

and HOLY GHOST, who by His power makes the blessing good in men:

"THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL." The Necessity of the Deity of Jesus The necessity of the Deity of Jesus meets us first in relation to men being brought to God in righteousness, for no purpose of God in regard to them could be realized if they were not brought to Him righteously, and established before Him according to His eternal justice and the holiness of His nature. How could this be done, and who was able to do it? The question is not a new one. It was asked by Job long centuries ago when he cried, "How should man be just with God?" (Job 9:2). And the question was not one of passing interest, that engaged his attention for a moment merely; it received his most earnest consideration, for he realized how vital a question it was. In Job 9:1-35 of his book we find him testing one by one the suggestions that arose in regard to it, and finally, apparently hopeless of finding an answer, breaking out in that soul-stirring lament, "HE IS NOT A MAN AS I AM, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. NEITHER IS THERE ANY DAYSMAN BETWIXT US, THAT MIGHT LAY HIS HAND UPON US BOTH. Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me; then would I speak and not fear Him: but it is not so with me." Do you perceive where he stood, and can you interpret his feelings? He said in effect: "I know that I have sinned against Him, and if He were a man as I am, I could, having the feelings of a man, understand His displeasure: I could estimate the extent of my offence, and I could go to Him and make restitution for the wrong that I have done, and so be at peace with Him. But He is not a man as I am, and I cannot enter into judgment with Him. I do not know where to begin the argument, and I cannot measure the demands of His justice. I have no ground upon which to stand before Him: the gulf between us is immeasurable from my side: He is almighty, holy and

just, and I am weak, sinful and guilty: His very holiness is a terror to me: it makes me afraid."

Only could Job have hope if a daysman, or mediator, appeared in the case, fully qualified to take it up: and see how accurately he had gauged the situation; He must be one who can stand betwixt us — between God, infinitely holy and just, and the sinner, guilty and conscience-stricken — and put his hand upon us both: and, says he, I know no one who can do it. I have felt the need of such an one, longed for Him, sought for Him, but I have not found Him.

Mark well the qualifications that the needed mediator must possess; He must stand between God and the sinner, and put His hand upon both: and I beg of you not to miss the meaning of that. It is recorded that when David would bring the ark to Zion, that ark being God's throne in Israel, and the symbol of His presence there, Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it, and the moment his presumptuous fingers touched that throne of God he fell to the earth a corpse. Learn from that solemn incident that no sinful man could put his hand upon God, or upon the throne of God, and live. The mediator for whom Job cried in his despair must be able to put His hand upon God, He must be God's equal, pure as God is pure, holy as God is holy, great as God is great; none less could intervene, or be of use to Job or to us. But he must also put His hand upon men: He must be one of us, yet sinless or He would need a mediator Himself: He must be able to take our part and to identify Himself with our vast indebtedness, able to answer for the enormity of our guilt, and remove it. HE MUST BE GOD AND MAN.

It should be evident to us all, as it was to Job, that such an one we cannot produce, for no man, even the best, could exalt Himself to Deity: the attempt to do so, which will be made by the coming superman, the beast of Revelation 13:1-18, will be the climax of all blasphemy: and will result in that impious and devil-inspired personage being cast alive into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:1-21). Men cannot bring forth the needed mediator: here they come to their wit's end: they have no hope except in God, the One whose glory has been challenged by their sin. But man's extremity is God's opportunity, and the one whom Job could not find on earth has come from heaven, and our part is to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. The New Testament is the book of the Mediator. In Matthew 1:1-25 there stands twice over in capital letters the name of its great subject, its true title, JESUS. "Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). "She brought forth her firstborn Son; and he called his name JESUS" (Matthew 1:25): and Jesus is Emmanuel; GOD WITH US. Being God, He knew according to God's perfect estimate what the effect to the universe of man's disregard of His will was; how and to what extent God's glory was jeopardized by man's sin: what the demands of the eternal throne were in regard to the violation of its just decrees. He knew how completely man's self-will had made him the slave of Satan, how great was the gulf that separated him from God: how utterly powerless he was to rectify the awful wrong that he had committed. He knew the penalty that had to be paid, the conflict that had to be waged, the work that had to be done. It was the will of God that every problem that man's sin had raised should be taken up and settled in a way in which every attribute of His should be glorified and salvation secured for us, and He, the Son, came to accomplish the will of God. He said, "A body hast Thou prepared Me. . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). He became man to stand in our place before God: to take the bill of our terrible indebtedness, and meet it to the full, so that God Himself could write "Settled" across the account. This involved for Him the sorrows of Calvary: and there, as the holy Substitute for men, He "gave Himself a ransom for all." The

sacrifice that He made has met all the claims of the throne, and He is now "THE ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS." But only one who could estimate things according to God's own measure of them could do what He has done.

What a Saviour is Jesus! How fully worthy is He of our fullest praise! He stooped to us that He might put His hand upon us, degraded though we were, and He has done it tenderly and graciously, so that we are not afraid. There is no terror for us in His hand, we do not shrink from Him. He has touched us with the touch of a man, and bound us with the cords of love. Yet he was never less than God, and God has touched us in Him. He has put one hand upon us and the other is placed upon the throne of God, and He is the one mediator. With the one hand He has offered the fullest satisfaction to the righteous claims of God, and with the other He has bestowed fulness of grace upon us. He brings us to God and gives us a place in His presence without fear, and in everlasting peace, a peace established upon the infallible and immovable foundation of divine righteousness, secured for us by a divine person for the eternal glory of God.

Thus are we justified before God, and all our fear is removed, and we are free to behold the hand that has been placed upon us, and to mark the fact that it is a wounded hand: a hand that was nail-pierced for us when He identified Himself with us, as we stood subject to the judgment of God, that He might save us. We know the power of this hand too: it has smitten death for us and will not relinquish its hold upon us for ever. As He is now a man in heaven, so shall we be there; He the first-born among many brethren, we His associates identified with Him in an everlasting oneness. He will never surrender that true humanity which He has taken up, and as He is, so are they also who are His. The purpose of God is that we should be conformed to His own image. And so we shall be, and yet never shall we forget that He is "over all, God, blessed for ever more."

02.02. Part 2. His All-sufficiency for Our Need.

Part 2. His All-sufficiency for Our Need.

"In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9).

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

"He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

"JESUS! Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill,

Thy patient life — to calm the soul,

Thy love — its fear dispel."

"Still in Thee love's sweet savour

Shone forth in every deed,

And showed God's loving favour

To every soul in need." (J. N. Darby.) The Friend of Sinners For one brief hour only is the veil that covers the first thirty years of our Lord's life drawn aside, and one saying of His alone during that period is recorded for our learning. But what a revelation of sinless, holy perfection, and readiness to bear the yoke of service for the blessing of mankind, does that one saying reveal! "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about MY FATHER'S BUSINESS?" It is probable that at the age of twelve a child begins definitely to choose between evil and good; and the Lord is shown to us in this beautiful passage as making His choice; He refused the evil and He chose the good; as it was written by the prophet, that Emmanuel would. His Father's business — His Father's will — this to Him was good and perfect and acceptable, and with this will treasured in His heart He lived His youthful days, until the due time came for His manifestation.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," and "A word spoken in due season, how good it is." Such were all the words of the Lord; every one of them came forth in its own time and circumstance, and none more fitly spoken than this word. In the record of His words also, all are divinely placed. If a Divine Person, divinely perfect and blessed, came into the world for the eternal blessing of men, it is only fitting that a Divine record of His coming and His words and ways, also divinely perfect and blessed, should be given, that those for whom He came might have a perfect assurance as to it. Admit the former, and the latter follows in logical sequence. To suppose that God would send His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him, and having done that, allow an imperfect, contradictory human record to be the only record of His life and death here, would be to suppose Him to be guilty of colossal folly. The record must be as

perfect in its own sphere as the One whose life and mission it records was perfect in His, or else we have no sure knowledge or certainty of these things upon which depends our souls' eternal welfare.

If the Holy Scriptures are what the critics say they are, mere ancient, human documents, in which are recorded events which the writers did but poorly remember, to be tested by human scholarship, which, by the way, commences its test by a decided bias against them; if they may be cut and criticized, accepted or rejected, in parts or wholly, then, where are we in this matter? The angel's triumphant declaration that He brought "good tidings of great joy" when He announced the birth of Jesus is a mockery; we know not whether our great Redeemer did ever say, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Such wonderful words may have been put into His mouth, as Shakespeare put great sayings into the mouths of his characters. Did He really warn men against "the damnation of hell," and speak those blessed words about the many mansions in His Father's house? We cannot say unless the record of them is divinely perfect, and divinely sure.

We believe in God, and we are confident that if "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," He would see to it that having given "His unspeakable gift" for men, they should be in no uncertainty about it; hence are the Scriptures God-breathed; the men who wrote them were moved by the Holy Spirit; they had these things, not by hearsay, or from their own imperfect observation, but "from the very first" from the source of all true knowledge, from God Himself. Hence the record of our Lord's words is a divine record, and the words are divinely placed, so that they shine like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

It is in Luke's Gospel that these words are alone recorded, and how beautifully they fit in to the character of this Gospel. The Gospel of Luke is the Gospel of "My Father's business." It is the Gospel of grace, for this the Father's Name implies.

It is the Father who, in the very heart of it, sees His prodigal son afar off, and has compassion upon him, and runs to meet him while yet he is a great way off, and falls on his neck and kisses him; and cries in His gladness, "Let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Yes, Luke's Gospel is the Gospel of grace to guilty sinners, and the Lord was the vessel of this grace His Father's business was His business. He was here to commence it, to carry it on, and to finish it, and the fact that He is crowned with glory and honour at His Father's right hand, is the proof that He has most blessedly done it, as is the fact also that millions are rejoicing in the grace of God which has brought salvation to them. Being the vessel of God's grace He was, and is, the Friend of sinners. Mark His first words in public testimony as given to us in this Gospel. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

He came to men bruised and broken and blinded, and bound by sin, and said unto them: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," and they all wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. In each Gospel the form of the opposition from His foes brings into greater prominence the chief feature that the Gospel presents. It is so here. The religionists did not like

grace, they could not understand it; so full were they of their own importance that they marvelled that Jesus did not pay court to them and seek their patronage; they grew angry and scornful when He sought the company of sinners, and this is their chief complaint in this Gospel; against this they shouted their opposition constantly. In Luke 5:30 they murmured against His disciples, saying, "Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners?" In Luke 7:34 they grow abusive and say, "Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." In Luke 15:2 they say with bitter enmity, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." And again in Luke 19:7, "they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."

They spoke the truth in their hatred, and that which they thought was His shame was His glory, as a countless host of sinners saved by grace will declare to His eternal praise. Not to the proudly religious did He come who, though wise in their own conceit, were "fools grown insolent in fooling; most, when the lost were dying at their doors." He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

He said, "Fear not," to sinful Simon (Luke 5:10); "I will — be thou clean," to the poor foul leper (Luke 5:13); "Weep not," to the broken-hearted widow (Luke 7:13); "Thy sins are forgiven," to the weeping sinner at His feet (Luke 7:48); and "To-day, shalt thou be with Me in paradise." to the dying robber (Luke 23:43).

He came to do His Father's business, and for this there was given to Him the tongue of the learned [or instructed], that He should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; His ear was wakened morning by morning, to hear as the learner (Isaiah 50:4). But who was He who thus lived in entire and daily obedience to His Father's word, so that He might carry on His business? Isaiah 50:1-11 tells us this also. He says: "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering" (Isaiah 50:2-3).

Yes, this is He who came from heaven to be the sinner's Friend, and to bring to the poorest and the worst the saving grace of God. He is the Creator, who came to redeem with outstretched arm; but it involved Him in a life of suffering and shame amongst men, and in hatred from those who loved Him not. The One who with hand omnipotent draws the curtain of night across the heavens, says: "The Lord God hath opened My ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked of the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:5-6).

Wonderful Friend of sinners! who would not cast aside their own righteousness and pride to make Thy acquaintance! and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Thee! The Lord and the Home Life To assure us of His constant and particular care for us in all our circumstances, God has taken infinite pains in His sure and holy Word: it is bright with many faithful sayings in regard to it, and beautiful with many concrete cases in which His perfect care for those who trust Him is illustrated; but nothing can be more conclusive and convincing in regard to it than the life of our Lord Jesus on earth.

Let us consider, then, how the Lord Jesus acted in regard to the matters domestic, and the general needs of those whom He loved, as shown us in the Gospel of John. In that Gospel, be it remembered, He comes forth as the Word, who was with God, and who was God — the great Creator of the universe become flesh for our blessing. It is in this Gospel that He said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Hence as we behold His tender mercy ever flowing forth, we see what the Father is, for thus He has revealed Him. Is it not, then, most worthy of note and full of comfort to all who need comfort, that in this Gospel, and this alone, He is shown to us as a GUEST AT A WEDDING, rejoicing with those that rejoice? And is it not equally significant that in this Gospel, and this alone, He is also shown to us as A WEEPER AT A GRAVE SIDE? The wedding is the beginning of the home life, and may represent its most joyous period: the sealed grave is the close and the breakup of it, the darkest day of all. And the Lord, who came to earth to show to us the Father, was at both: and is there a day between the two when He is absent? No. He has said "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and that, be it noted, again in connection with the home life (Hebrews 13:4-6).

There are profound depths of spiritual meaning in these two incidents, and we should certainly seek these, but in doing so do not let us miss that which lies clear and plain upon the surface. Jesus, who was the Creator, the only begotten Son of God, the revealer of the Father, associated Himself with His own in the joys and sorrows of their home life. Perish the thought that we may only know His presence at the meetings for prayer or worship: that He only connects Himself with what are known as religious services. If this were all, then our religion were artificial and dead, and our Lord useless to us in our trials, and scarcely of more value than the dumb idols of the heathen. But He comes into the home life when He is allowed, comes in all the plenitude of an inexhaustible grace, rejoicing if we rejoice, and Himself becoming the source of a joy that earthly circumstances cannot yield: and standing by us in days of stress and sorrow, to sympathize with and support the heart that looks to Him. How near this brings Him to us: how real it makes Him: how tender and accessible it shows Him to be.

If this is the case (and only those who do not know the Lord will deny it), then all we have to do is to bring our need to His notice. At the wedding in Cana this was done and He supplied the lack. Happy bridegroom and bride who were wise enough to ask Jesus to their marriage. At the sorrowing home in Bethany this was done, and it was not done in vain. We behold Him as He stands with Mary prostrate at His feet. Listen while she pours out her grief before Him. See her as she looks up through her weeping into His dear face, and see, His cheeks are also washed with tears. Yes, He cares. How beautiful must He have seemed to her that day! How His sympathy must have swallowed up her sorrow! What a revelation of His heart were those tears! What intimacy with Him did Mary's sorrow yield her!

"The bud had had a bitter taste,

But oh, how sweet the flower."

Christ became supreme in her love. She had learnt in that silent walk by the side of Jesus to the grave of her brother how fully and tenderly He entered into her grief: how able He was to lift her out of the depths and sustain her by His sympathy: how every question that could arise in her mind as to the rightness of God's ways with her was settled in Himself, and how His love, so perfect and true, for it was God's love, was able to heal the wound and fill the void in her heart: and those were

lessons, and that was an experience, that no mortal words can describe, but the result of it appeared when in silent adoration she poured the precious ointment upon His sacred feet. And what He was to Mary "yesterday," He is "to-day" to all who will bring their sorrow to His feet. And in Him is God revealed, turning that which seems only evil into everlasting good. The same blessed care is most beautifully expressed in the Lord's words to Zacchaeus: "To-day I must abide at thy house." This was not said for the chief of the tax-gatherers alone, but for us also: it is the way the grace of the Lord compels Him to take towards all whom He has sought and saved, and so it can be said that salvation has come to all who are His; salvation not from the penalty of sin merely, from hellfire at last, but for every day of the journey to the homeland, for He Himself is salvation to us, and He is an everyday Saviour, who will never leave us nor forsake us.

What a comfort lies here for all about whom the storms of trouble sweep! The Lord is with them, and every sorrow may be laid at His feet and every difficulty told to Him. That life which appears to have the least sorrow has its difficulties and burdens, and none of us have sufficient wisdom or strength to deal with these. But He is sufficient for little trials and for big, and so precious are we to Him that He will never abandon us. Only let it be realized that the grace of God brought Him down to us, not only to save us, but to abide with us, and that He is ever by our side to support and succour us and to sympathize with us, and it will change the aspect of every sorrow and produce the song where the sigh has been. It is the realization of His presence that can lead the saint of God to say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for THOU ART WITH ME: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Psalms 23:1-6). And if "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Observe carefully that the Lord did not merely say to Zacchaeus, "I must abide with thee," but "AT THY HOUSE." He was interested in the family of the man whom He had sought and saved. A place was to be found for Him in the home circle, so that not only the individual needs and difficulties, but those of the household, might also be brought to His notice. The Lord of Winds and Waves When the disciples launched forth upon the Sea of Galilee on that evening of which three of the Gospels tell, they needed but little faith to put their Master into the helmsman's seat and commit the steering of the ship to Him, for the wind was fair and the sea was calm. But when the storm uprose and the shore lights were lost in the darkness, and they found that He had fallen asleep in the place that they had assigned to Him, it seemed to them that they had jeopardized their safety. The good ship might have had some chance of outriding the gale if the helm had been in the strong and capable hands of one of the sons of Zebedee, or if wide awake Simon had had control, but what hope could there be for it in such a sea while the helmsman slept? As the tempest grew in violence their terror increased, until, when it seemed that the mighty billows would break them utterly, they awoke Him with that cry, made bitter by unbelief, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" And in that cry their Master's power over the storm and His love to them were alike arraigned.

What shame must have been theirs when in answer to their cry He rose up from His sleep and calmed the elements with a word! How outrageous must their doubts of Him have seemed when the winds retired at His bidding and the waves obeyed Him as a dog obeys its Master! Ah, why had they no faith? They might have stretched themselves beside Him and known the wonder of unbroken peace in the tempest, and made that night most memorable by their confidence in Him.

They might have shared His peace with Him, for it was not indifference that marked that one recorded sleep of His, but peace, wonderful, beautiful, unruffled peace in the wildest storm that ever beat upon that sea. And they were not one whit more safe when that great calm spread itself upon the waters than they were when the great billows thundered upon them, for the Man who slept in their storm-tossed ship was the Lord of the universe, and whether in peace or in calm they were in His care. Had they but realized this they might have honoured Him and saved themselves much worry, for if His hand was on the helm all was well.

Let us beware lest we fail in our confidence in the Lord as those fearful men failed. We may have spoken of safety in Him in fair weather, but when sailing upon stormy waters let us hold firmly to the fact that He cannot fail. Have we committed ourselves to His keeping? He is most worthy of our trust. Can we say as said Paul of old, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"? Do we know His love and His wisdom so well that we can stay our minds upon Him and put the helm of our tiny craft into His hands and leave it there? Do we ask sometimes, "Carest Thou not?" Let the Scriptures give the answer: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Held up on the Waves

It was night, and the disciples of our Lord were afloat upon the Sea of Galilee. He had remained upon the quiet mountainside in prayer to His Father, but He looked through the darkness and beheld them toiling uselessly, for the waves rolled high. His heart was moved with compassion as He saw how the storm baffled them, and from His peaceful retreat He stepped out upon the sea to go to them. His appearance, as He strode from wave to wave, affrighted them, but His voice quickly calmed them. How sweet must have been the peace that filled them when they heard Him say, "BE OF GOOD CHEER: IT IS I: BE NOT AFRAID"! Aye, it is good to hear the voice of the Lord above the night-storms and to know in days of stress that He is nigh. But Peter, impulsive and full of admiration for his Master, and ready to dare much to be near Him, left the boat to join Him where He walked. Then he found himself in circumstances that were new and strange to him — circumstances in which the creature could only sink and perish. But here comes in the loveliest bit of the wonderful story. He felt his desperate need and cried out to His Lord, and "immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him," and held him up. And together with the Master of every storm Peter walked on the very crests of the waves. The gale still raged fiercely and the sea surged and swished about his feet, but he was held up by almighty power and he walked by the side of his Lord, erect, fearless, and comforted.

Now let us understand the story. The Lord who sits above the water floods, and rules the waves from His throne of eternal calm, does not send succour to His saints as a sympathetic onlooker who knows nothing experimentally of the sorrows they endure. No. He came down upon the waves, He came from the eternal peace of heaven into the storm where His loved ones laboured: the winds blew and the waves tossed about Him. When His disciples saw Him, they were affrighted and supposed that He was a spirit, but He was not a spirit. HE WAS A MAN, AND HE IS A MAN. This is the amazing thing. Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood He, the Lord of Glory, likewise took part of the same, that He might know in His own experience the fierceness of the storms that beset our weak humanity: and He was tempted in all points as we are, apart from sin, and so He can succour us with a sympathy that is perfectly human though

divine.

It was the hand of a Man, in which was the very power of God, that held up Peter on that memorable night. It is the hand of a Man — of Jesus, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities — that is stretched out to us, and that holds us up upon the very waves that have leaped to our destruction. He is the Son of God, eternal in His being, and omnipotent in power, yet a man who loved us enough to die for us that He might take from our souls the very fear of death and make us triumph evermore.

We want our readers to lay hold of this great truth, not as a theory, but as a fact to be known first to faith and then blessedly in their experience. Peter's was an individual experience, he had it for himself, but it is an experience that every Christian may have when seas of trouble roll around. Yes, each for himself may be supported by that hand of gracious power and be made more than a conqueror in the very circumstance that threatens to swallow him up. What encouragement there is for us in the story — Peter's need and distress stretched out and reached the Saviour's heart, and the Saviour's hand stretched out and reached His sinking saint, and with his need met, his fears calmed, and his faith strengthened, Peter walked hand in hand with his Master until the storm ceased. The Good Shepherd The hand that bruised the head of the devil and smashed the power of death is the hand that holds the sheep of God securely for ever, but John 10:1-42 was not given to assure the sheep of Christ that they are eternally safe. It is often used for that purpose, and no doubt it has yielded comfort in that way to thousands of harassed souls. But that is not its purpose. The sheep of Christ should not need to be assured of their safety. It should be sufficient for them that they are HIS sheep. Can He let them slip? He is THE GOOD SHEPHERD. He laid down His life to deliver them from every foe. He has taken it again to gather them into one flock — the flock of God. Can one amongst these perish? Impossible! His greatness, goodness, love, and power forbid the thought entirely. They are safe. But the precious words of this chapter were not spoken, and preserved, to assure the sheep that they are safe, nor to occupy their thoughts with themselves at all, but with Christ. The chapter is about the Shepherd. It was written that we might see His greatness and hear the melody of His voice, and, as a consequence, know the supreme blessedness of following Him.

"He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep." The door is the appointed way of entrance, and by that way He came — by the way that was marked out by the prophecies of old, which spake of Him. Others had come claiming to be Christ, but they had proved themselves to be thieves and robbers, actuated by vain-glory, and making gain of the sheep: they did not come in the appointed way. He came into the fold (Israel), fulfilling the Scriptures. His entrance into the fold is given in the earlier chapters of Matthew, in which Gospel He is presented as the Messiah of Israel, and these chapters are significant with the phrase "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." And at His exit out of it given in the closing chapters of John, we are told often that things were done to Him "that the Scripture should be fulfilled."

There are prophecies which tell of His glory: how, as the Sun of Righteousness, He shall arise with healing in His wings, and fill the earth with the knowledge of God — for that time we wait: but there are others which tell us that "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." These prophecies mark out a path of humiliation and suffering for Him: they show Him trodden under foot by the proud of the earth; "His visage so marred more than any man,

and His form more than the sons of men." He gave His back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting. He was perfectly submissive to the will of Him that sent Him. The Lord God opened His ear and He was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

Now mark well who He is who trod this path of submission to God, and of suffering from sinners, who was buffeted by men because He would obey God. He says, "At My rebuke I dry up the sea. . . I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." He is the mighty Lord of the universe.

"Heaven's arches rang as the angels sang,

Proclaiming His royal degree —

But of lowly birth came the Lord to earth,

And in great humility."

Thus is He shown to us as the Shepherd of the sheep, gentle and submissive, meek and lowly of heart, the Servant of God and the Servant of men, yes, even of those who hated and derided Him. Have we seen the glory of that life of His — the glory of its humility? HIS DEATH UPON THE CROSS.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."

He has become the door of salvation and liberty for the sheep, the God-appointed and only way of blessing, but He has become that door by giving His life for them. There was no other means by which He could deliver them, for they were sinners every one, and held in the power of death. So the sword awoke against Him who is the Shepherd, who has proved Himself to be the Shepherd by standing between that sword and the sheep. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." It is not here a question of physical pain; of the thorns, the smitings and the nails: nor of all the shame and degradation connected with His suffering a malefactor's death: undoubtedly our Lord felt these things with an intensity of which none other could be capable: but there was more than that at Calvary, for "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10). It was Jehovah's sword that smote Him when His soul was made an offering for sin: the billows of His wrath rolled over Him as He stood as the Substitute in the place of the sheep.

He gave His life for the sheep. He entered the field where death seemed to hold an undisputed sway, and there He annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. As David beat down the mighty giant in Elah, so has the Good Shepherd, by His dying, destroyed the great foe, and wrought deliverance for the sheep.

He laid down His life, no man took it from Him. He had power to lay it down and power to take it again. These are wonderful words, proclaiming the fact of His Deity, for no creature could so have spoken, and yet in this same connection He says, "This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10:18). How startling is that which greets us here. The supreme power of Deity was

His, and yet He shows Himself to us in absolute submission to the Father's command. But further, this commandment of the Father's had the sheep entirely in view. His purpose was that they should be saved from every foe, and He has found a new reason for loving His well-beloved Son in that He laid down His life for them. These are wonderful things for the heart's meditation. Have we seen the Good Shepherd in the glory of His love? HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.

"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again."

He has taken His life again, that, as the Great Shepherd, He might gather the sheep of God into one flock. His voice sounded amidst the dead legalism of the Jews' religion, and the sheep within that fold heard it and followed Him out of it: His voice was also to ring tenderly and clear over the far-away mountains of sin, that His "other sheep" from among the Gentiles might also be brought, that there might be ONE FLOCK and one Shepherd. Not a fold now in which the sheep should be held together by the high walls of law and ordinance, as the Jews had been kept from the nations: nor yet by rules and regulations, either written or unwritten, but a FLOCK held together by the all-sufficiency and attractive power of the ONE SHEPHERD. This is the beginning of the revelation of the oneness of the Christian company. It is developed in the thought of the family having God as FATHER, and still further in the body and its one HEAD, which is Christ: but there is a sweetness about the thought of the one flock which is entirely its own, and it is this: the sheep are not united to each other organically, as are the members of a body, but each individual in the vast flock of God is attached to the Shepherd by an intimacy known to itself alone. "He calleth His own sheep by NAME." "I know My sheep and am known of Mine." It is because we know Him that we belong to the one flock. He has a special name for each one of us, each of us is —

"Called by that secret name

Of undisclosed delight."

We shall fully understand its meaning when we see Him in the "saint-thronged courts" above, but now our ears should be so keenly attent to His voice that we should be learning it here. There should be with each sheep a secret history of soul with the Shepherd, increasing in blessedness as the days go by.

How precious is this oneness to God, and to Christ, and to everyone whose heart is intelligent in divine truth. "I am the good Shepherd, and I know those that are Mine, and am known of those that are Mine, as the Father knows Me and I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep" (N.T.). This is an intimacy and communion that creature thought could never have conceived, and which can only be enjoyed by the Holy Ghost.

"There shall be one flock and one Shepherd"; this is the purpose of God, and, blessed be His name, it abides true, for there can be no failure in the one Great Shepherd. It is true for God, and true also for the faith and affection of every sheep that is contented to hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him. Have we seen Him as the Great Shepherd, in the glory of His all-sufficiency for the whole flock of God? HIS SUPREMACY OVER ALL EVIL.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

These words were spoken to those who believed not, and they were the declaration of the Lord's ability to keep and bless His sheep. Those Jews who urged Him to tell them plainly whether He was the Christ or not were seeking some sign that would satisfy their sensuality, a sign such as He had given them when He fed the multitude. They wanted a king who would give them the bread that perisheth, and bless them according to their own carnal thoughts, but for the Bread of God they had no taste. But His sheep heard His voice: they said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And this life He gave to them, a life outside of the world and nature, a life which was manifested to them in Him, and which belonged to the home out of which He had come.

He gives this life to His sheep, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Neither decay within nor foes without can rob Him of those whom the Father has given Him. He is their life and protector, and He is supreme in His glorious power. Can any sheep have a doubt since He is its Shepherd? If when crucified in weakness He annulled the power of the devil, what will He do in the glorious strength of His resurrection? Shall He not be triumphant over every force of evil, and that for ever? It must be so, and He declares in this His supremacy, that He will hold all who are His. Have we seen Him in the glory of this great power?

02.03. Part 3. His Sufferings and Death.

Part 3. His Sufferings and Death.

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow" (Lamentations 1:12).

—

"O day of mightiest sorrow,

Day of unfathomed grief!

When THOU didst taste the horror

Of wrath without relief.

"No eye was found to pity,

No heart to bear Thy woe:

But shame, and scorn and spitting.

None cared Thy Name to know." (J. N. Darby.) On Both Sides of the Sea "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." — (Matthew 26:30) "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." — (Hebrews 2:12)

Christians are called to be a triumphant people. Through the riches of the grace of God they can sing with joyful lips their songs of praise unto Him, but in this they are like the Israelites when they saw their enemies dead upon the seashore: then in the gladness of their freedom from the cruel oppressor they could sound the loud timbrel and sing the high praise of Jehovah, for He had manifested the greatness of His excellency in their deliverance (Exodus 15:1-27). But they did not sing on the other side, when the waters rolled darkly before them, the fierce foe pressed hard behind and the mountains reared their rugged heads on either side. But Jesus sang on both sides of the sea.

He "divided the sea, whose waves roared," and "made the depths of it a way for the ransomed to pass over." He divided it by passing through it, while all its fury was spent upon Him, and now in resurrection He can celebrate His great triumph, surrounded by those whom He has set free: and so is fulfilled the word, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." But He also sang on the other side. When deep called unto deep: when the waters were gathered to compass Him about: when the waves and billows of judgment uprose to pass over Him: as the darkness of Gethsemane and the deeper darkness of Calvary, with all its shame and woe and ignominy and unspeakable sorrow confronted Him; then He lifted up His voice and sang unto God. The disciples

may have known the words and the tune, but we cannot suppose that they entered into the spirit and meaning of that praise-psalm: He was the singer in deed and in truth.

It is written, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me," and herein was that passage fulfilled and God greatly glorified, even though no other heart appreciated or understood what Jesus then did. When the last "Praise ye the Lord" of that song was reached, He spoke of Himself as the Shepherd — the Shepherd, who, for the sake of the flock, was to bear the smiting of Jehovah's rod, and in view of this smiting He had to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." But in the presence of that unspeakable sorrow He fully approved God's will concerning Him, and to its last drop He would drink the cup that His Father gave Him. In this holy determination, conscious of God's approval of His faithfulness, He sang forth His praise as He entered the conflict. Be assured the music of that singing will never pass away: it will sound for ever in the Father's ear as the melody of a trust that never faltered and a love that was stronger than death. So He sang then, and so He sings now. But now He has companions who can join in the singing that He leadeth; His brethren — who owe their every joy to His sorrow: who are placed, through His death, beyond the reach of judgment's wrathful sea: who are one with Him in nature and life, and to whom He has revealed His Father's name. These can share His joy, and so can sing in concert with Him, for they stand with Him in the unclouded light of His Father's love, and this is their place for ever. Yes, this is our place who have believed on Him, the risen Lord; but how our hearts are moved in the midst of our joy, and for ever will be, as we remember that He sang on the other side of the sea.

"About a stone's cast"

"He went a little farther" (Matthew 26:39).

"He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast" (Luke 23:41). A great crisis was now reached in the life of the Lord Jesus. He had not separated Himself from His disciples in this way before, nor had they ever parted company with Him. They would not leave Him, for they could not do without Him. When others turned their backs upon Him, they said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and so bound to Him had they been, that He had said to them, "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptation." They were His lovers and friends, and though they did not understand the exceeding sorrow that filled His soul, yet there was the sympathy of love in their hearts towards Him, and this was very precious in that hour to Him. But now the parting time had come, if He was to fulfill the will of God. They follow Him to Gethsemane; they had often done so before, for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples, and in the past they had watched with Him in the silence of the night beneath those olive trees while He held communion with His Father. But now it was different, and He says to them: "Sit ye here, while I go and pray YONDER." Who can tell what that "yonder" meant to Him? He was about to enter the great conflict, and He "looked for comforters," and as Peter and the sons of Zebedee entered more fully into His thoughts than the other disciples, He takes them with Him. Surely these three could give Him what He longed for, and watch with Him through that terrible hour! But He must leave them, also. "He saith to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me." AND HE WENT A LITTLE FARTHER, or, as we read in Luke's record, "He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast." In Matthew's Gospel, Emmanuel is the King, and it was the prerogative of David's royal Son to act in His own right, so there "He went." In Luke's record, He is

the obedient and dependent Man, filled and anointed by the Spirit to do His Father's business; hence there He is "withdrawn from them" by the Father's will and the Spirit's power. His own voluntary act was in absolute unison with the Father's will and the Spirit's leading. But though it was only a stone's cast that He was withdrawn from them, as a man would measure distance, in reality the distance was immeasurable. He had started on a road now upon which His disciples could not travel; He must take it alone. It was a road that never had been or could be travelled by any other human foot than His. And these disciples were never to be associated with Him in the old way again; that was a chapter which was closing; the links that bound Him to them as the Messiah of Israel were breaking now, and keenly He felt it.

Three times in the midst of His own great conflict He went back to them; for though they were unable to tread the road that He was treading, or watch with Him in it, yet His love towards them could not change; and they also were to pass through a stern sifting, and He wanted them for their own sakes to watch and pray. There was no response now to His earnest desire; the comforters He looked for failed Him, "He found them asleep." Then, when they did awaken from that strange sleep, terror-stricken at the sight of His sorrow, "they all forsook Him and fled."

Lover and friend were put far from Him; no mere human sympathy could help Him, for no human heart had ever suffered as His was to suffer. The cup from which He drank was in His hand, and He must drink it until not a drop of its bitter contents remained; His Father's will and His love to us conspired together to make Him take it without a murmur. But He must do it alone.

"Alone He bare the cross,

Alone its grief sustained."

He had told His disciples that this break would be for "a little while." As a tender mother on leaving her timid child assures it that she will "soon come back," so He assured them that they should see Him again. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again a little while, and ye shall see Me: because I go to the Father." The "little while" passed, and the "little farther," the distance "about a stone's cast," with all its accumulated sorrow that had separated Him from them for that little while, was removed out of the way. And in resurrection He went after His broken-hearted, despairing, and scattered sheep, and gathered them together into one flock, and associated them with Himself in new and heavenly relationships, the blessedness of which they could never have conceived. We look back to that little while when He went a little farther, with deepest gratitude of heart, for but for the sorrow that He passed through then, we never could have sung, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Love that suffered all the Sorrow The more deeply we know the love of Jesus the more unknowable we find it to be: the more we consider the way of it the more amazed we stand at its wisdom and its warmth. It is not a blind love that may awaken to find flaws and faults in its objects that it knew not of, for it knew from the beginning with omniscient certainty all about the loved ones. It knew, also, with the unerring knowledge of God, the whole way of sorrow that must needs be trodden in order to obtain its desire. It is a love that cannot be disappointed or alarmed, and when the great tests came it neither faltered nor fled. We need not fear that it will break down or change now: it has been fully proved.

"His love to the utmost was tried,

Yet firmly endured as a rock."

Consider that great crisis in the life of the Lord when Judas came with "a band of men and officers . . . with lanterns and torches and weapons" (John 18:1-40). How hideous, how hellish did the treachery and hatred of the human heart appear in that torchlight glare! Yet that band was but an advance guard, a flying column sent out to reconnoitre: behind them lay the hosts of darkness, waiting to crush and overwhelm Him. They were but as the spray of a stormy ocean cast up upon the strand: behind them surged the seas of sorrow, frightful and unfathomed. But how did He meet the crisis? He met it by saying, "Let these go their way." He might have escaped what lay before, from one point of view, for two words of His were enough to paralyze His foes. But He would not use His divine might to save Himself, for had He done so He must have lost His loved ones. In their fervid devotion His disciples might well have put that band to flight, but He would not let them fight. Of what use would their feeble arms have been against all that lay behind that band of men who came to take Him with Judas as their leader? He saw what lay behind them — the awful sorrow, the malignity of Satan, the judgment of God, and He said, "Let these go their way." He saw the wolf preparing to devour the sheep. He saw the righteous sword, also, that had awakened against His people's sins, and He said, "Let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me, I have lost none."

He would bear all the sorrow alone. Not one pang must they feel of all those pangs that He would endure for them: not one stroke of all that judgment that He would bear must fall upon them. Not one drop of that bitter cup must gall their lips: He would drink it to the dregs and drink it alone for them. He would shield them from the suffering: stand between them and the threatening foe: become their Substitute under the judgment, and sacrifice Himself for them. That was the only way, and His love led Him that way, with steadfastness and deliberation, that He might keep for ever for Himself those that the Father had given Him. And we were represented there in those of whom He said, "Let these go their way." And we can say, each for himself, "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

"Guilt's bitter cup,

He drank it up,

Left but the love for me."

He bore it all for me. That Terrible Hour "This is YOUR HOUR, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53).

"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. Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:27).

Consider these words, my soul, in the presence of Him who spoke them. Note well the fact that there was an hour in the years of the Saviour's life below that was full of horror for Him, an hour from which He shrank with a perfect shrinking, and from which He would have escaped had any way been found in heaven above or on earth beneath. It was the hour of the unrestrained hatred of men and of the power of darkness.

He had trodden a rough road, but in all His ways God had given His angels charge over Him, and in their hands they had borne Him up, lest at any time He should have dashed His foot against a

stone. So that, though His adversaries hated Him with a virulent hatred, they could not hurt Him. They led Him to the edge of the rock upon which their city was built, in order to hurl Him into the abyss beneath it, but He, passing through the midst of them, went His way unharmed. The very stones that they picked up to cast at Him clave to their murderous hands while He "passed by." No malice of evil, whether of men or devils, had been able to break through the unseen angelic cordon, but for this terrible hour that protection was taken away. An angel brought Him heavenly succour in the garden and withdrew, and He turned to His foes and said to them, "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:43-53).

It was then that every element of evil beset Him round about. The floods rolled upon Him, and no voice was uplifted to cry unto them, "Hitherto shall ye come and no further." The dread array that had sought means to crush Him during the days of His lowly service amongst men combined against Him. The reins that had restrained them were thrown free, there was no check upon them, and their utmost fury broke upon Him. He was reproached, despised, and railed upon. Strong bulls of Bashan encompassed Him, gaping upon Him as a ravening and roaring lion: dogs beset Him: the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him. The sword, the power of the dog, the lion's mouth, the horns of the unicorn (Psalms 22:1-31) — all these in that dread hour sought out His soul to destroy Him: for to destroy Him was to destroy all that was good, and to overthrow Him was to overthrow the very throne of God. Upon Him — that one solitary Man, the Nazarene — who in that darkness had no helper, depended every hope of all the saints: the confidence of the host of great unfallen angelic principalities: the stability of the universe: and the supremacy of God.

We dwell upon the hatred of men, but we have seen nothing and known nothing so terrible as their hatred of Him, for never before, nor since, had proud men been confronted with absolute meekness: never before, nor since, had sin been unrestrained in the presence of perfect goodness, unprotected. But what of the malignity of the devil, and of those awful and entirely evil spiritual powers in rebellion against God, the roll of which is called in Psalms 22:1-31? Of these how little we know. Thank God, we know so little: we should have known much more had our Lord Jesus not faced them for us: but He knew, with divine and all-embracing prescience, their full strength before He entered that hour. Do we wonder that He prayed, "Father, save Me from this hour." But how worthy of everlasting adoration is He because of that supremely blessed and full consecration of soul which made Him say, "FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME." This was the grand purpose of His life below, and to secure this He entered and passed through that hour.

It was the great hour in which darkness wrestled against light for the mastery. How closely He was beset in the palace of the High Priest: before the Sanhedrin: in the house of Pilate: before the throne of Herod: in the place called Gabbatha: on the road to Golgotha; and finally on the malefactor's gibbet. We are permitted to hear His cry, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws: and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death. . . . Deliver my soul. . . . Save Me."

There was not a weapon in the vast armoury of evil, that Satan and his hosts had been preparing throughout the ages for this awful conflict, that was not brought against Him, the sent One of God, to force Him from the path of God's will and to make Him cry, "I yield" to the authority of darkness. Yet He did not yield. He was wholly light, darkness could gain no foothold in Him. The prince of

this world came, but he had nothing in Him. Blessed, holy, adorable Lord! Having exhausted every device of their almost boundless malice, and exhausted themselves in their fury against Him, they sat down to watch Him there (Matthew 27:36) — men and devils, amazed, baffled, defeated, crowding together about Him. Thrones and dominions had fallen before Satan as the great leader of all evil, so that he had become "the prince of this world," and "the prince of the power of the air." His conquests were far-reaching and his triumphs great: he had only to drive back the Son of God from doing the will of God and then would his victories be crowned with everlasting success: but in that one poor and lonely Man, despised by the people, abandoned by lover and friend, and forsaken of God, he met his conqueror.

Consider Him, my soul: He had neither reply nor reproach for the men who mocked Him: had He cursed them Satan would have triumphed, but only prayers for their blessing were forced from His suffering soul by their cruelty. He was laughed to scorn because God did not aid Him in His dire necessity: and to make Him cast off His faith was the enemy's fell purpose; but neither repining nor rebuke was heard in His cries as He poured out His sorrow before God, whose ear seemed deaf to the voice of His supplication. Nevertheless He still cried, "My God, My God . . . O My God. . . Thou art holy. . . Thou art He. . . I was cast upon Thee. . . Thou art My God. . . O My strength" (Psalms 22:1-31). So He triumphed in that terrible hour, and trod the foes of God beneath His feet by being trodden down. And because no power of evil could overcome Him He was able to take up the question of sin on behalf of sinful men and settle that question to the everlasting glory of God by bearing His righteous judgment against it. He had suffered for righteousness, and in faithfulness to the will of God, but when the full tale of His suffering in regard to these was told, He entered into deeper depths and into a darker hour, for He was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin." It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He put Him to grief when He made His soul an offering for sin. He died, and through death He has annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. He lives again and has the keys of death and hades. He is crowned with glory and honour. He must be exalted and extolled, and made very high, and He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied when the greatness of God's triumph through Him is publicly manifested to the wide universe. How glorious is He. The forces of evil have been met and vanquished: the judgment of God against sin has been borne and His justice glorified: the power of death has been destroyed by His dying, and He lives to die no more. No wonder that His saints delight to sing —

"Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,

Slain in His victory,

Who lived, who died, who lives again,

For thee, His Church, for thee."

"He was numbered with the transgressors"

"And when they came to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left." (Luke 23:33)

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They searched the prison cells of Jerusalem that morning for the most debased of all the criminals that that city contained, and they led them out to die along with Jesus. These men had been guilty of appalling crimes, and that was why they were chosen to hang one on His right hand and the other on His left: that was why they put Him upon the centre and highest cross. They meant to proclaim by their well-considered and malicious plan that He was the worst of the three. Thus did they heap shame upon Him, adding deepest insult to deepest injury. But I am glad that such men as these, and not James and John, were taken to be His companions on that day: in this the devil showed his lack of foresight, and in this he was outwitted, for if they had crucified the sons of Zebedee, one on His right hand and the other on His left, it would have been said that they were helping Him to finish His work of redemption. The devil would have deceived men, now that Jesus is proclaimed as a Saviour, and would have said: These holy men, His disciples, had their share in His work, so that you must not trust in Him alone, but trust also in St. John and St. James, for they are worthy of as much glory as He.

Such a deception cannot now be practised upon weary, anxious sinners; those murderers who hung with Him could have no hand in the work that He was doing. They were suffering for their own crimes, He, the sinless One, for yours and mine.

"Alone He bore the cross,

Alone its grief sustained;

His was the shame and loss,

And He the victory gained.

The mighty work was all His own,

Though we shall share His glorious throne."

Yes, Jesus is the Saviour, and He alone. Behold Him there upon that cross, the darkness and shame of His surroundings only throwing into brighter relief the glory of His person. See Him "numbered with the transgressors," bearing the sin of many, and praying for His foes! How worthy is He of that name which is above every name!

Behold Him, the central object of man's hatred: all the unspeakable enmity of men against God flung upon Him in scorn and shame, and cruelty unrestrained, and that, too, in the very hour when He stood forth as the infinite expression of God's love to men. Truly, as we look upon Him there, every other actor in that solemn scene fades from the view, and He stands out alone in the incomparable glory of His own divine and unconquerable love.

Yet what an evidence it is of the utter darkness of the heart of unregenerate man, and of his complete alienation from God, that he should have heaped shame and execration upon the One who is the most glorious and everlastingly blessed Person in God's universe, that he should have condemned Him to die between two malefactors upon a shameful cross, in whom was centred the eternal delight of the heart of the Father. The Victory of Love

"And they took Jesus, and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and two

other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." — (John 19:16-18)

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"They took Jesus and led Him away" in that the guilt of men reached its flood-tide.

"He bearing His cross went forth": in this was manifested the great victory of divine love over human hate. He was not dragged forth, nor driven forth; He went forth. No man took His life from Him; He laid it down Himself. The shouts of the rabble smote His ear and, with a holy sensitiveness, He keenly felt it all, and yet no thought of saving Himself was in His heart. In majestic lowliness He went forth, bearing His cross. He knew, to its last bitterness, all that the cross meant. He was not taken by surprise, nor did He go forth on the impulse of a moment. On the night that was passed in Gethsemane's garden He had looked into the darkness and had fully counted the cost. He had talked of it on the holy mount with Moses and Elias. This hour had been planned in the council chamber of eternity ere ever He came, and now He does not draw back. There was no resistance, no regret, and every step He took towards Golgotha shook the kingdom of the devil. And there "they crucified Him"; and the crucified Christ is God's answer to the devil's lie in Eden. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). If God had left us to reap the bitter harvest of our rebellion and sin, we could not have complained; but, instead of this, He undertook to dispel the darkness and overthrow the power of the devil by this mighty and convincing proof of His love to us. Satan had made men believe that God was a hard Master, gathering where He had not sowed. God has proved that He is full of love by giving the very best gift that heaven contained, even His own beloved Son, to bear the penalty of our sin: and it is when the glorious light of this love shines into the hearts of men that Satan's thralldom comes to an end. Jesus was lifted up upon the cross, and that lifting has declared the whole truth, and we who believe it have been drawn to Him. He has become our great attractive centre, and the devil no longer holds us as his prey. The lie is laid bare, the darkness of ignorance past, and God has triumphed: for the prince of this world is cast out of the hearts of those who believe. He no longer holds them as his citadel. They have surrendered themselves to the God whose perfect love has been demonstrated in the cross of Christ.

How great is the splendour of Calvary! By its glorious light we have been awakened from our night of sleep as by the rising sun at morn. We have been compelled to exclaim: "Then God did love us, after all!" The entrance of His Word has given light, and with light has come liberty. The curtains of darkness have been torn asunder, and our souls have stepped forth into the day.

02.04. Part 4. His Resurrection and Glory.

Part 4. His Resurrection and Glory.

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:17-18).

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"For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

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"He is not here! the power of death is broken:

The Son of Jesse hath Goliath slain.

See in this riven rocky keep the token

That death no longer shall despotic reign.

This casket holds the Prince of Life no longer;

The powers of hell have felt the might of God;

The strong man has been vanquished by the stronger;

The Red Sea smitten by the Saviour's rod" (J. Boyd.) "Fear not ye."

Stone and seal and soldiers held the lonely sepulchre in the garden where the body of Jesus lay. The subtlety of Jewish priests and the authority of Rome combined to make the place secure. "Make it," said Pilate, "as sure as ye can." They did their utmost, and may have gone to their beds assured that they would meet the hated Nazarene no more. What orders were issued to the Roman guard as they went to their unwonted watch? Were they told, I wonder, how to treat the expected raid upon that tomb by a mob of Galilean fishermen? It is more than likely that they were, but they certainly were not instructed how to deal with an earthquake, and an angel of the Lord, whose countenance was like lightning and whose raiment was white as snow. And the Galilean fishermen came not, but the earthquake and the angel did.

What a moment was that when the earth trembled and rocked, and the imperial seal was torn asunder, and the stone was rolled away from the mouth of that tomb by angelic hands! Glittering spears and shining armour were useless to withstand this display of heavenly power: the courage of the coarse defenders of that tomb failed utterly and they fell down flat as dead men.

There was every reason why that guard should shake and fall with fear, for it represented a world determined to be rid of Jesus, and that thought had realized its determination. Now He was risen

from the dead, and His resurrection was His triumph and their defeat. It was the declaration on the part of God that He had seen and disapproved their awful act at Calvary: and that Christ was the righteous One before whose throne all men must stand. But close at hand in that memorable hour were two weak women, and to them the angel turned with words of cheer. There was nothing in the power of God to make them afraid: there was every reason why they should rejoice. They represented, not the world that hated Jesus, but those whom He had chosen out of it, and who loved Him because He first loved them. So the angel said to them,

"FEAR NOT YE."

It seemed strange that such words should be said to these weak women, when Roman veterans fell as dead for fear: but the reason is at once declared. "I know," said the angel, "that

YE SEEK JESUS."

That was the reason. He was the object of their hearts' truest affection. The world was a dreary desert without Him: they could not keep away from that sepulchre where they supposed that He was lying. All their hopes were centred in Him: and though their faith, through ignorance, had been sorely shaken, their love for Him remained. He was their Beloved and their Friend, and in this, though they knew it not, their hearts were in fellowship with the heart of God. And we come together as those who cannot do without Him. As those women sought Him because they loved Him, so do we seek His presence, for He has won our hearts' affections, and in His company we find our fullest joy. He has become our gathering centre, our great attraction, our bond of fellowship: that which bound these women as one in their search for Him unites us also: we are one if we love our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not of the world that hates Him, but of God and of one another, because of our common devotion to Him.

"It is Himself that bindeth heart to heart,

In one eternal love." But why did they seek Him? And why do we seek Him? The angel supplied the answer, "Ye seek Jesus," he said,

"WHICH WAS CRUCIFIED."

That is why. We should never have sought Him if He had not been crucified. His crucifixion was the expression and the measure of His love to us. When He was despised and rejected by men,

"Stripped and scourged by hands ungentle,

Mocked by tongues untamed,"

then He suffered, the Just for us the unjust, to bring us to God. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:1-12). He "loved the church and gave Himself for it." It is love that passes knowledge, and yet we know it, for He bore our sins, and has put them all away, having borne the righteous judgment that was due to us for them. He died for us.

"We know the way, the glorious way He made

Through death's dark sea.

O Lamb of God, we bless the love that laid

Our sins on Thee." But if the angel could have said no more of Him, it would have been useless for any of us to have sought Him, or still to seek Him. He would have been of no use to us, nor could be. If He is a dead Christ we are hopeless, for "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). But a glad triumph swells through the angel's words, as he proclaims, "He is not here, for

HE IS RISEN."

His work upon the cross has been accepted: the price He paid there for us is enough. Death has met his conqueror: the grave has been robbed of its terrors, and the devil's power has been broken for ever. The Father's approval of His life and death has been made manifest, His own personal greatness and glory has been declared, and eternal redemption secured for us beyond recall. We can understand how every fear and dark foreboding in these women's hearts would be changed to confidence and joy. His resurrection proved that He had not deceived them; that every hope that He had raised within their breasts would be fulfilled. And it was this that the angel urged upon them when he said, "He is risen AS HE SAID."

He had told them that He would rise again: that He had done so was the confirmation of all His words, and proved that He was fully worthy of their fullest confidence. We, too, may give to the winds our fears, and renew our confidence in Him, as we read His words, which tell us that not one jot or tittle of His word shall fail. He is risen, that is the pledge. Death mocks at men's assertions and brings to naught their words and works, but our Saviour lives as Victor over death to give complete effect to all that the prophets have spoken concerning Him and all that He has spoken concerning us.

"COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY."

They were to be witnesses to the disciples of this great event, and so must view the empty tomb with their own eyes, and this they did at the invitation of the angel of the Lord. It was presumptuously stated by one whose blasphemies have been closed by death that the Lord did not actually rise from the dead: that His remains are still lying somewhere near to Calvary. If this is so the Christian faith is a delusion and a snare, and all those who have fallen asleep in the joy of it have perished. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

See how the glorious worth of our Lord comes out in the angel's words.

1. YE SEEK JESUS — His personal preciousness.
2. WHICH WAS CRUCIFIED — His matchless love.
3. HE IS RISEN — His glorious power.
4. AS HE SAID — His absolute trustworthiness. But there is more in this wonderful story: the risen Lord had not forgotten His disciples; they were His first thought. So that the angel continued,

"GO QUICKLY, AND TELL HIS DISCIPLES

that He is risen from the dead, and goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him; lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly with fear and great joy, and did run to bring His disciples word." Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee,

"INTO A MOUNTAIN WHERE JESUS HAD APPOINTED THEM."

He appointed a place where He could meet with them, and, blessed fact, He has appointed a place for us, where He can meet with us. It is in this same gospel that His precious words are recorded for us; "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). It is not the place that we choose: we may not please ourselves in this matter: the place is His appointment: it is our responsibility as well as our joy to obey His word and keep this appointment with Him. The place that He appointed them was outside the temple and away from Jerusalem. We must remember that in Matthew's Gospel He had been presented to Israel as their Messiah, and they had rejected Him, so that the temple, their house, and their city were to be desolated, and the faithful remnant was to be led out of both and gathered to Himself. His name instead of the temple and the city was to be their rallying centre. And so to-day not a sensuous religion, an ornate service, or a massive temple is that which satisfies His heart or the hearts of those who love Him. To meet His own is His wish, and to be in His presence without distraction, or the intrusion of that which pleases nature, is the wish of those who keep His word and do not deny His Name.

"AND WHEN THEY SAW HIM THEY WORSHIPPED HIM." Could they do other, when He stood before them who had died for them, bearing in His risen body the marks of His suffering and death? A sight of Him was all that was needed to prostrate them in holy adoration at His feet. And so it will be with us if without distraction we seek His presence in the place that He has appointed us.

"Jesus, Thou alone art worthy

Ceaseless praises to receive,

For Thy love and grace and goodness

Rise o'er all our hearts conceive.

"Praise Him, praise Him, praise the Saviour,

Saints aloud your voices raise.

Praise Him, praise Him, till in heaven

Perfected we'll sing His praise."

"Woman, why weepest thou?"

Mary of Magdala stands in the garden where the mournful cypress casts its shadows, and sighs in the freshening breezes o'er the tombs of the dead. The morning sun breaking over the eastern Olivet has not reached the deep grove where she weeps, and if it had, its rays hold no power that can dispel the gloom of her soul, for she has lost the One in whom her life was centred, and she knows not where to find Him. The disciples, her friends, have homes and duties and distractions,

but earth has no comfort for her as she stands beside that sepulchre where all that she loved had lain. Neither can heaven yield her consolation, she feels, for though "angels in white" appear and speak to her, she turns from them as though they were intruders, unable to understand or ease her grief. Behold her as she weeps, darkness above, darkness around, darkness within, and listen to her broken cry, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Hopeless and overwhelming her sorrow seemed, for, believing that she had lost her Lord, both time and eternity were desolated for her.

Among the shadows He waits for her — her risen Lord, and when she turns herself back and stands face to face with Him, He speaks to her, asking the cause of her grief. But she supposes Him to be the gardener, and of what use can a gardener be to her? The gardener labours upon beautiful things that have neither sorrows nor souls — she has both: he tends things that grow and shed their sweetness for a day, then die and are forgotten — she is full of bitterness and cannot forget she seeks not flowers, but "Him" — who can heal the broken-hearted, who Himself is called the "Man of Sorrows." Marvellous designation for Jehovah's Fellow! The gardener may work with sympathy among the graves and endeavour to cover with the beauty of nature the stark nakedness of death, but a flower-strewed grave remains a grave, and the flowers fade in spite of all his labour, while the sorrow lives to drain the red heart white, unless a hand other than a gardener's intervenes. Mary does not want a gardener to garnish a grave, she wants her Lord to heal and satisfy her soul; she wants Him who breaks the power of death, and casts the light of resurrection upon the gloomy grave. But if Mary knows not Jesus, He knows her, and calls her by her name in accents that throb with infinite love. He commands the morning for her, and turns the shadow of death into joy. The darkness flies away from her soul, and the dirge gives place to the triumph song within her heart, as she sees Him, recognizes Him, and responds to His voice to her in that one word, "Rabboni." Here is a glorious deliverance from the bondage of a hopeless sorrow. THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED. He calls her by her name, and His presence and His voice change her outlook at once and for ever. In this there is everlasting consolation and good hope for all who weep. Death has met his conqueror: his stronghold has been stormed and taken, and the dark King of Terrors dethroned. Christ is risen, He is victor. In no other way could the gates of death be opened for us than by His resurrection from the dead. He has opened them, and holds the keys of them, as He that liveth for evermore. To all who put their faith in Him He says, "Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hades and of death" (Revelation 1:17-18). He is Master of death and the grave. Who? The risen Lord who loves you, and who tenderly lays upon you the hand of His power, and calls you by your name. He who tasted death for you in its unspeakable bitterness because He loved you, and who now would sweeten the cup that you drink with His deepest sympathy and undying love. He has flooded the darkness of death with the light of hope, and you may look forward with confidence to the day when "shall be brought to pass that saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The tenderness of His grace is as great as the triumph of His might: as it was for Mary in that distant day, so it is for us in this.

Power and Grace On the evening of the resurrection day the disciples were gathered together, the last of them drawn to that blessed tryst from distant Emmaus by the Lord's personal service to

them: and being thus gathered, two things commanded their thoughts and filled them with wonder; (1) THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED, (2) AND HATH APPEARED TO SIMON. Nothing could be of greater moment to them than the first, for it was the manifestation of their Lord's victorious power, and was the confirmation of all things which He had spoken to them. And though they did not understand at the time what the results of this glorious resurrection were, yet it must have opened a new world to their souls, and shown them that what, in their eyes, had been weakness and defeat, had become the veritable triumph of God. But how could they meet the risen Lord? Had they not forsaken Him in the midst of His exceeding sorrow, and might He not in consequence discard them for others more faithful and worthy? They might have thought so, and gone to hide themselves from Him for very shame, but — He had "appeared to Simon."

They do not say He hath appeared unto Mary Magdalene: they knew that her eyes had been the first to look upon Him, but there was nothing remarkable about His appearing to her, for she — devoted heart — had stood bereaved without the empty tomb, weeping out her sorrow, because she knew not where her beloved Lord lay. The world was a wilderness night where no comfort shone because the Lord was gone. It was no surprise to them, or to us, that since He was risen, He should appear to Mary. But to Simon! who had abandoned his Master, and had proved the veriest coward in the presence of the scorning of a servant maid: who had denied his Lord with oaths and curses — that He should appear to Simon filled them with wonder. So the two marvels are linked together by them, and in the Holy Spirit's record for us.

His Mighty Power HAD BROUGHT HIM FROM THE GRAVE.

His Tender Gracious Love HAD CARRIED HIM EVEN TO SIMON.

It was this Lord who stood in the midst of them: the powers of darkness had been smitten before Him, and the failure of His followers had not changed Him. He was all-sufficient for every foe without, and for every failure within. No wonder then that it is recorded that the joy of seeing Him was so overwhelming, that they could scarcely believe. But their doubts were speedily removed; they saw the Lord, and it is also our privilege to see Him — their Lord and ours — who had risen indeed, and appeared unto Simon.

We need Him as much as they did, for the malignity of the devil is not one whit less now than then, and we have to mourn failure and sin as terrible as Simon's, for the Church has not kept His Word, and has often denied His Name. But Christ remains unchanged, and every purpose of God, with every hope of His people, hangs alone upon Him.

How blessed then to know that this same Lord is in the midst of His saints to-day!

Days of stress and trial they are, in which the devil is seeking to stamp out all testimony for God, both as to the true word of the Gospel, and in the lives and unity of His own. But He abides. If His pilgrim people are treading a wilderness journey in the which they are conscious of fierce opposition, of their individual needs, and much failure, He says to them, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," so that they may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Jesus showing Himself to His Disciples "On this wise showed He Himself" (John 21:1).

Simon Peter was a man of action: his was that nature that cannot bear to be still and wait: if his Master gave him no command he would act upon his own initiative, and being such a man he exercised an influence upon others. So that when he proposed to go a-fishing his companions fell in with his plans: "and that night they caught nothing." As the red dawn chased the night-mists across the sea their Lord stood on the shore. Who shall tell with what tenderness He looked upon them, hungry, weary, and dispirited as they were! He had looked upon them all through that night of toil, had watched over them with an unspeakable love, for they were "His own," and the love He bore them could not change, and now had come the moment when He would show Himself to them. Not at first did they recognize Him, not until He proved who He was by commanding the fish of the sea to come to their net. Then spake out that disciple whom Jesus loved, saying, "IT IS THE LORD." And so they came to land and found "a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." What a showing of Himself to them was this! How it revealed His care for them! THEY WERE COLD, and He knew it, and His own hand had provided the fire to warm them: THEY WERE HUNGRY, and He thought of it, and provided fish and bread to satisfy them: THEY WERE TIRED with their toil, and He sympathized with them in their weariness. Their faithlessness had made them FEARFUL AND ASHAMED; He knew it, and so invited them to sit down before Him, and made them quite at home by His grace, while He gave to them the food that those precious pierced hands had prepared for them. Matchless revelation of Himself! He, their Lord and Master, rejoiced to minister unto them: He, death's conqueror, and creation's Lord as He had proved Himself to be, was not indifferent to their bodily necessities, He cared for their smallest need.

Time spent in meditation upon the wonderful manner in which He showed Himself to them will not be wasted, for here is a revelation of His tender interest in His own, and He is just the same to-day as then, the same to us as He was to those Galilean fishermen.

Entering His Glory

(Luke 24:1-53).

"HE IS RISEN." The fact of the actual bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is of the greatest possible importance. The salvation of the souls of men, the vindication of His own glorious person, and the supremacy of the everlasting God are all involved in it. If Christ be not raised, actually and bodily raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. If Christ be not raised, actually and bodily raised, He is not what He said He was, and His life and words on earth are a cruel deception. If Christ be not raised, actually and bodily raised, God has met with defeat, His throne has been sapped at the very base of it, the devil has triumphed, and evil is almighty in the universe.

If Christ be not raised, God's gracious intentions with regard to the blessing of men have been frustrated: heaven shall never celebrate the greatness of God's salvation: no song shall ever roll over the fields of glory: the Father's house shall be sad and silent for ever; the earth shall remain a desert where no fragrant rose can blossom, and a deluge of darkness, more direful and disastrous than that flood which smote the world in Noah's day, shall roll over the whole race of men in an everlasting mastery.

If, then, everything depends upon the resurrection of our Lord — and it does, for so we are taught in the Scriptures of Truth — it is good for us to be able to travel in thought and faith with those who, on the first day of the week, sought the sepulchre where they had laid Him: it is good for us to

look into that empty rock-hewn tomb and to hear angelic voices exclaim, "Why seek ye the living amongst the dead? He is not here, HE IS RISEN." Thank God! And the fact is placed outside the region of question: the Scriptures: the more than five hundred brethren: and Saul of Tarsus who saw Him alive after He was risen: and the happy millions of ransomed men and women who have staked their all for time and eternity upon Christ, and who have sung their song of triumph in the very presence of death, all unite to bear witness to His victory over death: and His own words are to us the crowning of the testimony, "Fear not: I am the First and the Last; I am He that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18).

Let those who deny the fact produce their witnesses, and bring their proofs to the test.

HE MUST BE SUPREME. The Lord appears in Luke's Gospel on a great mission. He called it in His first recorded words "My Father's business" (Luke 2:49). It was "to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins . . . to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:77-79). So His first utterance in public service was: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4:18). And throughout the Gospel the opposition to Him was always because He would unswervingly pursue His Father's business. So they murmured because He did eat and drink with publicans and sinners (Luke 5:30): they said with scorn that He was "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34): they murmured again, saying, "This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). And yet again, "That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner" (Luke 19:7). But the Son of Man had come to seek and to save that which was lost, and their murmurings did not hinder Him in this, though death and resurrection lay in the path of its accomplishment.

It was necessary, according to the divine plan of campaign, that others, not only those eleven disciples whom He met on this resurrection day, but all His disciples throughout the succeeding centuries down even to this day, should bear a part in this wonderful mission of making known this grace to the ends of the earth: and in this resurrection chapter the Lord is seen instructing His disciples as to this, and adjusting their thoughts to the new conditions.

These disciples, however, were faithless, dispirited, and sad. Strange that it should have been so, for that first Lord's day was the most glorious of all the days that God had made. But the Lord drew near and went with them, and the more we scrutinize His ways with them as He quietly and irresistibly takes the place of supremacy in their lives, the more glorious does He appear to us. Their confidence in Him had received a rude shock, and yet they loved Him, and were sadly reciting the doings of the past week when "He drew near and went with them." He drew near in more senses than one; there was no sudden display of power and splendour to fill them with awe, but the exercise of that compassion that fills His heart for the ignorant. He came close to them in their sorrow and woe in all that gentleness that had always marked His dealings with them. They were the bruised reed and the smoking flax, which He would not break nor quench. They were broken of heart and sore of spirit, and needed the balm of the great Physician, and He was there to tenderly point out the sickness and to apply the remedy. Such is He who is the Master of all His servants, and thus does He prepare them to take up His service with boldness and joy. Their fundamental mistake had been, that, in their innermost thought, they had made Him secondary to

Israel. This is disclosed in their woeful complaint, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed ISRAEL." They had hoped that He would have broken the foreign yoke and made their nation free and glorious in the earth, and if He had done this how great He would have been in their eyes: but, instead, they had seen Him nailed to a malefactor's gibbet. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter: and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

He had died, and His death was the grave of all their hopes. They reasoned as men, that since He had died all must be lost, for death is the end of all the glory of man: his thoughts and purposes lie shattered and broken beside his mortal clay. But Jesus was risen again, and resurrection is the power of God; it is God's new beginning and His glory; His thoughts and purposes are all established by it, established in Christ, where disaster can never overtake them, for "He dieth no more."

Happy are they who, by the grace of God, can transfer their hopes from that race of man which lies under the dread sentence of death, and centre them in Christ, the Second Man, the last Adam, who has risen above the power of death, the life-giving Head of a new race.

These disciples had not believed all that the prophets had spoken. They had had their favourite texts, and those texts spoke of the great power of the Messiah — power that would crush their foes and make them the head of the nations: these they read and cherished and loved, and as surely as God spoke them He will fulfil them: but those Scriptures that spoke of His sorrows, His acquaintance with grief, humiliation, rejection, and death they had neither understood nor believed. With great patience He expounded these to them, showing them these things written therein concerning HIMSELF, and how that He ought to suffer and enter into His glory. He showed them these things until their eyes began to perceive hitherto unthought-of glories in Him, and their hearts glowed within them at the sight of them. In the council chamber of eternity it was planned that He should have His glory as the Head and Centre of a universe of blessing founded upon redemption, a universe to which men from all nations were necessary, and by the path of suffering He was tested, and in it His fitness for that place was proved. Every test brought out this fitness in clearer light until the final test — THE CROSS.

Every human perfection disclosed its fragrance in His suffering; His absolute and unquestioning obedience to the will of God throughout all the way that that will led Him, His meekness, dependence, self-abnegation — everything, in fact, that man ought to be according to the thought of God, He was, and that right onward and into death. In Him also, the lonely and forsaken Man upon the cross, there appeared in full revelation every attribute of God. No ray of light from without pierced the awful gloom that enshrouded Him as the sin-bearer, but from out of that darkness there shone a glory that shall fill eternity. "All divine attributes were harmonized there — wisdom, holiness, mercy, justice, power, and truth" — and above all and through all the very nature of God, which is love, was declared triumphantly in the very place and hour where His justice demanded that sin should be judged to the uttermost.

Wonderful Saviour! It is along that path of unspeakable suffering that He has entered His glory. But the glory He has entered has added no glory to Him, for He was all glorious as He trod that downward pathway of sorrow and shame; He is not, nor can He be, more glorious than He was when He bowed His thorn-crowned head in death.

If He is now exalted to the Father's right hand it is because that place alone in the wide universe is worthy to receive Him. The diamond has been put in the golden setting, He has gone to His own place. Crowns of immortal lustre shall shine resplendent upon His sacred brow, but that brow is worthy of them, nor would they fit another. As He expounded these things to them, thoughts of Israel must have faded from their minds, and He must have arisen to the supreme place in their thoughts, so that when at last their eyes are opened to know Him they no longer do their own will, nor think of their own interests or comfort, but that same hour of the night they arise and return to Jerusalem. They did His will, though no command had been expressed: instinctively they knew what He would have them do. HIS LORDSHIP WAS COMPLETE. But His lordship was exercised in perfect grace, and they did His will under the compulsion of love: no other service is acceptable to Him.

HE IS THE LEADER OF HIS SERVANTS. The disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem on that day talking of His resurrection. He greeted them with that blessed salutation, PEACE! for theirs was to be a mission of peace, and if they were to prosecute it aright they must be filled with and kept in peace. With a quiet and matchless dignity He convinces them as to the reality of His resurrection, assures them that it is Himself and none other who stands before them, and opens their understanding as to the teaching of all Scripture concerning Himself. It was this teaching as to Himself that was to prepare them for the mission and to maintain them in peace in it. Out of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms He showed them God's plan and His glory. He showed them that He was the fulfilment of every word that God had uttered whether in promise or prophecy. Their fears, then, that all they had hoped for was lost, were altogether groundless, for in Him, their risen Lord, everything that God had purposed was secured. And further, though it was not then declared to them, they afterwards learnt that in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and that they were complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power. All the resources of God were in Him for them, and there was not a power in the universe that could intercept those resources.

Brethren in Christ, are we conscious that our Lord is such a glorious Lord, Centre, Leader, and Head for His servants? Those who are in the knowledge of this will fear no foe, for all the foes are defeated, as His resurrection is witness; they will dread no lack, for all the mighty fulness of God is at their disposal in Him. His presence in the midst of those disciples made them one, one in heart, object, and purpose: for what place could divergent views and selfish aspirations find in the presence of their glorious risen Lord? As they looked upon Him, bearing in His body the wounds of the cross, wounds received in His devotion to them, a tide of love to Him must have surged through every heart, and each would instinctively drop into his divinely appointed place with regard to Himself and each other. IN THE GREAT OUTER CIRCLE. Having assumed His rightful place amongst them, and opened their understanding that they might have a right knowledge as to Himself and the new circumstances in which they saw Him, He turned their eyes to the great outer circle of "all nations" and said unto them, "Thus it is written." Let that sentence impress us as it must have impressed them, and mark the place that THE SCRIPTURES hold in this chapter; first as to His own personal glory, it was "All that the prophets had spoken": then in the sacred circle of His beloved servants it was, "All things must be fulfilled, which were spoken in Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me." And now in connection with the whole world it is "Thus it is written." There can be no right understanding of any relationship which we may have

with the Lord apart from the Scriptures, nor can we rightly act in any sphere with Him apart from the guidance of the Scriptures. And further, mark the place that THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST occupy in this chapter. First, as to His own personal glory, "Ought not Christ to have suffered?" Then, in the sacred circle of His servants, "He showed them His hands and His feet." Lastly, in this wide circle of all the world, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again the third day."

There is no sphere in which we may move with Him on this side of the glory in which we may forget His sufferings and death; and on the other side, when at home in the glory of God, He will still be the Lamb that was slain. The value of the Scriptures is that they keep Him constantly before us, for they unfold to us "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

How wonderfully interwoven are these great things; the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, the sufferings of Christ, His resurrection and glory, and the grace of God to all nations. Let no rude hand attempt to tear them asunder, or destroy any one of these divine verities, for if one could be spoiled the whole fabric would be marred. But what place have the Scriptures and the sufferings of Christ with those who profess to be carrying out this blessed mission in these days? The question needs to be asked, for neither can be popular in the world that knows not God, and the popular taste, alas! is often consulted rather than the will of God. The preaching of Christ crucified strikes at the root of all the pride of man: it means that he, in spite of all his boasted progress, must abase himself at the feet of the One who hung upon a gibbet, that only by this means can he be in right relations with God.

It means that in spite of all his culture, religion, learning, and power, he is a sinner under the power of death, the judgment of God, for "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). It means that Christ, the holy and the true, upon whom alone death had no claim, went down into it as the judgment of God, and that only thus could it be removed. This preaching is to the Jew (the religionist) a stumbling-block, and to the Greek (the philosopher) foolishness: nevertheless it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. And how wonderful it is to us who believe, and how great our joy when we see Him, who went into death for us, raised again from the dead. He has sustained the judgment, has passed through the deep waters, "He divided the sea whose waves roared" and has made the depths a way for His ransomed to pass over — the Lord of Hosts is His name. How great indeed is His glory in God's salvation.

"Christ died for our sins . . . was buried and rose again from the dead." These are the great facts that have to be heralded in every habitation of man, and these facts are according to the Scriptures. And these facts are to be heralded, that men may know that in consequence of them a way has been opened by which they may return to God, and returning have all their sins remitted. And these priceless blessings have to be offered in His name: that is, His servants are to do it on His behalf, as His representatives, His ambassadors, backed by His authority, and, as He told them, endued with the power which He would send them from above. Then "He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and CARRIED UP INTO HEAVEN." His work was finished, and the glory of God claimed Him, and their raptured eyes followed Him into that shekinah cloud. He is in that glory still: Stephen saw Him, Saul of Tarsus saw Him, and we by faith may also see Him "JESUS, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR" (Hebrews 2:9). The Great High Priest

Here is a theme that might well occupy volumes printed in gold, but how little it is understood. Victory in the homeward way depends entirely upon the grace and mercy ministered from the throne on which He sits. The great High Priest is Jesus, the Son of God. Does not the heart swell with holy exultation at the thought of His greatness? The service to which He devotes Himself in this character is that of bearing up His pilgrim saints in intercession before God, and He does this with truest compassion and deepest sympathy. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities — marvellous thought! It means that every pang in every heart that loves Him is felt by Him. We may not be able to understand it: we are not asked to do so — it is too great for our small minds, but He asks us to believe it, and if we don't we grieve that heart that loves above all things to be trusted. He would have us to believe that He is serving us every hour because He loves us: yes, loves us with the same love that led Him to Calvary for us. The birth pangs do not exhaust the mother's love for her babe: she would be willing to lay down her life for it at any time.

"Yet she may forgetful prove,

He will never cease to love."

How could He cease to love? He is JESUS. And what does that name mean to us? It tells us of the love that brought Him from the eternal throne to Bethlehem's manger: it tells us of a life of suffering-service that led through sorrow and shame and loss to the cross of Calvary: it tells us how His love declared itself there. The waves of death uplifted their awful crests and rolled upon Him to engulf Him: the billows of Satan's power roared about Him to destroy Him, and He went down beneath the deep waters of God's judgment against sin on our behalf. But though He stood for us where all the seas met upon Him, yet was His love not quenched. It burned with a fervent flame amidst the fierce waters, and shed its wondrous light in the darkness of that awful hour, and there it triumphed — and now the Lord is risen: He lives upon the throne of God for us; and

"We stand beyond the doom

Of all our sins through Jesu's empty tomb."

His love has not changed one whit: it is as deeply interested in our welfare to-day as it was when it bore our sins on the tree. Were it otherwise, Jesus would no longer bear that precious name for us, and we should have neither Saviour, Priest, nor home. But Jesus is the Son of God, for so our text presents Him, and while "Jesus" carries us in thought down to the very depths of the humiliation into which His love carried Him, "THE SON OF GOD" presents His glory, His magnificent greatness, the unmeasured splendour of His Person and inheritance. But there are other thoughts than these in the bringing together of these names and titles that should talk eloquently to our hearts. "Jesus" tells us of His preciousness to us. "The Son of God" tells us of His preciousness to God. "JESUS" TELLS US THAT, SINCE HE LOVES US SO WELL, THERE IS NOTHING THAT WOULD BE GOOD FOR US THAT HE WILL NOT ASK FOR US WHEN HE INTERCEDES BEFORE GOD FOR US: AND "SON OF GOD" TELLS US THAT GOD WILL NOT DENY HIM ANY REQUEST THAT HE MAKES. So that the fact of Jesus the Son of God being our great High Priest means that we are put into contact with the eternal and infinite resources of God, and that eternal and infinite love sets these resources in motion for us, for God loves His Son and Jesus loves us, and Jesus is the Son of God.

He has passed through the heavens from the very lowest point of suffering and shame: He has gone to the highest point in glory, and no watchful sentry rang out the challenge, "Halt!" for every gate was thrown open wide for Him to pass triumphantly through, and He is our Forerunner as well as our Priest. He has passed into the glory which is our HOME before us, and for us, and the welcome that He received is the welcome that awaits us. There is not a difficulty or hostile power that He has not met in the way that we travel as we follow Him. He was tempted in all points as we are, apart from sin. And now He lives in the glory to succour us with gracious help from thence. THE THRONE OF GRACE is available for us. We may come boldly to it, and when we do we shall discover that our best Friend sits upon it, and there we shall obtain mercy and find grace for seasonable help.

Here are some of our resources, and as we draw upon them we shall hold the full assurance of hope unto the end, and THE END IS HOME.

Hallelujah!

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." (Psalms 150:1-6) So ends the last psalm, and therein is presented to us the result, as far as the earth is concerned, of the coming of the Lord into it. He is the blessed Man of the first psalm who walked not in the counsel of the ungodly, but delighted in the law of the Lord, and meditated in it both day and night. Every breath that He drew was a "hallelujah!" — a "Praise ye the Lord:" every pulse of His devoted heart was for God: in His every word and act the Father was glorified. Every moral excellence shone in unmeasured perfection in Him. Men said, "When shall He die and His name perish?" (Psalms 41:5): but His fruit shall appear in its season, His leaf shall never wither, and whatsoever He doeth shall prosper. Men thought that His light was quenched for ever when unresistingly He was led to the Cross, but He is coming again, He shall arise — the Sun of Righteousness: and then shall break that morning for which the saints of God have ever sighed, even a morning without clouds: as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain (2 Samuel 23:4).

He will stamp His blessed character upon His kingdom: it will reflect the glory which is effulgent in Him: every groan, and murmur, and cry of anguish will be hushed, the darkness will fly before the shining of His presence, and the whole earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord: and as His every breath was a hallelujah when He was here, so everything that hath breath will say "Hallelujah!" then. The rise and fall of kingdoms: the accumulation of grave questions: the clashing of conflicting interests, which is growing fiercer as the years roll on, and which prove the instability of things in this world, and fill the hearts of men with misgiving, do not disturb the one who with the eye of faith sees "Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour: that He by the grace of God should taste death for everything" (Hebrews 2:9, N.T.). The Morning Star, bright harbinger of day, shines in the heavens and fills his heart with hope, so that he can cry, Hallelujah! now. THE LORD IS COMING.

". . . . We lift the head

In joyful expectation,

For He will bring salvation."

—

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

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"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Php 3:20-21).

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"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

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He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:20-21).

02.05. Conclusion

Conclusion

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

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"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

—

"To Thee, Lord, my heart unfoldeth,
As the rose to the golden sun,
To Thee, Lord, mine arms are clinging,
The eternal joy begun.
For ever, through endless ages,
Thy cross and Thy sorrow shall be
The glory, the song, and the sweetness
That make heaven heaven to me." (H. Suso.)

—

"O keep my soul, Lord Jesus,
Abiding still with Thee,
And if I wander, teach me
Soon back to Thee to flee.

"That all Thy gracious favour
May to my soul be known;
And, versed in this Thy goodness,

My hopes Thyself shall crown." (J. N. Darby.) In going over these papers, which have as their theme the Person of Christ, we feel that it is surely one most sorrowful indication of the low and backslidden condition of the majority of the children of God that devotion to Christ should be spoken of as something to marvel at and to praise. It is undoubtedly beautiful, and must yield

sweet fragrance to the Father whose beloved Son Christ is, but that it should call for special comment on our part when it shows itself only proves that it is sadly exceptional, and clearly demonstrates the need of recovery.

We speak of the wonderful character of the devotion of Paul the Apostle when he laid all his glory in the dust as dross, and counted all that in which he might have boasted as a burden of which he was well rid, that he might have Christ for his gain, but was it really wonderful when in the same breath with which he tells of his own renunciation he also tells of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord? Notice how he speaks of Him, not as "the" Lord, nor "our" Lord, but as "MY LORD." Let the heart who knows the Saviour linger there for a while, and then answer, "Would it not have been wonderful if he had acted otherwise? Would it be wonderful if a woman abandoned a torn and filthy garment for a costly robe adorned with gold and gems? Then how can it have been wonderful on the Apostle's part to discard his own righteousness and be found IN HIM, having that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith?"

We marvel at Paul rejoicing that Paul had gone from his thoughts, crucified with Christ, so that he no longer lived for Paul, for Christ had displaced him, in every sphere of life in which he moved, but why should we marvel when he tells us at once that the One who now enthralled him and controlled him wholly was "THE SON OF GOD WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME"? (Galatians 2:20). Let us draw near and stand by this servant of Christ and put ourselves into his words, each for himself, and we marvel no more at his selfless life.

Why should we wonder that Paul laboured that whether living or dead he might be agreeable to his Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9, N.T.). He would not have us to wonder at it at all, and hastens to tell us that "THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US." It would seem as though the marvel crept into his mind, that it could be a marvel to any that he should so labour when he adds, "We thus judge, that if One died for all then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but UNTO HIM WHO DIED FOR THEM, AND ROSE AGAIN." In all these passages in which Paul speaks of his own devotion to Christ it is as though he stretched out his hands to the saints to whom he wrote, and to us also, and cried — Do not marvel that I wholly love my Lord: if you had seen Him as I have seen Him you would love Him wholly too! If He had come to you as He came to me, when I lay broken and dumb at His feet in my sinfulness, and folded me — worthless as I was, and chief of sinners in my hatred of Him — warmly to His heart, you could not forget Him. If you knew His mighty embrace as I do, and if your life bathed itself in that love that is "too vast to comprehend," you would cease to marvel at me: instead you would marvel that any heart on earth could hold back from Him, and any lip remain silent before Him. And you would weep in your astonishment, that any having tasted of His preciousness should have another thought of self or turn again from Him to the base and beggarly world!

Strange that we should think it a matter for praise that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His word! The wonder is that Martha could keep away from that sacred spot. We do not wonder that men delight to listen to exquisite music, or that the heart of the maiden thrills at the voice of her true lover, and that when he is near she has neither eyes nor ears for any but he. Then why should we wonder that the voice of Jesus was sweet to Mary? In His voice there is heaven's own music,

and when He speaks it is from the heart of eternal love. If we look at Jesus as Mary saw Him, and know Him as she knew Him, we shall cease to wonder that she broke her alabaster box and poured its costly treasure on His feet. We shall take our place with her and do likewise, for He will fill our vision and possess our hearts. And the frowns of sisters and the condemnation of disciples who think themselves more practical and wiser than we, will not disturb us as we wonder and worship in the presence of unspeakable preciousness.

If the purpose of heart that made Paul what he was and the devotion of heart that made Mary so acceptable to the Lord are in any measure to mark us, we must transfer our thoughts from them to Him, and from self to Him. In this only is true recovery, and it is worth our while to do so.

—

"Lord Jesus, we remember the travail of Thy soul,

When through Thy love's deep pity the waves did o'er Thee roll.

Baptized in death's dark waters, for us Thy blood was shed,

For us, Thou, Lord of Glory, wast numbered with the dead." As we remember this, O Lord, the lowest of low places is the one we take before Thee. Angels that have never sinned may stand in the presence of the great Jehovah, but we, whose sins brought Thee into death, can only lie prostrate with amazement at Thy feet. THY LOVE for us brought Thee into the place that OUR SINS had marked as ours, and there Thou didst drink the bitter cup of our judgment to its last drop. The darkness which should have been our lot for ever, enshrouded Thee, when Thou, who knewest no sin, wast made sin for us. Thou wert wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Thee and with Thy stripes we are healed.

Saviour, we bow at Thy sacred feet and break our alabaster boxes there and pour out our adoration before Thee. And it is here that our souls are recovered from their wanderings. Here we learn our nothingness and Thine exceeding worth. Here in Thy presence we grieve that our hearts should ever have a selfish thought; that any rival could dispute Thy right to fill our lives. Here we cast ourselves upon Thy pardoning mercy, and here would yield ourselves afresh to Thee.

"Let Thy love, Lord, like a fetter

Bind our wandering hearts to Thee." And Thou art risen from the dead. The grave could not hold Thee. The glory of the Father raised Thee, and Thou hast lifted us from our degradation and sin, and hast joined us to Thyself in all Thine own acceptance before Thy Father and God. We no longer cower in terror in the presence of death, but we triumph in Thy triumphs, Thou Victor o'er the grave! Thou hast breathed into us a new life, the first and mightiest impulse of which is LOVE TO THEE.

03.00. "For this cause"

"For this cause" The Church: the Bride of the Lamb "this is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church" Ephesians 5:32.

J. T. Mawson "Scripture Truth" Series — No. 1.

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03.01. "Behold the Bridegroom"

"Behold the Bridegroom" The End of the Voyage. — The Holy Spirit's Chief Work.

"Be ye also ready." — Luke 12:40. As the mist lifted from the horizon, our port came into view; rising up from the sea the Table Mountain reared its head to the sky and Capetown stretched itself out at the foot of it, as though proudly secure beneath the shadow of a mighty protector. Most of us were glad that we had reached the end of the voyage, but there were two of our fellow passengers who interested me more than the rest, and whose feelings as the good ship steamed into the bay, must have been as different as it was possible for them to be. One was a bride-to-be, the other a criminal, in charge of the police. The bride was eager and expectant as she leaned over the rail of the vessel and scanned the jetty through borrowed binoculars in search of the man she loved and trusted; and it was easy to see when she had got sight of him, for the glasses were dropped suddenly and the handkerchief was waved excitedly. The criminal stood back from the crowd with the handcuffs upon his wrists, a dejected figure. The end of the voyage meant hopes realized, a husband, and gladness and home for the bride; it meant a judge, and conviction, and punishment to follow for the criminal.

We are all moving on to the end of the voyage, the mists that veil the future will lift from our eyes soon. Shall we behold the Saviour as our heavenly Bridegroom? Shall we in that hour come to the realization of that blessed hope? Or shall we meet Him as the Judge, who with divine and inexorable justice will deal with our guilty lives and condemn them? It must be one or the other. Those who have believed the gospel, who have come as sinners to the feet of the great Saviour, and there heard His voice of pardon, shall meet Him as the Bridegroom when He comes, but those who have refused His mercy, and loved their sins rather than God's salvation, shall meet Him as the Judge. There can be no escape from this; whether living or dead they shall meet Him as the Judge, for "He hath commanded us to preach and to testify that this is He who shall be judge of quick and dead." My book is for those who are saved, for those who can say the Son of God "loved me and gave Himself for me." I have good news for them, the best of news — it is that the Saviour, who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended to the right hand of God in the sight of His disciples, is coming again. Yes, Jesus is coming again, and you are to meet Him as the Bridegroom. The cry has gone forth, "Behold the Bridegroom, go ye out to meet Him." THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CHIEF WORK "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." — John 15:26.

Every one who has believed the gospel of our salvation has been sealed by the Holy Ghost (Ephesians 1:13). He dwells in each one, and by His indwelling He has bound them all together into one indivisible body, and this Holy Ghost indwelt body is to be the bride, the wife of the Lamb. This is really the subject of my book, and my desire in issuing it is that the hearts of many may be filled with hope, and be stirred up and eager for the end of the voyage, for the coming of the Bridegroom.

I have been asking myself why the blessed hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus seems to move the hearts of Christians so little. Many believe it as a doctrine — they know that it must be so, because the Bible so clearly speaks of it, but that is all. It does not stir them and change them, they are not like unto men that wait for their Lord. What is the reason? I believe it is because the Holy Ghost is greatly hindered in His greatest work within them. He has been given to us, not in the first place to enable us to be free from the dominion of sin, or to give us power for service — He can and will do both — but there is something greater than these great things; they will be the natural consequence of His chief work in us if He is not hindered in it. What is that work? It is to make Christ supreme in the affections, to make Him everything to us. Let us learn this from the Lord's own words in the Gospel of John. He said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). And again, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, HE SHALL TESTIFY OF ME" (John 15:26). And again, "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. HE SHALL GLORIFY ME: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-15). In this little book, reference is made to Abraham's servant, who went into the distant land to bring back from it a wife for his master's son. The friends of the damsel besought him that she might remain with them for a little while. They were ready to acknowledge that it would be good for her to go, but they were against undue haste, they were not exactly enthusiastic about the matter, it was not all-important in their view of things. The servant's answer to their request was peremptory and final, "Hinder me not," he said. He would not loiter uselessly or waste his time in that distant land. The joy of his master and his master's son was before him; and the supreme matter in his thoughts was to fulfil his mission faithfully. To them who were awaiting the success of his mission he would hasten the bride. Have we learnt that to gather out of the world a bride for Christ and to lead her home to Him is the supreme work of the Holy Ghost? If those who are saved have more heart for the world and for earthly things, than they have for the Lord and His things, the Holy Ghost is hindered in His great work. If we are inclined to loiter on the homeward way, or if going forth to meet the Bridegroom is not the all-important thing with us, we might well hear a grieved Holy Spirit saying to us, "Hinder Me not." We cannot separate the bright hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus from the work of the Holy Spirit within us; we shall not be eager to see Him as He is, if we have not ears to hear what the Spirit has to say to us. He has come to: —

"Speak of Jesus and His love,

Passing all bounds of human thought."

He has come to unfold the glories of the Son of God to our souls. He wants our whole hearts for Christ and is delighted when He gets them; He is grieved and hindered when He does not.

It is remarkable that the last mention of the Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture is in the last chapter of the Bible, where we read, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It shows us the end and the climax of the Spirit's work. Here we have "the unity of the Spirit" in practical manifestation, for here we see the hearts of the saints bound together in one great desire for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For this the Spirit of God is labouring. He is taking the things of Christ and showing them to the saints of God, and in this way He is tuning their hearts into full unison with His own, so that the Lamb may hear at last the music of this prayer from the heart of the bride, "EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS."

03.02. The Lord's Triple Claim to Our Love

The Lord's Triple Claim to Our Love

"Myrrh and aloes, cassia are all thy garments; out of the ivory palaces, stringed instruments have made thee glad." — Psalms 45:8 (J. N. Darby's New Translation). The Grace that Meets our Need. — The Glory of His Person. — His Suffering Love.

"We love Him because He first loved us." Of old it was commanded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might," and though our Lord's claim upon us is now not one whit less than that, nor could He be satisfied with anything less, it is not by commandment that He secures the love of His church or of any heart in it. Love cannot be secured in that way, as man's sad history, in every phase of it, since Sinai, declares. No, He has another way, and a way that cannot fail— He gains our love by disclosing His own; He gains His desire to have us for Himself by showing Himself to us, as brighter and better than the brightest and best that would be a rival to His claim. His claim to our love has a triple basis: He claims us because He can meet all our needs by His grace; He claims us because of what He is in His own glorious person; He claims us because of the love that He has for us, love that led Him into the deep suffering of death on our behalf. Psalms 45:1-17 declares these three great things, and though this Psalm may have the earthly bride in view in the coming glorious millennium, yet we believe we are fully justified in using it for our present purpose, for it is full of Christ. It is Himself — and He showed His disciples things concerning Himself out of the Psalms. The end in view is that the fair daughter of a distant land might be attracted to the great King, for His joy and glory. Hence He is spoken of to her in glowing words that can apply to none but Christ.

"Grace is poured into His lips" — He speaks in tender tones to the heart, as many proved when He was here upon earth, when He spoke words in season to them that were weary: the woman by the well of Sychar, for instance, and she who wept at His feet in Simon's house, and the widow who mourned her only son, and the palsied man who groaned beneath a load of sin, and Zaccheus, and the children, and a host of others — all these found Him to be fairer than the children of men, because of the grace that was poured into His lips. And has our experience been less blessed? We have heard His voice speaking in words of pardon and peace to our once troubled and burdened hearts. Grace has poured out of His lips for us. Yes, we know from blessed experience what grace is His, we have heard His voice saying:

"Lay down, thou weary one,

Lay down, thy head upon My breast." THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON But He is glorious as well as gracious. His arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies. He stands out in His glory above every name that is named. He will be triumphant over all that hate Him, even as He is tender to all who hear His voice and love Him. This also must be declared of Him, that we may know that His grace to us is not weakness. In His majesty He will ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness— three great attributes that will show themselves when He comes

forth to judge, but which were not wanting when He stooped to save us.

He is as great as He is gracious, for He is God, with an everlasting throne, and nothing could exceed the significance of this; for if He is God, His claim must be supreme. It stands before all other claims. The claims of father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, children, and self also, must recede into the background when He puts in His claim. None other than God has a right to supersede these relationships which He has ordained, but He who would win our undivided hearts, is God, whose throne is for ever and ever, and to His claim we must yield. But the final appeal is more touching than all; verse 8 of our Psalm is given in J. N. Darby's New Translation, as "Myrrh and aloes and cassia are all thy garments; out of the ivory palaces, stringed instruments have made thee glad." These fragrant spices which clothe our Saviour like a garment stir our memories; they carry us back to the time when instead of glory and honour, a life of sorrow was His. It is of this that the myrrh speaks. The wise men from the east were divinely guided when they gave their gifts to Him as He lay in His mother's arms in the house— gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gold spoke of His divine glory; the frankincense of His holy, fragrant humanity; and the myrrh of His suffering even unto death. They represented the way that He took — three great steps, if you will: —

"From Godhead's fullest glory,
Down to Calvary's depth of woe."

We look back to it now and it is the fragrance of the myrrh that greets us and attracts us. We might remain unmoved in the presence of His majesty, but whose heart will not melt in the presence of His suffering? HIS SUFFERING LOVE The aloes, the central spice of the three, speaks of the love that lay behind all the suffering. It was more fragrant and prized than all other spices; nothing to be compared with it ever came out of the mysterious East. I found in an old dictionary the following account of it: "It was the inner wood, or heart, of a tree that grew in India, exceedingly fragrant, worth more than its weight in gold, and said to be a sovereign cordial for all fainting fits and nervous disorders." If the learned compiler of that dictionary had intended to give a description of the love of Christ he could not have succeeded better. The aloes tree had to be cleft to its heart if the fragrance of it was to be disclosed, and it was on the cross of Calvary, when cleft by the sword of God's judgment against our sin, that the heart of Christ disclosed all the greatness of His love, and there is nothing in the universe more fragrant than that — the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Further, His love is far more precious than gold. If the world could give all the gold it possesses and offer it to us in exchange for the knowledge of the love of Christ, would any of us exchange that knowledge for that great price? We would not, for His love is more precious than gold. It cannot be purchased, but it has poured out its priceless wealth without reserve for us. It is said to be a sovereign remedy for all fainting fits. Do we grow weary and faint in the pilgrim way that leads us to our glorious destiny — the marriage of the Lamb? There is a sovereign remedy for such a state, let us lean upon the arm and heart of our Beloved and taste afresh the cordial of His love.

Further, it is the sovereign remedy for all nervous disorders. It is the united love of His church that the Lord looks for, but these are difficult days in which the devil has succeeded in sadly dividing the hearts of His loved ones. There seems to be an epidemic of what might well be called spiritual neurasthenia. The symptoms scarcely need to be described — they are irritability,

hypersensitiveness, fault-finding, and strife, and where these things are there may be sighing and crying in secret, but there is no united crying for the coming of the Lord. What is the remedy? The aloes was the cordial for nervous disorders. This is the remedy — the suffering love of Christ, one full draught of this love is enough to allay the fever, sooth the spirit, throw things into their true proportion and perspective, and heal every sore and breach. The meaning of the cassia is not so easy to determine, but it may set forth that same love that brought the Lord down from the glory into a life of suffering, and down into death and deep darkness, come forth now in resurrection, unchanged by all that it has suffered. This I believe it to be. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end," and will for ever more. He has come forth in resurrection and shows Himself to us now in the glory, yet fragrant with all the love that led Him to die.

What answer could there be to such a presentation of Himself? Only one. He must be made glad by the music of the stringed instruments out of the ivory palaces. Our hearts are such palaces in His reckoning — He desires to make them His dwelling-places. Do we welcome Him with gladness and praise, as Zacchaeus did when the Lord said to him, "To-day I must abide at thy house"? He looks for this, it is His due. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." But while our Lord and Saviour rightly expects that we should open our hearts to Him, this is not the end that He has in view. Nothing will satisfy Him but the marriage day. He has prepared a home for His bride; His heart is opened wide for her. So there comes the appeal, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

"What needest thou with thy tribe's black tents,

When thou hast the red pavilion of My heart." In the New Testament also it is the presentation of Himself that wins the desired response. In Revelation 22:1-21. He makes a direct and personal appeal to us all: "I Jesus . . . am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star." His name — His precious name — like ointment poured forth, revives our affections; His glory commands our admiration; His beauty as the morning Star awakens our hopes, and in unison with the Spirit we can answer this revelation of Himself by the one word He desires to hear: "Come" — "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

03.03. Espoused to one Husband

Espoused to one Husband

"I am jealous over you with godly jealousy for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." — 2 Corinthians 11:2. The Espousals. — The Spring-time of Love. — The Answer of the Great Lover. — Christ Everything. THE ESPOUSALS

What a change it makes in a Christian's outlook when he discovers the fact that he is loved by the Lord and that he is precious and desirable in His sight. When this knowledge comes to us — and it is true of everyone who has owned the Lord's claims and trusted Him as Saviour — we are lifted on to a new plane in our thoughts of Him. We shall not think less of all that He has done for us, instead, we shall begin to understand the greatness of it better. We shall still be grateful for all His ways of grace with us, and shall often tell Him of them, but rest of heart in His love will be the dominant thing, and, what goes along with that, love to Him in response to it. We shall become conscious that we stand in a hitherto undreamt-of relationship to Him, a relationship in which mutual love has the chief place. This is a day of our espousals. Can we reverently contemplate the meaning of this? This is not mere poetic imagery, for we read in the Scriptures, and wonderful are the words, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). What does this mean? It can only have one meaning. The redeemed of the Lord have been affianced to Him. He loves us and has chosen us for Himself. He has made the appeal of love to us, He has said, "I want you for myself." And we have said, "Yes," to Him. It was a happy day for us when our sins were washed away and our souls were saved and we got a sure hope of heaven, but greater than all, and the end that the Lord had in view in it all, we were then espoused to Christ, to be for Him alone, the joy and rejoicing of His heart. The marriage day has not yet come, but it is coming, and we may read about it in Ephesians 5:25-27 and Revelation 19:7-9.

These are the days of the espousals, and we have been espoused to a PERSON WHO LOVES US and has proved His love. It is on my heart to press this, for I fear that the Lord Jesus is not a living, bright reality to many Christians. "Christian Science" is spreading, and though no true child of God could follow the delusions of that cult, yet the spirit of it is abroad — an evil, seducing and anti-christian spirit, that would persuade us that Christ is only a divine principle in the lives of men, and not our living Saviour, Jesus our Lord, who can fill and satisfy the heart. "What matters it," say some, "whether Jesus rose from the dead or not, so long as His spirit permeates society?" And Satan beguiles many unwary souls by this sort of thing, and the very heart is taken out of their faith, and the Lord Jesus becomes to them intangible, vague, impersonal, shadowy, and distant. But we know that Christ is a living Person, who loves us, and delights in us and in our love to Him, and that He gave Himself for us that He might wholly possess us. He can be satisfied with nothing less than our love. The greatest joy we can give to Him is to love Him, and to yield up ourselves to Him in full surrender. The greatest work we can do is to keep ourselves for Him. This is what it means to be a chaste virgin for Christ.

It may be, that like many another, you have feared His imperious and exclusive claim. You may have felt, as Francis Thompson expressed it in his striking poem:

"For, though I knew His love who followed, Yet was I sore adread —

Lest having Him, I must have naught beside."

And so you fled from Him, but: —

"Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue."

You tried elsewhere for satisfaction, but nothing blest your thirsting mouth, and still He followed you: —

"With unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic majesty;

And passed those noised feet

A voice came yet more fleet —

Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."

You could not evade Him and now you are His for ever. Blessed be the Lord for the persistency of His love. Now His joy in us and ours in Him lies in our being wholly for Him. The Spring-Time of Love "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley." The joy and beauty of this relationship to Christ in which we stand is illustrated for us in the Song of Solomon. Every chapter is fragrant with love, and if we read it, and are taught by the Holy Spirit as we read it, we shall find that the language, though figurative, describes the Lord's delight in us and ours in Him, when we know Him in this sweet relationship. Take the second chapter. There the bride-to-be has discovered that she is beloved, and that the one who loves her delights in her. She is precious to him; this she has learnt, and she exclaims: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley." These were not high thoughts of herself. The rose of Sharon was not the queen of summer as is the gorgeous flower that we call the rose; more likely than not it was the narcissus, a flower of the field, a fragrant flower no doubt, but not obtrusive and gay; and the lily of the valley grew in lowly places and out of sight, and had to be sought for by the one who valued it. **BUT THESE WERE SPRING FLOWERS,** and the fragrant hope of spring was in them. As they bloomed in the valleys they told of a time when the summer's glory would crown the hills. They figured forth the beginnings of love, but they were prophetic of the time when love would come to its fulness on the marriage day.

Upon this maiden the king's choice had fallen, she was to share his crown and kingdom; but not of this does she think and sing, for she is inwardly conscious of something greater than all the display of glory that was to come to her; the king loved her, this was her joy; she was precious to him, this filled her with a glad surprise; and without fear or reserve, she tells out to him what she knows she is to him. Have we reached this point in our secret experience of soul with the Lord? We can only learn it as we are near to Him, for who could teach us this but Himself? This is the beginning of love, it is "first love." It is more than what He has done for us, it is Himself who has done it. We do not lose the benefaction, but we have the Benefactor. We are one with the Lord, for "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). The freshness and the hope of the spring

flowers are in this experience, and in it there is the pledge that the day will surely come when He will present the church to Himself, "a glorious church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." THE ANSWER OF THE GREAT LOVER "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters." But hear the answer that this great lover gives to his chosen bride. He takes up her own words, but he adds to them. He adorns them and makes them glow with his love. He makes them the opportunity of showing her the great manifestation of his great love for her, and so increases her confidence in him and enlarges her affection for him. "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters," he says.

Let us get at the heart of this, and understand what it means for us in our relationship with the Lord. Dr. Thompson in his well-known book, *The Land and the Book*, says of this lily: "Our flower delights most in the valleys; but it is found also on the mountains. It grows among thorns, and I have sadly lacerated my hands in extricating it from them." Does the fact that the lily grew among the thorns need any interpretation? If we can say, "I am the lily of the valley," if we know that we are this to Christ, His answer is, "Yes, but the lily among thorns." He would have us remember that it cost Him something to secure us for Himself. How lacerated was He in extricating us from the tangled thorns in which we grew! He showed to His disciples His hands and side, when He came to them in resurrection. Nothing could drive the cold unbelief from the soul of Thomas, but a sight of His wounds. And He would not that we should forget them. It is as though He said to us: —

"Behold with what labour I won thee,

Behold in My hands and My feet,

The tale of My measureless sorrow,

The love that made suffering sweet." His body was lacerated, but His soul was lacerated, too, for before He could have His lilies for Himself and extricate them from the thorns, His soul had to be made an offering for sin. Can anything move the hard heart like this? We do not love Him and adore Him because the brightest crowns of heaven shine upon His worthy brow; we are glad that He is crowned with glory, but it is not that that won our hearts. We love Him because that same brow was crowned with thorns, and because He was put to shame upon a cross when He came forth in His great love to tread the thorny way to save us for Himself. To the utmost His love was tried, and it stood the test. It passeth knowledge. When we realize this, and the wonder of it fills our souls, we do not say, "Thank God WE are saved!" setting the "we" in the centre of our sentence and thoughts; but we say, "Oh, what it cost HIM to make us His." He is the centre of our sentence, and relief and thanksgiving deepen into wonder and worship. The suffering is all past but His love abides, and the suffering will not be forgotten, for when the great marriage day comes, and all heaven rejoices in the gladness of it, it is the marriage of the LAMB that is celebrated (Revelation 19:1-21), and the bride is the LAMB'S WIFE (Revelation 21:1-27). Thus the sorrows of the cross and the joys of love's consummation are joined the one to the other; the Lamb who suffered will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied on that great day. But while we wait for that day, the love of Christ is a present reality, and we who are espoused to Him may have the joy of communion with Him now, and constrained by His love, live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again; and for this He yearns.

If any heart has been indifferent to His yearnings and has been closed against Him, let His own words move and melt it now" Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

CHRIST EVERYTHING "He brought me into his banqueting house and his banner over me was love." In this communion of love the maiden responds to the king, not now to speak of herself, but of him who fills her thoughts. Her words are great words, and the music of pure love swells in them. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood," she says, "so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." Have we so learnt Christ? If so our vagrant desires, our restlessness of spirit have ceased and we have found satisfaction and a great hope. It was thus with Mary of Bethany at the feet of Jesus, when she heard His word, and when she poured out her precious ointment upon Him; it was thus with John, the beloved, when he leaned his head upon Jesus' breast at supper; and with Thomas, of the doubtful mind, when he cried, "My Lord and my God"; and with Paul the Apostle when he exclaimed, "The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." What a blessed experience this is, and the more deeply it is known in its present joy, the more will the heart long for the day of presentation, for the marriage day. Then there will be no more need for watchfulness; faithfulness to Christ in a hostile and seductive world will be called for no more. We shall have reached eternal rest.

We shall be beyond the reach of Satan's beguilings then, but now there is nothing he hates more than this personal intimacy with and joy in Christ. Hence the fear expressed by the apostle in those words of warning: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from simplicity as to Christ." His purpose is to draw us away from this "first love." How often he succeeds to our shame, and we have to sing sadly: —

"Yet, Lord, alas what weakness,

Within myself I find;

No infant's changing pleasure

Is like my wandering mind."

If the backsliding is not quickly arrested how soon we become neither "cold nor hot," a state of heart that is obnoxious to the Lord.

We would not willingly be untrue to Christ; but Satan is subtle, and if we are to be kept from his snares we must depend upon and commune with our Lord. "He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is love." To abide there is to abide in a safe place, and to be satisfied with Him.

"There all His gracious favour

May to our souls be known;

And versed in this His goodness,

Our hopes HIMSELF shall crown."

03.04. "For this cause"

"For this cause"

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." — Genesis 2:18.

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." — Genesis 2:23.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." — Ephesians 5:31. The Deep Sleep, — The Help Meet.

If we are to understand God's purposes we must not neglect any part of His Word. The Holy Scriptures are not so many loose fragments gathered together in a haphazard way, but one complete whole. "No Scripture is of private interpretation," which means that no Scripture stands alone; each part has its connection with every other part. The beginning of Genesis finds its answer at the end of Revelation, and in the building of a help-meet for Adam there was foreshadowed the great purpose that was in the heart of God for the glory and joy of His beloved Son. Adam was made in the image and likeness of God, and was set in dominion over this lower creation to represent God to it. The greatness of his mind was proved in that when God brought the animals to him he was able to give each a name that described its character. God had crowned him with glory and honour and set him over the works of His hands. But he had a heart as well as a mind, and none of the animals nor all the power and glory with which he was crowned in Eden could satisfy his heart. Nothing could do this but a companion who could understand his love and reciprocate it. Hence God said, "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a help-meet for him." And with this in view God casts him into a deep sleep and took a rib from his side, and with it He built the woman, and when Adam awoke he said, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." She was taken out of himself and she satisfied his heart. The New Testament tells us that Adam was a figure of Him that was to come, even Christ. He is to have universal dominion, for He has been set far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. In that place of glory and power He must have His help-meet, who shall be more to Him than all the glory, one who shall satisfy His heart for evermore. "For this cause," says the Word of God, "shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." For this cause, that He might have the church for Himself, and one with Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, Christ went down into death, so great was His love: —

"Down beneath those sunless waters,

He from heaven has passed;

He has found His heart's desire,

Found His pearl at last."

"For this cause He died dishonoured,
As a felon dies;
For His church, the pearl all priceless,
In the Saviour's eyes."

There was no other way by which He could secure His church for Himself, for the power of death had to be broken that His loved ones might be free. As Eve was taken out of Adam when he was thrown into the deep sleep, so the church has sprung out of the death of Christ. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The Father's Purpose "And Abraham rose up early in the morning . . . and Isaac . . ." — Genesis 22:1-24. The Early Morning: The Father and the Son. — The Heat of the Day: The Faithful Servant. — The Eventide: The Meeting of the Bridegroom and the Bride. THE EARLY MORNING The first time that LOVE is mentioned in the Bible is here: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest." It is the love of the father to the son, and it typifies for us the first and the greatest of all loves, and the source from which all true love has flowed, the love of God the Father for His Son. This is a most wonderful theme, and we must consider it, for we should never have been brought into these most blessed relations to the Lord in which we now stand, and are yet to stand, apart from it. I believe that we may justly say, that all the grace that has come to us, as those who are espoused to Christ, and all the glory that we hope for, as those who are to be part of His bride, find their spring in this, "the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). This love is shown to us very clearly in John's Gospel where Jesus is called "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father," and where, when speaking to His Father, He said, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:1-26). He was worthy to be loved by the Father, and this was surely what the Father meant when twice He declared from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Out of this love of the Father to the Son has sprung up this great purpose for the joy and glory of the loved One, which we are considering, and for the fulfilment of this purpose God had to awaken into activity, if we may be permitted with the greatest reverence to use such an expression in regard to Him. This is set before us in figure when Abraham rose up early in the morning, to lead his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, to the place of sacrifice. THE EARLY MORNING is the beginning of the day's work AND THE EVENTIDE sees its completion or failure. The day of God's work for the fulfilment of His great purpose began when His beloved Son, the Word, "became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." John, the forerunner, knew what this coming of the beloved Son meant, for he said to his disciples, "I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, I must decrease." John may not have looked beyond Israel when he spoke, but we may take up His words and read them in the light of the full revelation of the truth.

How bright was the dawning of that day! The true light then shone in its gracious fulness for every man. How the hearts of men ought to have thrilled to it! What expectations ought to have awakened within them! Alas, the darkness did not comprehend the light, and the world did not know its Maker, but that did not turn the Father from His purpose. The day of His great work had begun, and He could do no other than work while it was day. The Father and the Son had risen up and started forth on the journey that led to the place of sacrifice — Golgotha, for judgment and

death and Satan's power lay between the morning and the eventide. We learn as we read John's Gospel, how the Father and the Son "went both of them together," in an absolute and indivisible oneness of purpose. This oneness is seen in the Lord's words, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work. . . . What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise, for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that He Himself doeth" (John 5:1-47). The time came in the journey of Abraham and Isaac to the land of Moriah when the young men were left behind, and the wood for the burnt offering was laid upon Isaac; and as we read the story we are reminded of the words of Jesus to His disciples, "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the FATHER IS WITH ME" (John 16:32); and then "He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha." (John 19:1). We who are parents may have some conception of what Abraham's feelings must have been as he walked with Isaac to the place of sacrifice, and as they communed together on the way, but what heart of man can conceive what it cost the Father, when in obedience to His will, His well-beloved went forth unflinchingly to death; and when in their communings together on the way the Son said to the Father, "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. Father, glorify Thy name." There was an instant answer to that cry, not that the Lord Himself needed it, for His confidence in His Father's love was absolute, but for the people's sake, that they might know that that lonely Man whom they hated was heard and beloved by the Father in heaven.

Isaac was delivered from the uplifted knife and there suffered in his stead the ram caught by its horns in the thicket, but no substitute was found for God's beloved Son; it was impossible that He could be delivered from the stroke of death. God's purpose must be realized and there was only way by which it could be, the Lamb of God must die, if ever the marriage of the Lamb was to take place; and Jesus, the Son of God, was the Lamb of God.

We believe that we are right in saying that it was not far from the place to which Abraham led Isaac that Jesus suffered, and Abraham called that place Jehovah-Jireh — the mount of the Lord who sees and provides. The place was well and truly named, for we see at Golgotha how God, who saw the end from the beginning, provided a Lamb for Himself, and by the death of His Lamb laid an immovable foundation for eternal peace and joy and glory, and the fulfilment of all His will.

How wonderfully the purpose of God unfolds in this story. Abraham had said to the young men, "I and the lad will go yonder . . . and come again to you." He knew that He would not come back alone; his faith laid hold upon God and he knew that He was able to raise up his son even from the dead, "from whence also he received him in a figure." How blessed it is for us to know that the fact infinitely exceeds the figure, and the fact is that, "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4), and as the risen Son of God He could send His disciples that triumphant message, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." Beyond the suffering of death and the darkness of the grave we see the Father and Son moving on together to the great end that the Father has in view. THE HEAT OF THE DAY "Thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." — Genesis 24:4. This brings us to Genesis 24:1-67, where Abraham declared what was in his heart for Isaac's joy; it was that he should have a bride worthy of his love to share all his wealth. She had to be brought from a far country, and a servant who could be trusted had to be sent to fetch her. In Abraham's own

household there was such a servant, who, without any thought of himself, would carry out all Abraham's desire. I am not stretching the Scripture unduly when I say that this devoted, unselfish servant is a figure of the Holy Ghost: indeed, nothing could be clearer. The story teaches us the Father's purpose for the joy and glory of His beloved Son, the Risen Man, Christ Jesus, which will be brought to full realization by the work and power of the Holy Ghost. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all have their part in this great matter.

It is an enthralling story. How well Abraham's servant carried out his mission, journeying through the heat of the day on his great quest; how well and wisely he spoke of his master's son; how charming was the grace of Rebekah, and how ready was her response to the servant's appeal. All these features in the figure are found in the great antitype of it. The Holy Ghost has come from the Father to bear witness to the blessedness and unsearchable riches of Christ, and to win hearts for Him. He has come to take of His things, and show them to us, and to glorify Him, as John 14:15-16 shows us. He works within us to produce a response in our hearts to the attractiveness of God's beloved Son, that just as Rebekah was willing to leave her father's house and her own land and to go to Isaac whom she had not seen, so we may be made willing to turn from the world and choose Christ instead of it, and say in response to the demand, "Wilt thou go with this man?" "I will go." And thus it comes to pass that we are espoused to one husband that we may be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. Happy indeed it is for us if this work of the Holy Ghost has been effectual in us, and if it can be said of us in regard to the Lord, "Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). THE EVENTIDE

The meeting of the Bridegroom and the Bride.

"And Isaac went forth to meditate in the field at eventide, and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming, and REBEKAH. . . ." — Genesis 24:63. The day of these divine activities is drawing to its close, we are surely very near the eventide when the Lamb will meet His bride. And that hour fills His thoughts. The place that it has in the closing words of Scripture is significant. Three times over in the last chapter of the Bible our Lord says, "I come quickly." It is true that two of these times have to do with the rewards that He will give to His faithful servants, and He will find a peculiar joy in this, but when that side of things has been dealt with in every phase of it, and He is free to allow the feelings of His heart to break out, without any question of gain or judgment, He says — "I JESUS . . . AM THE BRIGHT, AND MORNING STAR." This is the last presentation of Himself before He comes. It does not show Him in His majesty and power, with eyes as a flame of fire and feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and a sharp two-edged sword going out of His mouth. It is Himself, the Saviour, who in His measureless love went down into death for His bride; it is Himself, so meek and gentle, so full of grace and truth; it is Himself, the altogether lovely One, and the great Lover of His church. By this name we have come to know and adore and love Him. He presents Himself in this personal way, to stir the affections of His bride, and to make her cry in unison with the Spirit, "Come" (Revelation 22:16-17). Then He gives one final word. The very last that He has addressed to His church, it is His final love-word to his espoused and longed-for bride. "He which testifieth these things saith, 'SURELY, I COME QUICKLY.'" There can be but one right response to that word, and may it break forth from every one of our hearts, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"And Isaac went out . . . at eventide . . . and behold the camels were coming, and Rebekah." What joy awaits us when the fact that our story prefigures actually comes to pass, but what will the joy of our Lord be? Let us see how the Scripture puts it. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." It will be a shout of triumph and of joy — as I hope to show on another page — for then the time of waiting will be past, the day's work will be finished, the eventide will be reached, the church completed, and the true Isaac will rest in His love for her. Father, Son and Holy Ghost will rejoice together as the Lamb sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

Thus shall this acceptable time, this great day of grace reach its climax. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God as one by one those who have wandered afar from Him are reached by His grace and gathered in. And that joy has been continuous and ever increasing in its greatness since Pentecost, but here it comes to a fulness that cannot be exceeded, for here the object and aim of all the activities of the grace of God throughout this day of grace is reached, and the heart of the Triune God exults, and overflows with joy. That joy is shared by every heart within the universe of bliss, for we read: "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:6-7).

03.05. The Catching up of the Church

The Catching up of the Church

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord . . . the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. The Lord's Last Words. — Satan's Complete Defeat — The Law of Gravitation. — That Blessed Hope.

"They that are Christ's at His coming." The presentation of the church to Christ will take place in heaven, and of course it must be caught up into heaven for that great event, and further, that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He must come for it Himself. Moreover, it must be there in its completeness or it would not be a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This fact alone is enough to show how false is the doctrine which some hold of the "partial rapture" of the church. We may be sure that when the marriage of the Lamb takes place His wife will not be a partial or mutilated wife. Again we speak of the fact that the last words ever spoken by the Lord to His church are, "Surely I come quickly." They show what a place His coming for His blood-bought church has in His thoughts. When He had communicated the whole revelation that God had given Him to His servant John, He added this last personal word of tender, yearning love, "I come quickly." And surely that word goes directly to the heart, and calls for this response, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

One of the strangest things in the church's history is that this great hope seems to have been entirely forgotten for centuries. These words which should have lived in the hearts of the church, seem to have been little treasured or understood. It is strange that even now they should affect so little those who know and understand them. Yet we have not to go far to find the solution of this strange thing. It is revealed in the Lord's words to the assembly at Ephesus, "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." The church has backslidden and has ceased to watch, and though the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" has gone forth with the greatest clearness, the mass of believers continue to be indifferent, as though they understood not the meaning of that midnight cry, nor wished to. Yet the moment is drawing on when the Lord will fulfil His word, and will "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God." That shout will be a shout of pent-up joy, that will burst from His heart and lips, because the time of waiting is over at last. It will be a shout of triumph and power, an assembling shout, that shall ring through heaven and earth and down into the grave; and in response to it, "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." What an hour of triumph that will be! The air is the seat of Satan's power now, he is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). But there in the very seat of his power the Lord will meet His church. The powers of darkness will not prevent the meeting. How they will cower and tremble in complete defeat, as the triumphant Lord meets His triumphant church in the very region where they thought themselves

supreme!

Unless we are prepared to argue that words do not mean what they stand for, or that the Lord uttered vain words when He gave this revelation to His servant Paul, we must believe that the moment is coming when the dead in Christ will be raised up, and with them millions of people, the whole of the blood-bought church, gathered out of every nation, tribe, and tongue, will be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air, to be for ever with Him. They will disappear suddenly and completely from every place, condition and pursuit, in which they have lived, to be seen no more by the world until they return with Him to reign over the earth. That this appears an impossible thing to the human mind unenlightened by the truth, we admit; it is incredible to everything but faith; and we are quite prepared to hear the scoffer contend that the law of gravitation would prevent such a thing. But by the Word of the Lord it is revealed to us, and faith lays hold of that and says, "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." And what says the Word? "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," and the shout of the Lord is mightier than the law of gravitation, for in that shout will be the power by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself. The law of gravitation is a natural law, and controls natural bodies, and the scoffers overlook the fact that we are to be changed in that hour of the Lord's triumph. Our natural bodies are to be transformed by His mighty power into bodies of glory, like unto His own glorious body, and what law will control them? Not any natural law, but the law of the glory. Natural laws for natural bodies, but the law of the glory for bodies of glory; and the law of the glory is that Christ is supreme, and that He will draw up to Himself everyone that is of Himself and like Himself. This is that "blessed hope." It is not the improvement of the world, as men dream, for "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). It is not the conversion of the world by the gospel, for the Lord Himself asked the question, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). And when He does come back to the earth with His glorified saints He will not be welcomed by glad and rapturous multitudes, but "all tribes of the earth shall mourn" (Matthew 24:30). "And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." It is not the universal revival of divine life and energy in Christendom, for "the love of many shall wax cold," and "the time shall come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3), "when they shall have the form of godliness but deny the power" (2 Timothy 3:5). This blessed hope is not centred in the world, or in Christendom, but in Christ; it is the hope of His coming, it is centred in Himself — in "THE LORD JESUS CHRIST OUR HOPE" (1 Timothy 1:1). "And everyone that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

"Oh! bright and blessed hope!

When shall it be

That we His face, long loved,

Revealed shall see?

"Oh! when — without a cloud —

His features trace,

Whose faithful love so long

We've known in grace?"

03.06. The Marriage of the Lamb

The Marriage of the Lamb

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand . . . And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." — Revelation 19:1-2; Revelation 19:6-7. The Judgment of the False Church. — Great Joy and its Cause. — The Lamb. — His Wife hath made Herself Ready. — The Marriage Robe. — How it is being Prepared. THE JUDGMENT OF THE FALSE CHURCH "And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." A woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, called in the plain language of Scripture "the great whore", and the Lamb's wife clothed in fine linen, clean and white — these two we see in these latter chapters of the Revelation; and they stand out in startling contrast the one to the other, both as to their character and destiny. Chapters 17 and 18 describe for us the magnificence, the power, the far-stretching influence, the horrible corruption and terrible doom of the former. Chapter 19 shows us the purity and blessedness of the latter — her destiny is the glory of the Lamb. The former, whose names are given to us in capital letters in our Bible, is, "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." IT IS ROME. She professes to be the true church, the faithful spouse of the Lamb, but she is false, and denies in principle and practice His name, character and word. She will become, as shown in these chapters, utterly apostate, and upon her must fall the overwhelming and righteous judgments of God. This mystery, described in its two-fold character of the great whore and Babylon, is not popery stripped of its temporal power, as we have known it — which power is now being restored to it, a definite sign of the times — but popery triumphant. In the time described in these chapters it will have gathered into a magnificent but corrupt unity the whole profession of Christianity, and will have brought into complete subjugation the western nations. It will not only have enslaved the consciences of men religiously, but will also have control over their politics. The woman rides the beast. The kings that she will dominate will hate her for her arrogance, and will eventually destroy her and so fulfil the will of God, but for a while she will hold undisputed sway over them all. This is all plainly taught in Revelation 17:1-18.

Rome is working for this universal supremacy now, but she cannot achieve it while the Holy Ghost who dwells in all who are truly the Lord's is here; His power and work prevent the full development of the apostasy. But at the coming of the Lord, as given in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, the true church, which is the body of Christ, and which is to be the wife of the Lamb, will be caught up to heaven. Then not a true Christian will be left on earth, for the Lord knoweth them that are His, and the outward shell of the profession of Christ will be left behind, and Rome unfettered and unhindered will speedily reach the goal of her ambition.*

{*Note: It is not denied that there are many sincere believers in the one and only Saviour, the Lord Jesus, in the Romish Church, and these are members of the body of Christ, and will be caught up at His coming. There is a present call to them, "Come out of her My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." — Revelation 18:4.} The true church, that which the Lord spoke of in Matthew 16:1-28 as "My church," is not a great organization held together by human power and wisdom, but is made up of all who have in sincerity owned Jesus as their Lord and Saviour; all such have a vital link with Him as the Son of God, and are not Christians by profession only. They are united in one body to Christ, who is their Head in heaven. This is a unity that is of God, and it will abide for ever; the other is a unity that is of the devil and it will perish in the depths of perdition. The mystery of iniquity doth already work, and Rome is making rapid progress towards its desired end, clearly showing that we are in "the last days." The growing love of ritual and popish practices in the English and other state churches are an evidence of this, and of the power and influence that it already wields. Oh, Christians, let us be fully awake to the situation. There are two great unities in Christendom, and they are growing to completion. The Spirit of God is the power in one, and the spirit of evil works in the other. We must be wholeheartedly in that which is of God and separate from that which is corrupt and of the devil. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

"Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him."

GREAT JOY AND ITS CAUSE "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him" (Revelation 19:7).

Revelation 19:1-21 opens with the adoration of the host in heaven; they rejoice and praise God that He has judged the false and corrupt church which, instead of being faithful to Christ and a witness for Him in the earth, and so the channel of blessing to men, has corrupted men with its own terrible corruption. "True and righteous are His judgments," they say, as they turn from beholding the destruction of the evil thing, to rejoice in that which is eternally good. They celebrate the supremacy of the Lord God omnipotent, and since He reigneth none can thwart His eternal purposes. These purposes have their centre in Christ and His church, the Lamb and His wife. Before the worlds were made it was in the heart of God that His beloved Son should have a bride; and in this chapter the hour has arrived, and all heaven rejoices with a great joy. "I heard," says John, "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings." "Let us be glad," say they, "and rejoice . . . for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." It is the joy of God that fills every heart and rolls in its matchless melody to the uttermost bounds of heaven. The Father rejoices, for the hour has come for the consummation of His purpose for the joy of His Son; the Son rejoices, for the hour has come in which He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; the Holy Ghost rejoices that His work is completed, and that the wife of the Lamb is ready for the marriage. The hour has arrived of which Ephesians 5:1-33 speaks "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, THAT HE MIGHT PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT HAVING SPOT, OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING; BUT THAT IT SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH." THE LAMB "The marriage of the Lamb is come."

It is the marriage of the Lamb. We have no difficulty in identifying the Lamb. It is Jesus who died for us. In this Book of the Revelation He bears many great titles. In Revelation 5:1-14 He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; in Revelation 12:1-17 He is the Man-child that shall rule the nations with a rod of iron; in Revelation 16:1-21 He is the King of kings and Lord of lords; in Revelation 22:1-21 He is the Alpha and Omega. Great and varied are His glories, upon His head are many crowns, but when the marriage comes, it is not by any of these titles that He is known, but as the Lamb. The joy of the marriage day is linked up with the sorrow of Calvary. It is the One who bowed His head beneath the judgment of God in death who is to see of the travail of His soul, and receive to Himself His church, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. The Lamb was the sacrifice. He became sacrificially what those who were to be His bride were actually, for He was made sin for them, that they might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We have no difficulty in identifying the Lamb, who is the centre and object of this scene of glory and joy, as once He was the centre and object of man's hatred and scorn, and of all suffering and shame at Calvary. But who is the wife of the Lamb, who now appears with Him, the object of His love and the sharer of His glory? Not angels, not Israel, not the nations of men, but the church, that has been gathered out of all nations — it only can fill this place of closest relationship to Him. The church which is the great anti-type of Eve and Rebekah, the church which He called "MY church," the pearl of great price for which He sold all that He had, the church which He loved and for which He gave Himself, that it might be to Him a glorious church, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing", the church which was in the Father's counsels for the joy of His Son before ever the world was made, the church in which true bridal affections have been developed by the mighty working of the Holy Ghost — this is the wife of the Lamb. And now she appears as His wife, to be entirely for Him, His joy and His help-meet, enough to compensate Him for all His sorrow and woe. And she is also all that He desires her to be — all her hopes realized and her desires satisfied in Him.

"O Bride, the saints in glory shine,
Can they not fill that heart of thine?
No, were the Lamb, their light, withdrawn,
The saints, in gloom, would weep and mourn.
Can the Son of God then comfort thee?
Yes, Christ and none besides for me,
For mine is a soul of noble birth,
That needeth more than heaven and earth;
And the breath of God has drawn me in
To the heart that was riven for my sin,
For the Sun of the Godhead pours His rays
Through the crystal depths of His manhood's grace,

And the Spirit sent by Father and Son,

Hath filled my soul and my heart hath won." HIS WIFE HATH MADE HERSELF READY

"To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints" (Revelation 19:8).

She could not make herself fit or ready for heaven; her fitness for that spotless home of eternal love is Christ Himself, for He "is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." But she makes herself ready for the marriage; and that by being clothed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousnesses of the saints. The word should be in the plural, it is righteousnesses, not righteousness. Christ alone is our righteousness, but being made righteous in Him, the saints of God are enabled to produce good works on earth, and these are the fine linen, clean and white, that shall be the marriage robe of the wife of the Lamb on that great day. In eastern lands, I suppose, the bride is presented to the bridegroom in the garments her own fingers have wrought. It shall be so with the wife of the Lamb, for to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, her own work. But how and where could this material be produced?

Suppose a great prince wished to appear on some great state occasion in a garment designed and made by himself, but when he looked round for the material that would suit his design, he could not find anything that satisfied him, nor any loom on which it could be woven. What must he do? He must invent a loom that can produce the material, and then when his cloth is ready he must fashion it as he will for his own satisfaction and the praise of his genius. So it is; God determined, when He purposed that the Lamb should have a wife, the very sort of garment she should wear; it was to be of fine linen, clean and white, the righteousnesses of saints — but where on earth, among men, could it be found? In Old Testament days God gave men the opportunity of bringing it forth. He gave them the law, a perfect loom upon which to do it. But they miserably failed in their efforts, and after centuries of patience with them, God had to say, "ALL YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESSES ARE AS FILTHY RAGS." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Then was God's intention to fail? No. If I may use my illustration — He has brought into being a new loom capable of producing that which He desires. But first He shows the design and the pattern. The Lord Jesus came into the world to do the will of God. He lived a life of complete obedience to God, and near the end of it He took three of His disciples into the holy mount and there He was transfigured before them, "and His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9:3). This was an unearthly, heavenly whiteness, emblematic of the life of righteousness He had lived on earth. And God's great purpose is to reproduce that life in His saints; and so we read: "FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS UNTO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD HATH BEFORE ORDAINED THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM" (Ephesians 2:10). If we do not understand that statement we shall not understand how the fine linen can be produced. We are not saved by works, but we are saved for works. It is grace that has saved us through faith, but that same grace has fashioned us for the production of good works. GOD HAS A LOOM NOW, and upon it He is producing fine linen, clean and white, He is reproducing in His people now the graces that shone in all their perfection in Jesus. The life of Jesus is being manifested in their mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:10).

We all know how cloth is produced. There is the loom, the weaver, and the raw material. As a matter of fact, the raw material goes through a series of processes before it reaches the loom, but there it is at last, and as the weaver works the warp and weft into the loom, the loom works out the finished article. And that is what we get in Php 2:12-13 : "WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING. FOR IT IS GOD THAT WORKETH IN YOU, BOTH THE WILLING AND THE DOING OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE." God is the great weaver, we are the loom, and as He works in we must work out the fine linen, clean and white. When we see this we must acknowledge that He is, He must be, deeply interested in our lives and ways with the marriage of the Lamb in view — are we also interested? But what is this fine linen? Says one, "I should like to serve the Lord Jesus, but I cannot stand upon the platform and preach to multitudes, or do any great work for Him; I am ignorant and poor, and my life is lived in obscurity." Do not think that this fine linen is preaching, or doing some spectacular service. Many a man preaches to large congregations and produces nothing but filthy rags, for self is the end and aim of his efforts. But there is a poor woman who loves the Saviour, she is producing fine linen in abundance. Happy in His love she starts her arduous day with a song of praise and thanksgiving to God — that is a bit of fine linen. When spoken to harshly she answers with meekness, and overcomes evil with good — that is another bit of fine linen. You need not be great and famous for this; if you can be patient and forbearing when you are not treated well, and if you can FORGIVE — ah, that is difficult, is it not? He spoke so ill of you. She was so spiteful. And you have already been kind and forgiving. Your patience is exhausted, and you can't forgive again! Can't you? You who have been forgiven so much! Yes, grace can enable you to do it, and if you do it will be fine linen, clean and white, for that is what Jesus did. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, and when His foes did their worst, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance — all these are the threads of this beautiful fabric, the fine linen, clean and white, and not one thread will ever be lost. God Himself will preserve it, it is imperishable. You may not have thought when you did that kind act for Jesus' sake that it would live for ever, but it will; and that word of cheer and comfort spoken to a tried and sorrowing saint will never be forgotten, nor will that effort to win a soul for the Saviour. All these things will go to make up the marriage garment. Every Christian has the privilege of contributing to it. How important it is that we should be walking in lowliness of mind and obedience to God, that His gracious work may go on in us and through us. He has left us in the world for this — may we not forget it. Do not say that this is beyond us. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus with this end in view. We have been saved by His grace, and fitted by Him to produce this fine linen. This garment of fine linen, clean and white, will be a wonderful triumph for God. He will be able to show in that day the reality of His work in His saints. He will be able to show that in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that beset His saints on earth and conspired to make them false to Christ, they have brought forth these righteousnesses. So will the devil be defeated and the accusations that are brought against the saints be silenced. How wonderful it is, that, in this filthy place, a world reeking with moral putrefaction, this work is going on, and that we may have our part in it. We have but to keep near to our Lord and His love will constrain us to be very diligent in this matter.

After the marriage the Lord will come forth as King of kings and Lord of lords, but when He does His saints will come with Him in this same raiment (Revelation 19:14). They will share His triumph and glory and live and reign with Him a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-15).

03.07. The Holy City

The Holy City

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." — Revelation 21:9-11. The Bride the Lamb's Wife. — Having the Glory of God. — The Wall of the City. — Four Square, and ever-open Gates. — The Street of Gold. — God is the Light and the Lamb the Lamp. — The Pure River of the Water of Life. — The Tree of Life. — The Lord God giveth them Light. THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB.

"I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

We have considered the church as the wife of the Lamb — what it is to Christ, how it will fill His heart with a satisfaction and joy which will be eternal.

Now our subject is the same church as the holy city — not so much what she will be TO Christ, but what she will be FOR Christ. In the first aspect of the church the great thing is LOVE, the love of Christ fully known by the church, and responded to without reserve; but the church as the New Jerusalem, the holy city, is not so much LOVE as LIGHT — light for the nations. It is love, divine love, filling it with a wonderful radiance, but shining out as light for all. The nations are to walk in the light of the holy city, but the city is the bride, the Lamb's wife. There is love Christward — there is light manward.

Notice how this holy city is introduced. The angel said to John: "Come, I will show the bride, the Lamb's wife. . . . And he showed me that great city, holy Jerusalem." When the church is all that she ought to be to Christ, for this is what the bride, the Lamb's wife, indicates, then she will be all she ought to be as light to man — the city under the administration of which men will live — and the measure of her love to Christ will be the measure of her light to men. I want to give these things a present and practical application. It follows, if this is true, that just in that measure in which we love Christ now, are we really witnesses for Him here below. Our light in the midst of the prevailing darkness is measured by our love to Christ, and our love to Christ is measured by our knowledge of His love to us. If we keep ourselves in His love, if we keep ourselves near to Him, separate from those things that can mar us for His pleasure, we shall enjoy His love, and we cannot enjoy His love without responding to it, and just in that measure that we respond to His love shall we be witnesses for Him in the world. Our light manward is measured by our love Christward.

HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD

"Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Revelation 21:11).

First we are to enter into the glory of God; for us it is the Father's house, and we are made meet for it by the Father's grace and the blood of Jesus, and then we are to come out of it all radiant with the light that fills it, to shed that light upon the earth during the millennial reign of Christ. The church is to be the vessel of the glory of God. What is the glory of God? The glory of God, in the moral aspect of it, is the display of His own blessed nature; He has revealed Himself. How has He done that? He has done that in the Person of His beloved Son, and having done it the great fact has come into evidence that GOD IS LOVE. That is the glory of God. You would not know it by simply scanning the heavens. They declare His handiwork, His wisdom, His divinity, His power. Men did not learn this great fact at Sinai, for there in the presence of the thunderings and fire of that dread mount they were filled with terror. This great and blessed revelation was made by the beloved Son when He came into the world and passed through it to the cross of Calvary. The light that He brought into the world is to be contained in the holy city, and that light will radiate from it to the utmost bounds of creation, and all creation will rejoice in the fact that God is love.

"Each heart its praise outpouring,

To Him all praise above,

Each voice in strains adoring,

Re-echoes — 'GOD IS LOVE.'" This is our testimony to-day, for it is this fact that has changed, enlightened, and blest us. But how has it been manifested towards us? "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10). The love of God has been made manifest in relieving us of our liabilities and removing the load of sins that oppressed us, and by bringing us into love and light and liberty. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." This is the gospel that we have to preach. This is the light we have to bear in the darkness. This is the glory that will shine from the new Jerusalem, and in the light of which the nations will walk. They will get an entirely new conception of God, even as we did when first we were enlightened and learned that God is love. They will learn what wisdom and righteousness in administration are, and every national and international question that can arise will be solved in the light in which they walk. This will be the glory that excelleth: GOD IS LOVE. THE WALL OF THE HOLY CITY "And had a wall great and high."

It is remarkable that more is said of the wall of the Holy City than of the city itself (Revelation 21:1-27); there must be an important reason for this. Why is it there? The wall is not there to exclude from that city a single saint of God; for "they that are written in the Lamb's book of life, shall enter in." The wall will be an inclusive wall; everyone whom sovereign grace has chosen and called to heavenly glory, everyone who has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, will be enclosed in its shining embrace. "A GARDEN ENCLOSED IS MY SISTER, MY SPOUSE," says the Bridegroom, in the Song of Songs, meaning, that she was all for Him, and it is this that the wall of the city, great and high, teaches us. If it includes all whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, it also indicates that the city is exclusively for God. When a man purchases an estate and puts a wall about it, he says, "That is mine; I want that for my own pleasure" — and so it is. The city will be for God's pleasure in the first instance without restraint and in perfect complacency He will walk in its golden street, and though its gates are opened wide to every point of the

compass, and will never be closed either night or day, there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth. The wall indicates that there will be, even in that millennial age, some reserve on God's part. No wall will be needed to encircle the city in the eternal state, when God will be all in all. Then He will dwell with men, and His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, and no fresh invasion of sin will ever cause Him to retire behind a veil. But in the millennial age sin will not be wholly banished from the earth, and while God will be active towards men in goodness and blessing, there will still be reserve as far as His relations with them are concerned. His temple and dwelling-place will be walled about. But within the wall all will be as He would have it — holy and unblameable before Him in love. The wall will not be a frowning battlement, grimly reared for defence or defiance, raised against great foes and manned by intrepid warriors, for from those heavenly places in which the city will appear, the foe will have been cast down, and the devil chained in the bottomless pit (Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 20:1-15). The city will be the church triumphant, and nothing that defiles will threaten the peace of it, and it will fear no attack from without, and will be free to enjoy the riches of God's grace within. It will be God's enclosure, within it He will show His glory, and every created intelligence will learn from it what pleases Him. And through the wall the glory will shine; it will not obscure the glory or hide its beauties. And in the foundation of it will be every manner of precious stones, cut by the supreme art of the Divine Lapidary; the all-varied wisdom of God will radiate there, not to repel, but to attract all nations in admiring worship to it.

How great the glory of the city will be — THE GLORY OF GOD. How great is the grace that has given us a part in it — THE GRACE OF GOD.

FOUR SQUARE, AND EVER-OPEN GATES "And the city lieth foursquare . . . and had twelve gates." The city will be four-square, facing without fear or shame every point of the compass. It will be equal on every side, and on every side there will be three gates, gates that shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night there. I must link together the four-square city and the twelve gates in the wall of it. It is the city that is equal in every part of it that can open its gates to every quarter of the wide earth. But what for? A great city like London keeps its gates open perpetually, for it is dependent upon every part of the earth for its very life. From north, south, east, and west, supplies are continually pouring into it; but the gates of the holy city will be opened, not for supplies to flow into it, but for blessing to flow out of it, blessing for the whole earth. This city of God will look out in every direction, and wherever it looks it will pour out its blessing. Our aim must be this four-squareness now. What we are to be according to God's own purpose must affect us now. But, alas! how often it is otherwise with us. A man may be intelligent in the Scriptures, and even prominent in ministry and in service, and be anything but Christ-like in his home or business. He is not four-square and just in that measure in which he lacks in this he is enfeebled in his testimony, and as a channel of blessing to men.

Suppose I act in an unchristian, ungracious way in the home or business, or in the presence of unconverted men, or I am harsh and ungracious with my brethren; on that side in which I have failed of the grace of God the gate is shut and the blessing cannot flow out, for I am ashamed, and my mouth is closed. But if I keep myself in the love of God and maintain a conscience void of offence before God and man, then am I four-square, unashamed, and can face men and bless them. This our Lord was in all the holy perfection of His Person. He was all that He said, and none could convict Him of sin, hence wherever He went the blessing flowed in divine freeness. The

names of the twelve tribes of Israel are upon the gates, because according to promise, Israel is to have the honour of administration on earth, and all the blessing that flows to the nations from the heavenly city will flow through Israel as the channel of it to the nations. AND EVERY GATE IS PEARL. The pearl is not an Old Testament figure, it does not belong to Israel. It is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament.* It is a New Testament figure, and is a similitude of the church taken out of the sea of the nations (Matthew 13:1-58). The merchantman sought goodly pearls, and finding one of great price, sold all that he had to possess it. Christ is the merchantman and the pearl is His church. In His eyes it is pure, precious and one. The church is to have this character in all her outgoings in witness and blessing. The gates of pearl emphasize what I have already stated, that when the church is what Christ would have it to be — pure, answering to His thoughts of its preciousness to Him, and undivided — then it will be the channel and the centre of blessing for all.

{* Job 28:18 should really read "crystal."} THE STREET OF GOLD "And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Not streets of gold, as some of our poets have sung, but one street, a street of gold like unto transparent glass. Here is gold of a new sort. There is nothing so opaque, nothing so blinding to the eyes as the gold that men crave and labour for how devious are the ways by which they get it. But this street will be transparent gold, there will be nothing shady in it, no double dealing, no defilement there. And who will walk on this street? It will be laid for the feet of God, and where He walks the street must be of gold. His way must be a way of righteousness which is of Himself and where He can display His character in all His ways, for this surely is the meaning of the street of gold. A man is known by the way he walks, and where he walks, and God will make known His character when He walks in this street, and there will be nothing hidden and dark in it, it will be like unto transparent glass.

It has always been His desire to walk with men. He came down into the garden to walk with Adam in the cool of the day. But there was no street of gold there, and Adam hid away in his fear of God behind the trees of the garden. He was a sinner and God could not walk with him. And when God gathered Israel out of Egypt and brought them to Himself in the wilderness, He desired to walk in and with them, but there was no golden street in the midst of them. His commandments were on their lips but not in their hearts, and He could only be with them in the angel of His presence behind the veil of the Tabernacle — there was no liberty there either for Him or for them. But when we come to the New Testament, we have the revelation of God in Jesus; God was in Christ, and walked in Him displaying all His grace; and God's intention is that the life of Jesus should be continued in His saints. We have some wonderful words at the end of 2 Corinthians 6:1-18. The saints of God are commanded to be separate from evil things, to come out from among evil men and their ways; for what communion can there be between the believer and the unbeliever, between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, between the temple of God and demons. Then come the wonderful words, "God hath said, I will dwell in them, and WALK IN THEM." Not only dwell in them, we often stress that, but walk in them — He would form and find within them a street of gold where He could walk and show His character through them.

We may know little of this now — alas, that we should know so little — but in the day of which this vision of glory speaks it will be known in its fulness, for God shall walk in the holy city, and we shall walk where God walks, for we shall be holy as He is holy. A street is for common use, and in holy communion with God, Himself delighting in the display of His own character, and in us, and we

delighting in Him, we shall walk with Him.

"There in effulgence bright,

Saviour and Guide, with Thee

I'll walk, and in Thy heavenly light

Whiter my robe shall be."

GOD IS THE LIGHT AND THE LAMB THE LAMP

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (margin).

God gives light to the city, but all that light is in the Lamb, for He is the lamp, as the word should be. There is no light, no knowledge of God apart from the Lamb of God. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. So John tells us in the first chapter of his Gospel. Yes, but when public witness was borne to Him in that Gospel it was, "Behold the Lamb of God." He was the Light of the world, but to be this, and so that the light could reach us, He had to come as the Lamb.

What blind fools men are when they refuse the cross of Christ. They desire a gospel without a sacrifice, without the blood. God has no such gospel for men. He can give no light or blessing apart from the Lamb. The Lamb is the lamp — all the light of God abides in Him and shines forth from Him, and that light is for blessing of men. THE PURE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE "And He showed me a pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb."

There is to be blessing unrestrained in the power of the Holy Ghost, but it flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. The throne indicates God's supremacy, but the Lamb is there. What a sight it will be for the world which crucified the Lamb when He appears in the throne of God! The cross of a malefactor on earth, the throne of God in heaven! But that cross and His place on that throne secure blessing for men. The pure river will flow forth from the throne, but that were impossible apart from the Lamb, and its streams will carry refreshment and life and healing wherever they flow. God in the supremacy of His grace, as the redeemer God, enthroned in righteousness for man's blessing, will be acknowledged as the Source of all good. And if any ask how God who is eternally just can bless from His throne a world that had sinned so foully against Him, the one and only answer is — the Lamb is there. THE TREE OF LIFE

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Revelation 22:2). The tree of life is Christ — and the fruit is God's portion in Him, the food of the privileged dwellers in that city. He is enough for God and He will be enough for them. None shall hunger there, nor will they tire of that heavenly food, for there is no monotony in Jesus for the heart of one that knows His love and walks in the Spirit. And He is enough now. He brings forth His fruit in His season now. He is able to meet every fresh need, every fresh longing of the soul now. He is enough the heart and mind to fill. We shall not tire of Him there. May we be satisfied with Him now, and sit under His shadow with great delight and find His fruit sweet

to our taste.

Fruit is God's food, it is ever so presented symbolically in Scripture, it is for His delight. We are to share God's thoughts of Christ, and this will yield us joy and satisfaction for ever.

Then there will be no more curse, for the Lamb bore the curse. Thorns the earth was to bring forth when man sinned, and thorns were placed upon His sacred brow. He bore the curse that He might remove it. And His servants shall serve Him — they shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads. What a prospect! Especially for those of us who feel how feeble our service here is! But there His servants shall serve Him. Love cannot be satisfied unless it is serving, and the Lord will give His servants the joy and opportunity of serving Him in all the power of the Holy Ghost — without any faltering or failure. THE LORD GOD GIVETH THEM LIGHT

"There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

We shall have no need of either natural light or artificial light in that holy city — God will be enough. The light of our lives for ever will come from God Himself. It is what God is that will fill that scene with radiance and fill our hearts with joy. And He would do that now. The sun symbolizes God's natural mercies, and so full of tenderness and mercy is He, that He gives us these things richly to enjoy; for having spared not His own Son, will he not with Him freely give us all things? And these natural gifts in a certain way are light to us. But, suppose these things were taken from us, what then? Suppose every natural joy, every comfort, every earthly ray of light were removed, and suppose we lost everything that we have devised for ourselves, of which the candle would speak, could we say, "The Lord God giveth us light — He is enough"?

I heard of a Christian who was in very affluent circumstances. Suddenly, with one sweep, he was beggared, and in explaining his experience afterwards, he said, "When I was well-to-do, I saw God in everything, and now that I have nothing, I HAVE GOT EVERYTHING IN GOD." I heard of a wealthy American who was very glad he had wealth, not for his own sake, but for the sake of his wife whom he idolized. This lady was a Christian of a meek and gentle spirit. Her husband did not understand the secret of that quiet, happy life, but he greatly admired it, and was glad he could give her the comforts of life, for she was a delicate person. As time went on, the wheel of fortune turned and left him with scarcely a penny. He was very distressed about it. He had to leave the mansion and go into a somewhat mean flat, and he wondered how it would go with his wife. But he found she was able to sing, "Oh! The peace my Saviour gives," just as sweetly without the grand piano. The Lord God was her light. Oh! is it so, that He is able to do that for us? Were every earthly light removed and every prop gone and every comfort taken away from us, would He be enough? Yes, we should find Him to be enough. The Lord God is our light. Beloved Christians, what a God we have got! And the day is coming when the vast number of those who inhabit that holy city will find everything in God, and when they find everything in God, there will be no night. The best things on earth change, they wax and wane, rise to their zenith and set. But when God is everything there is no night. The Lord Himself speaking to His servant, says, "These sayings are true and faithful." Let us lay hold of them and cherish them. Let us hold to them as the very sayings of God, true and faithful — not the fallible words of men, the fruit of a darkened imagination, but the true and faithful sayings of God. Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this Book. If we keep the sayings of this Book, we shall be kept from the pollution of

this world, and be those who are ready and watching and saying in unison with the Holy Ghost,"
Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

03.08. The Eternal State

The Eternal State

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold! the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." — Revelation 21:2-4.

God All in All. — As a Bride Adorned for Her Husband.

GOD ALL IN ALL "My delights were with the sons of men." — Proverbs 8:31. The hand of the Lord set the pendulum of time swinging when in the beginning He created the heavens and the earth. And one age of time after another has passed in which He has wrought to bring about the fulfilment of His own counsels of wisdom and love. He has been in no haste, for much had to be done. There was first the slow development of evil that reached its climax at the cross; there was the manifestation of good that triumphed over it there; but in both alike we see revealed God's deep interest in men — men and not angels are the object of His solicitude, with men in view He has worked from the beginning. We are surely greatly moved when we realize that all His counsels of love are centred in men. This amazing fact is declared in Proverbs 8:1-36, where, in relation to creation, when it was contemplated in eternity, but not actually brought into being, WISDOM — whom we know now to be the Son of God, our Saviour, for He is the wisdom of God — says, "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." Yes, it was upon men that the heart of God was set from all eternity, and when the earth was created as their residence, and the platform upon which He would display all His love to them and what that love would do, He created them, male and female, in the image and likeness of God. But not for long could God delight in man, for though He had surrounded him by countless gifts, all proving His care and goodness, he fell before the seductions and falsehoods of that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and while God did not cease to love him, he, on his part, mistrusted and hated God. The devil had triumphed in this first battle for the possession of man — what was to be done? If God could not carry out His thoughts of love in regard to him, the devil's triumph would be perpetuated for ever. But God had His resources and the devil's triumph was but temporary, and, in fact, it did but give God the opportunity of bringing His resources to light. In passing sentence upon the deceiver, He said, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." The Seed of the woman was the Son of God, the One who was daily God's delight, before there was any serpent, or earth, or man, or woman. And in due time He came of a woman, the virgin's Son, to undo the works of the devil and bring man back again to God. And He has carried out God's will to the letter, He has done it without any thought of Himself. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and by His obedience to God's will, obedience that led Him into death,

He has made it possible for God to delight in and dwell with men. And this He will do when the pendulum of time has ceased to swing, and all things have passed into that eternal now for which we wait. Revelation 21:1-4 describes the state of blessedness that shall then be — it is a brief statement, but how comprehensive and illuminating! There will be an entire absence of all that has made the world a vale of tears. God will take the place that death and sorrow and crying and pain have had in the lives of men, and He will dwell with them. He will dwell with them as the One who in great compassion has wiped away all tears from their eyes; and they shall delight in Him for ever, and He will delight in them, and evil shall assail them no more. His eternal purpose shall then have been reached and secured through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. THE TABERNACLE OF GOD "As a bride adorned for her husband." In that scene of eternal blessedness, the church will have a distinct place from every other family in it, whether of angels or men. She is to be there as the special joy and prize of the great Redeemer, to whom the redeemed universe will owe its every joy. See how she is described. "And I, John," says the seer, "saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." That is to be her eternal distinction and glory. We have seen how she will radiate blessing to the nations of the earth, because she is the bride, the Lamb's wife. She will be indispensable to men during the millennial age, for no light as to God or guidance as to their lives will reach them except through her, for in her God will dwell and the Lamb will reign, and the light that does reach them through her will be enough for all their needs and joy. But in the eternal state it will be no longer what she can be as a vessel of light to men, IT IS WHAT SHE IS TO CHRIST — a bride adorned for her husband. She will be that for ever, for in eternity there will be no change or decay, and as she appears when eternity supersedes time, so shall she be as the ages of it roll on. Succeeding ages will unfold new and all-satisfying glories from God, who shall be all in all; but through all those ages the church will be for Christ, adorned with heavenly grace for His eye and heart, and never shall there be for a single instant a wandering thought or desire for any pleasure, save those that He will afford her. No rival shall ever challenge His sole right to her affections; she will receive His love into her bosom without measure and respond to it without reserve. She shall be for ever satisfied with Him.

"Yes, Jesus Lord, our hearts shall be

For ever satisfied with Thee."

Conclusion "Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this Book" Revelation 22:7.

"Behold I come quickly: and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END, THE FIRST AND THE LAST." — Revelation 22:12-13.

"SURELY I COME QUICKLY." The knowledge of the love of Christ in this special character in which we have been considering it, is the crown of all knowledge, and it is the topmost and choicest shoot in the spiritual growth of all who possess it. Let us hold it fast if we have it, lest any man rob us of it. Hear how the Lord speaks of it to the Philadelphian church, "Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I HAVE LOVED THEE." They had no higher honour, greater treasure, or brighter crown than that.

It has been urged that occupation with this side of things and the "blessed hope" that goes along with it, tends to make Christians unpractical and indifferent to the welfare of others. The exact opposite is the truth. When the heart is right as to this, everything else falls into its proper place in relation to it. So that the Christian's life becomes like a well-grown fir tree. The topmost and centre branch takes the lead and shows the way for every other branch. As it advances, so do they, but it must be first. If the tree loses that branch, it loses its completeness, beauty and symmetry. That this is so is clearly indicated in Revelation 22:1-21, the last chapter of the Bible. When the Lord is first, the supreme object of our faith and hope and love, all that is right will fall into its natural order. We shall be a separate people, for "he that hath this hope in Him purifieth Himself even as He is pure," and we shall not be involved in, and waste our time on, efforts to improve the world in which Christ has no place; but we shall not be an indifferent or lazy people; there will be earnest activity in two distinct circles of service. The first circle is that of His own, whom He loves; we shall begin there; and the second is that of the poor, barren, thirsty world. The Spirit and the BRIDE say, Come, to Him; this is the only true attitude of heart towards the Lord in any of His own. Here, as we have said already, "the unity of the Spirit" finds a blessed and practical expression. Here, also, is that first love that alone can satisfy the heart of the Lord. But when this response to the Lord breaks from the heart enraptured with Himself, there is the immediate call to others also, "Let him that heareth say, Come." The heart that is true to the Lord desires that every other heart that knows Him should be equally true to Him, and sets about with diligent labour to secure this. The heart that has heard the Lord saying, "I Jesus . . . am the bright and morning Star," and, "Surely I come quickly," not only desires to be ready for His coming itself, but must have others ready too. A simple illustration will make this plain. It is necessary for a mother to leave her children for a while, and as she puts the goodbye kiss upon their lips she says, "I will come back soon," and if she has the opportunity of sending a message to them during her absence, the burden of it is, "I will come back soon." She knows well that nothing will stir the hearts of her children and please them more than that word. Yes, but in the message her own desire breaks out! It is because she longs for them and yearns to see and embrace them again that she sends such a message to them. And what can cheer her more during her separation from them than to know that they are longing to see her, and echoing her own message, "Come back soon." Even so it is with the Lord and every true-hearted saint in Revelation 22:1-21. But in that little household there is Mary, the eldest of those young children. Not only is there expectation in her heart, but a sense of responsibility, too. It is love that has put both there. She loves her mother, and so she longs to see her again; she loves her mother, and so she will not be idle, for she wants everything in the home to be ready for her return. And the love for her mother and the time she has spent in her company has made her very sensible as to what will please her, so the home is kept clean and the children are dressed and ready. Mother may come any time now, she will find them waiting. But how often they go to the door and peer out of the window; they cannot sit still — mother will soon be here, and they are eager for a sight of her, and as the day wears on they become more eager and expectant. They are a watching, as well as a waiting family, and it is their love for their mother that makes them so. But what is Mary doing? While she waits for her mother, she slips first into this room and then into that to make sure that nothing is out of place, and most of all she keeps her eye on the younger children; not a speck must be on them when the mother returns. She must feed them and wash them and keep them out of mischief, and as their minds wander to other things — for an infant's pleasure is continually changing — she continually reminds them that mother is coming, to keep

alive their interest in this greatest of all events to her. And so she waits and she watches like the rest, but she works also. She is faithful to her trust. Blessed is Mary when her mother comes. She has a twofold happiness. Not only is her mother back again, but she has said, "Well done," to her faithful daughter. She has the joy of her mother's presence, and the satisfaction of her mother's approbation. This surely is what we get in the Lord's words in this closing chapter of the Bible: "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to give to every man according as his work shall be." And again: "Behold I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this Book." Has the Lord's love to me affected me as the mother's love affected her daughter? Let each reader ask himself that question. If so I shall not be an unpractical and lazy Christian, I shall be watching, waiting and working, and my heart will go out to all whom He loves, and I shall not be satisfied with being ready to greet Him myself when He comes, but I shall be anxious that all His own may be ready too, because I know that thus He would have it. There is no truth in the whole of the Scripture that could have a greater effect upon us or make us labour more diligently than this. It separates from the world and evil things that hinder in the service of the Lord, but it enlarges the heart and gives an interest in all who are precious to Him, everyone of them an integral part of His church, and I one with them all, one indivisible company — the bride that cries in unison with the Spirit, "Come Lord Jesus."

But, further, the true heart overflows to the needy world and must be evangelical. Connected with this earnest desire on the part of the Spirit and the bride for the coming of the Lord we have the last appeal of the grace of God to needy men. It comes from the heart of God, but it comes through the bride, in whom His Spirit dwells. The hearts that long for Christ yearn after others, even as His heart does. It is as though they said, "We have reached the fountain of living water and are satisfied — will you not come and drink also? There is enough for us and enough for you, and our joy will not be lessened but will be increased if we see you drink. Our Lord desires that you should, and if you do it will please and glorify Him, and this is our greatest wish." And the appeal widens out to the whole world: whosoever will, and wherever he may be, may take of the water of life freely. Instead of our affections being narrowed and our activities limited by this great truth we have the whole church for which we may care and the whole world to which we may appeal, and in which we may carry out our work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope.

How blessed is this invitation of grace. In Revelation 21:6 the Lord had said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of THE FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE freely." Not of the river, or the stream, be it noted. The river of life will flow forth in a mighty volume in the coming millennial age, but now men are invited to the Fountain. The river has been polluted; the opinions of men and "doctrines of devils" have been turned into it, and as the stream has flowed on the error has predominated: —

"Some truth there is, but dashed and brew'd with lies;

To please the fools, and puzzle all the wise."

It is not the stream that the Lord offers, but THE FOUNTAIN! There is no pollution there. There springs up the living water, pure and fresh and free! It is Christ!

"O Christ, He is the Fountain,

The deep, sweet well of love." And if one who reads this book has not yet responded to His gracious offer, I close it with an appeal to that one. You need neither preacher nor priest to stand between you and Christ. He invites you to come to Himself, directly and at once. The work of the Holy Ghost is to call your attention to Him, and the whole purpose of the Bible is that you should take freely of the fountain of the water of life that He so freely offers; that you should believe on Him who is the Son of God, and believing have life through His name. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: —

"The Sun of the Godhead pours His rays,

Through the crystal depths of His Manhood's grace." And it is Himself He gives. He places Himself and all the blessedness that there is in Him at your disposal.

Whether for salvation or satisfaction, sinner and saint must turn to the Fountain, to Christ Himself. All else will fail, and every earth-born stream will run dry, but His sufficiency is inexhaustible and eternal, for He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

"And ah! the Master is so fair,

His smile so sweet to banished men,

That they who meet it unaware

Can never rest on earth again.

And they who see Him risen afar,

At God's right hand to welcome them,

Forgetful stand, of name and land,

Desiring fair Jerusalem."

And these are they that cry, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints." Amen.

Shine Forth, O Lord!

Shine forth, O Lord, Thou bright and morning star!

Come, quickly come! Thy people waiting are

To see Thy light dispel the deepening gloom,

Waiting the power that vanquishes the tomb.

Shine forth, O Lord, and drive away our fears,

Fulfil our hopes, and give us joy for tears;

Shout, shout the word that bids Thy dead arise,

And calls Thy saints to meet Thee in the skies.

Shine forth, O Lord, come soon for Thy redeemed,
For those on whom Thy tender love has beamed;
Thy pilgrim saints oft weary in the way,
Cry out for Thee — Star of the coming day!
Shine forth, O Lord, by sorrow oft baptized,
We quit the world, and all things by it prized,
Shake ourselves free from every earthly care,
And onward press to meet Thee in the air.
Shine forth, O Lord, and claim Thy blood-bought bride,
Put forth Thy power and raise her to Thy side.
We wait the hour when our glad shout shall be —
That death is swallowed up in victory.
Shine forth, O Lord, and bring to pass the day,
When every clime shall own Thy rightful sway,
When all mankind before Thy throne shall fall,
And heaven and earth shall crown Thee Lord of all. J. T. M.

04.00. The Feast, the Famine and the Flame.

The Feast, the Famine and the Flame.

J. T. Mawson.

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04.000. Explanation

Explanation A popular writer has said that "God" is the vaguest word in the English language. The statement offended me when I read it at first, but on considering it I have come to the conclusion that it is true as far as multitudes of men are concerned, and that God is as surely "the unknown God" to them as He was to the Athenian philosophers when Paul preached on Mars Hill nineteen centuries ago.

What is God like? "No man hath seen God at any time." Then who can describe Him for us and introduce us to Him? "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Then if that is so, if we would know God, we must listen to the Lord Jesus, for He is the only-begotten Son. No man can be excused if he does not know God now, for the truth as to Him is fully revealed, and the truth is not vague; but not to nature, not to science, not to philosophy must we go for the truth, but to JESUS. He said, when arraigned before Pilate, "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

Now in the central parables of Luke's Gospel, we hear the voice of Jesus telling us what God is: His care for the needs of men, and His compassionate provision for those needs, His love for men, His desire for their company, and His just judgment on the despisers and impenitent are set before us in vivid pictures. And, said the Lord, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It is of these parables that I write in this book which I have called, The Feast, the Famine and the Flame. May the blessing of God rest upon the readers.

J. T. Mawson.

04.01. All things are NOW ready."

All things are NOW ready."

"And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God. Then said He unto him, a certain man made a great supper and bade many: And he sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are NOW ready." Luke 14:1-35.

"Come and hear the grand old story,

Story told in ages past,

All earth's annals far surpassing,

Story that shall ever last.

Noblest, truest,

Oldest, newest,

Fairest, rarest,

Saddest, gladdest,

That this earth has ever known." The man who sat at meat with the Lord Jesus and said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," was putting into the language of that day the feeling that it must be a good thing for a man to go to heaven when he dies. We do not hear the feeling expressed so often now as we used to when

"There is a happy land

Far, far away,"

was one of the most often sung hymns at revival meetings. Indeed, whatever may be the inner, unspoken feeling, it has become the popular thing to jeer at the idea, and those who are so far behind the times as to preach a heaven in the future for those who believe the gospel now, are looked upon by many as allies of the Capitalists offering heaven as a bribe to men if only they will be contented with such things as they have and work hard that their "masters" may continue to enjoy the wealth that their labour produces. I do not know when and where the notion started, but Robert Burns worked it into one of his poems one hundred and fifty years ago when he wrote,

"We labour soon, we labour late,

To feed the titled knave, man,

And all the comfort we shall get

Is that ayont the grave, man."

See how the Lord answered the man who could only imagine blessing from God "ayont the grave." He propounded to him the parable of the great Supper, and announced the invitation to it, "Come, for all things are NOW ready." I must lay stress upon the word "now," for I am sure the Lord did, and what a word it is! It surely means that God will not keep men waiting for happiness until they are dead; He offers to make them happy now, for the parable of the great Supper tells of His provision for the happiness of men. He has prepared joys for them in this life, exceeding their highest expectations, and He invites them to come for them now. It means that in turning to God men do not turn their backs on true satisfaction, for it is a feast to which He invites them and not a fast; He wants them to come to it now, in this life, for all things are now ready. The Lord Jesus was always divinely quiet when men opposed and blasphemed Him; "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not," yet He must have been profoundly moved and grieved when men misunderstood and distrusted God. Why, I have read of one of His servants, by name John Fletcher, a great preacher, who called his wife and maid to his bedside when he lay dying, and said to them, "Sing, shout, God is love," so mightily was his soul stirred by the thought of God's love to men; and I saw a little servant lassie of fourteen, distressed and weeping after a gospel service, who in answer to my question as to what the trouble was, told me that she had persuaded some friends of hers to come and hear about the Saviour and they had gone away unaffected. That was the cause of her grief. Must not the heart of Jesus who knew God's love in its full tenderness and strength have been stirred by it, and grieved — profoundly grieved, when He saw that men kept God at a distance and lived their lives without Him because they believed the devil's lie that if He had anything at all for them it was in the future and not in the present? I feel that when the Lord announced this great Supper and gave out the words of the invitation He did so with a spirit and a fervour that must have arrested and impressed those that heard them, and yet with grief of heart, for He knew that many would despise and reject it, but I do not think they would ever forget the way He said, "Come, for all things are now ready."

We cannot hear His actual voice speaking to us as they did, but the words are there, and they tell us that God has considered and anticipated the deepest needs of our lives, and that He had catered for our happiness, when we had neither the sense nor the power to do it ourselves. Dismiss your distrust of God, cast out of your heart the lie that He is indifferent to the way you live your life. He is not the author of men's miseries, as some suppose.

It is

"Man's inhumanity to man

Makes countless thousands mourn."

God has prepared the great Supper; neither angels nor men assisted Him. Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done it. None are asked to contribute to it, but all are invited to appropriate it, and to do so now — God wants men to enjoy His Supper now. The heavenly bell is ringing, calling men to the feast now. That "now" in the invitation is a great word. It is the Lord's own word N.O.W. now. It is an imperative word, it has no future tense, and its antithesis is Never.

I had a relative whom I had not met. He heard that I was to preach in the city in which he lived, and he decided to come and hear me and make my acquaintance. I do not know what he expected, but he was disappointed in what he heard. This very parable was my subject and I pressed upon

the people what I am now pressing, that God's word is now. Now, not to-morrow. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation," and, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." I spelt the word many times, for I felt sure that it was my message then as I am sure it is now. My relative listened. What did I mean? This was surely the strangest preaching he had ever heard! Did I think they were a lot of children that needed to have a word of three letters spelt over to them? He had expected something different, an intellectual sermon, perhaps, for intelligent men, or a forceful urge to a better and more useful life; and he went away as I have said, disappointed. But he confessed in a letter afterwards that he could not shake off that word NOW. It followed him, and kept him waking at night; it hammered at the very door of his soul; it was not an invitation only, it was a challenge, and I believe through the infinite mercy of God it did its intended work.

"Come, for all things are now ready." What does it mean? It means that God is not waiting until you die to receive you but He comes to you now and here, bringing heaven's blessing to you where you are. God loves you, and, if you will, He will welcome you at last to His home beyond the grave, but He loves you so well that He does not propose to keep you waiting until then to be happy, He sends His message to you now — a message of love and joy, an invitation to a great Supper, made ready for you by an infinite love, "Come, for all things are now ready."

* * * *

Yes, "All things are now ready," but not a man will come and enter that feast unless he is converted and becomes as a little child. The little child of the Lord's parable hears and believes, there is no pretence about him, he confesses his need when he feels it, and simply and thankfully receives what is offered him and talks about what he has received. After a protracted gospel service in Kingston, Jamaica, at which many anxious souls had pressed into the feast, a little negro lad, ten years old perhaps, touched me on the elbow and said, "Do speak to me, sir, my soul does feel so unsaved." We found a quiet spot where he could listen to the word, and then we knelt in prayer. When I had prayed for him, he prayed for himself, "Lord Jesus," he said, "save my soul." And he jumped to his feet, having no doubt that his prayer was answered, for as he said, I had told him that the Lord had said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." He had come and proved that the Lord's words were true. The next afternoon we held a meeting for boys and girls like himself, and he asked that he might tell them what had happened to him, and this is what he said. "Dear friends, last night I came to Jesus, and He has saved me and made me happy, and I want you all to follow my good example, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen." Is it as simple as that? Yes, to the little child, but, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

04.02. "Come!"

"Come!"

"Come; for all things are now ready."

"Yet there is room!" Love, love eternal waits,

The Saviour sits within the pearly gates.

Come home, oh come!

Come, e'er it be too late.

"Yet there is room!" Still open stands the gate,

The gate of love — it is not yet too late,

Come home, oh come!

The grace of God receive.

Louder and sweeter sounds the loving call,

Come, lingerer, come — enter the festal hall.

Come home, oh come!

The love of God believe. The Servant sent forth by the Master of the house with the invitations to the Supper is none other than the Holy Spirit of God. The Apostles of the Lord who were the first preachers of this gospel were told by their Master to tarry in Jerusalem until He came, and when He did come, they "preached the gospel by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." The message is so wonderful and the work of filling God's house so great and urgent, that it could not be committed to a lesser person. It is the Holy Ghost who has come into the world with an invitation to men from the Father and the Son. The first word of the invitation is COME. Consider the significance of that. It is not "Go work in My vineyard" but "COME to My Supper." It is a wonderful word, an evangelical word. It is a word that suits well the lips of the Father, who sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world; it suits well the lips of the Son who died that sinners might live; it suits well the lips of the Holy Ghost who has come into the world to compel hungry and sinful men to come to God's Supper. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are saying, Come, The Triune God desire your company in their home for ever; They are saying Come to you. Do you understand the meaning of the word? That babe of six months understands it. If I can only put the right tone into my voice and the proper smile on my face, and hold out my hands to the little mite and say, "Come," it answers at once. It cannot run to me, it cannot even say, "I will;" but it stretches out its arms and struggles to reach me. It knows what I mean. God is saying, "Come" to men, and behind the invitation there is the yearning of His love for them. He wills the death of none of them; He will cast out none who come in answer to His call; He will welcome them to His feast

and bless them for ever.

I was preaching the gospel in Leamington Spa. To the meetings came a man named Irons, and those who knew him were surprised to see him there. He was well-known, a hardened sinner. Yes, with a heart as hard as his name. He had been a man of means and had married a lady who was well-to-do, but he had drunk and gambled both fortunes, and for some years his only homes had been prison and the common lodging-house. But he came to the meetings, and one night he told me that he was saved. Saved! George Irons saved! I had my doubts, so unbelieving was I. However he came to see me, and what a time we had together! "Tell me" I said, "how this came about; are you saved because you made up your mind to give up the drink and lead a decent life?" "No," he said, "it wasn't that. While you were preaching, it seemed as if God was stretching out His arms to me, and saying, 'Come, I'll receive you just as you are.'" That is it. That is what "Come" means. I could doubt the man no more; he had heard the voice of the Saviour God calling him from his misery and sin to home and feast and love, and to God Himself. And the same voice is calling you. Come, Come, COME. The late Canon Fleming in his Autobiography has told an appealing story of the death of the Duke of Clarence, the elder son of the late King Edward VII, who was then Prince of Wales. The young duke was lying at Sandringham. His mother, the Princess of Wales, was sitting at his side, when he suddenly opened his eyes and said, "Who is that calling for me?" She answered him, "It is Jesus calling you, dear." Those were the last words he uttered, and hers were the last words he heard, for in a few minutes his life quietly closed. She rose from his bedside and saw his diary lying on a table nearby; it was open to the date when first he took the communion, and there she read,

"Just as I am, without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me;

And that Thou bidst me come to Thee;

O Lamb of God, I come."

"I could not doubt," said the future Queen of England "that dear Eddie had really come." The invitation comes to everyone, to the highest and the least, prince and pauper, and all who come are welcomed alike, for in God's sight there is no difference between royal duke and homeless drunkard, no difference between George Irons, the Duke of Clarence, and you and me.

It is strange that such an invitation should have failed in its appeal to those favoured people to whom it was first sent; but so it was. They all with one consent began to make excuse. They were not rude about it; not one of them said, as I heard a man say to whom a gospel tract was offered in a Scottish express train, "I call that a bit of impertinence; why can't people keep their religion to themselves?" No, they were not like that, it was with the greatest possible politeness that they rejected the invitation, but they rejected it all the same, they deliberately and finally rejected it.

One had his land, another had his oxen, and a third had his wife; and there was nothing wrong in these; they were all legitimate possessions, and the men who had them were evidently shrewd, industrious and sociable men. What was wrong then? Their own interests were more important in their eyes than the great Supper; they were so completely engrossed with what they possessed that they could not even consider the grace of the invitation sent to them by the Master of the

House. He had thought of them and provided His feast for them in vain, His kindness was slighted and His servant turned from their doors with a blank refusal; they could manage very well without the Supper, thank you! Did the Lord err in drawing this picture? Most certainly not. He reads the hearts of all and knows their motives and ways, and He described in the parable the folly and sinful independence of God and His blessing of which thousands are guilty. It may have described the folly of the Jew to whom the gospel was first sent, but it also describes the attitude of thousands of easy-placed, well-to-do men and women of the world to-day. They would prefer to have nothing to do with God; they will take His benefits, but they do not desire His saving grace; the gospel Supper has no attraction for them; temporalities are more to them than eternal verities. They have no time for God. "I have bought," "I have bought," "I have married." Their own activities and achievements are everything to them, and not one of them says, "I have sinned" as did the prodigal son; and dares anyone to say that they will have another opportunity in another life? The Master of the house was angry and said, "None of those men that were bidden shall taste of My Supper." God's word to sinners is "Come"; if that word is rejected it changes to "Depart." The "larger hope" that some have preached is a delusion and a lie.

Let every man and woman of us hear this word of invitation, this great word, Come, and heed it, and respond to it without delay. It is God that is calling.

"Oh, be swift my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet."

It is God who calls; it is God who says Come.

04.03. The Future

The Future "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

"The music of the ransomed,

I thought how sweet 'twould sound,

How all the halls of glory

With joy would echo round.

But ah! more sweet and charming

Than songs or music rare

Is this heart-thrilling sentence,

The one I love is there."

I don't want anybody to suppose from what I have said that the present is more important than the future — it is not. Time is short, it runs on swift feet. Forty, fifty, sixty, perhaps eighty years, and a man bids "good-bye" to this life and enters eternity, and eternity is long: it never ends; and no question can rival in importance that which we sometimes ask, Where will you spend eternity?

I remember years ago seeing a village in Ireland in ruins. All the cottages in it were roofless and uninhabited. It was a melancholy sight. I was told that the people who once lived in those cottages had refused to pay the rent and had been evicted. The village was a parable to me. We dwell in "this earthly house of our tabernacle" — you and I — and we have received "notice to quit." Why? Because we have not paid the rent. God is the landlord, He is the designer and builder of our bodies. It is He that "giveth to us life, breath and all things" as the Bible tells us; consequently He has claims upon us, and we have not met those claims, nor desired to. We were all alike in this respect, until some of us — but that is another matter that we shall come to soon — we did not pay the rent, we were determined not to; "we turned every one to his own way"; and that is why notice to quit has been served on us. We are awaiting eviction — some of us have "a better hope," but again that is another matter. The truth is, "It is appointed unto men once to die." The grim bailiff DEATH has his work to do, and when the time comes, he will do it effectually, regardless of our wishes or feelings. To some he comes suddenly, and without warning evicts them from this earthly dwelling; but however and whenever he comes, the long-cherished and tenderly-cared for tabernacle will fall into ruins; nothing can save it; and surely the greatest question to the man involved is, What of the one who dwelt in it? Who can tell us? A well-known scientist has said that the soul of a man is like the flame of a candle; when it is snuffed out it is gone and done with for ever. I wonder if he really believes that. You do not, and neither do I. He would reduce us to the level of the beasts, from which he says we have sprung; but we know better than that. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul; and he is greater than sun, moon and stars, for he will live for ever and be conscious of his existence when they have

ceased to be. You and I will live forever. But who can tell us about that? The agnostic cannot — the man who parades his ignorance and boasts in it. Robert Ingersoll was a clever man; he laughed at the Bible and lectured in crowded halls on "The Mistakes of Moses"; had he any comfort or assurance to give us about eternity? Hear what he said about it:

"Is there beyond the silent night

An endless day?

Is death a door that leads to light?

We cannot say.

The tongueless secret locked in fate

We do not know. We hope and wait."

Suppose the landlord of those defaulting Irish folk had sent a message to them of this sort, "You have failed in your obligations, and in justice I must have you evicted from the cottages in which you have lived and disregarded my claims; but when the time comes for you to be turned out, I will open the doors of my mansion and welcome you to my home. It will be my pleasure to have your company." Suppose that! Never such a landlord existed among men; if there had been such an one, his fame would have spread to the ends of the earth, and his deed would have been the subject of many a story book. It is my business and joy to tell you that such a landlord God is. He has thrown open the doors of His home, and there are many mansions there — there is room for all. And in the gospel — in this very parable, God is telling men that though they have got notice to quit, for death has passed upon all men for that all have sinned, yet He will welcome to His home whosoever will accept His invitation when the time of their eviction comes. It is a surprising offer, and puts God in a different light to that in which men generally view Him, and it is the more surprising because it is made to those who are enemies and alienated from Him by wicked works.

Now in contrast to the hopeless wail of the agnostic the Christian speaks with confidence as he looks into the future. He can say, "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Corinthians 5:1-21. And though with many, if not all, there is a natural shrinking from death, the Christian may face it without fear, for the death of Christ has taken the sting out of it, by dying He has robbed the devil of the power of it, to deliver those who through fear of it were all their lifetime subject to bondage. As we read the Scriptures we realise that the saved man or woman, those who rely wholly upon the Saviour, have no need to have a single tremor in the presence of death. We are very familiar with Paul's words, "To depart to be with Christ which is far better," and, "To die is gain." But others also have spoken when dying. John Fletcher said, "I'm like a bird escaping from its cage." Melancthon said, "Nothing now but heaven." J. G. Bellett cried out with joy at the thought of being with the "Man of Sychar's well," and "the Man of Calvary." I heard of a young girl in her late teens, who when they thought she was gone and said so, whispered, "I'm just passing into glory," and I will give you in way of contrast to Ingersoll's gloomy outlook the words of a contemporary of his, D. L. Moody, who spoke to more people than any man of his day. It is said that he addressed audiences aggregating one hundred millions, and his subject was always Christ the Saviour. He was dying at 62, his strong physical frame worn out by excessive labours. Here in

his son's own words is the account of his going. "Suddenly he was heard speaking in slow and measured words. He was saying, 'Earth recedes; heaven opens before me.' The first impulse was to try to arouse him from what appeared to be a dream. 'No, this is no dream, Will,' he replied, 'It is beautiful. It is like a trance. If this is death, it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go.'" A gifted poet has sung a poor, sad dirge:

"Nothing begins and nothing ends

That is not paid with moan,

For we are born in others' pain

And perish in our own." But we may thank God, that such a hopeless outlook has no place in Christian hymnary.

I am anxious that you should not be deceived by the lie that God has nothing for you now, that you must wait for His blessing "ayont the grave," but I am equally anxious that you should enquire as to the future. The gospel that tells us of present joy and peace, of the feast that is now ready, tells us also of future glory and a home in heaven for ever. God has said, "My house shall be full," and His invitation to men covers the present and the future; there is a feast and a home for all who respond — a satisfying feast and an eternal home.

04.04. The Great Supper

The Great Supper "A certain man made a great Supper."

"Great is the house and great the One that built it;

Great is the Supper He has spread therein;

Great was the price it cost Him to provide it,

And great the grace that forces us within.

Soon to that region He will safely bring us,

Once in that dwelling which is His and ours,

Sorrow and pain and death no more shall sting us;

There shall we worship with supernal powers."

Nobody who knows anything about it will challenge me when I say that the parable of the GREAT Supper was spoken by our Lord to illustrate God's way of blessing men. It tells how He proposes to meet the deepest needs of their souls and deliver them from their miseries; it also tells of His desire that they should be happy with Him at His own expense, as His guests; He desires the pleasure of their company. And, if I may add another thing, without clouding the issue, it shows the joyful way in which He is now celebrating the coronation of His Son in the glory. The day of the coronation of George VI and his Queen was a great day; from London to the farthest outposts of the Empire, in mansion, cottage and slum, there was feasting and rejoicing. God has raised up Jesus from the dead and crowned Him with glory and honour; He has enthroned Him to be a Prince and a Saviour for men, and He wants everyone to rejoice because of this. He invites us to share His joy and participate in the blessings that result from the triumph of His Son over sin and death and the devil, and because of His coronation in heaven. The Supper is a great one because of this great reason for it — the desire of God for the happiness of men.

It is great because God is great, and it is His Supper. He is great in His power and wisdom, as we all surely know, for this is declared in His creative works, but He is greater in His love. "God is love" and it is this that should appeal to us all. In ancient days, for His own wise purposes, He selected one nation from all the rest and cared for it with a special care, but that was only until the time arrived for His Son to appear. Now He will have all men to be saved, Gentiles as well as Jews. He thinks of every nation, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." He sends His invitation to all. The gospel word is "whosoever will." The rich are no more to Him than the poor; in His sight the black are equal to the white. He stretches out His hands to all and invites all without distinction to come in to His Supper. It is a great Supper because it is God's, and He is great.

It is a great Supper because of the multitude that will enjoy it for ever. It does not seem that that could be so, judging by what we see. The happy Christians appear to be in the minority. The multitudes queue up for the cinemas and theatres and race courses; dance halls are packed, but not the gospel services. The clown gets the laughing crowd while the herald of God's salvation delivers his message to the children and a few, sometimes very few, adults. "Without exaggeration, a thousand people gathered round us to hear the word," writes an enthusiastic open-air evangelist, "and at the end of the meeting four men stepped out and confessed the Lord Jesus as their Saviour." Four out of a thousand! Of course we are glad of the four; "there is joy in the presence of the angels when one sinner repents," but four out of a thousand! that was a very small percentage. The world, the flesh and the devil seem to have had the best of it in that crowd. It may have been that kind of thing that made a man in the previous chapter ask, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" We know the Lord's answer, Look after yourself. "Strive you to enter in." Yet in spite of the fact that most men seem to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and the many are on the broad road and not in the narrow way, His house shall be filled, and it shall be filled with a multitude that no man can number. They shall come from the North and the South, and the East and the West and sit down in God's kingdom, a mighty host, ransomed from death and hell by the precious blood of God's Son, to feast for ever with Him. Many will seek to enter in then but shall not be able, because they ignored God's NOW and arrived too late. But in spite of that, heaven will be filled with a countless multitude. The Supper is great because of the number that will enjoy it.

It is a great Supper because of the cost of it, and this is the very heart of the subject. What will God give to make men happy? What price will He pay? He gives life, but the shadow of death lies on it. He gives health, but sickness is never far away. He could give money, but what is money? A North of England newspaper offered a prize for the best definition of money, and the definition that won the prize was a great one. I do not think it could be bettered. Here it is. "Money can purchase everything but happiness, and open every door but the door of heaven." But if a man is not happy in this world and does not reach heaven in the next, what has he that is worth having? He must have both if he is to be a blessed man, and not life or health or wealth can give him either; but God can give him both, but — at what a cost!

"God so loved" — Ah, the old text! I had a strange dream. In my dream I was spending a beautiful summer's day in some Yorkshire villages giving away gospel books and talking to the people about the Saviour. At a cottage door there sat a group of women, enjoying the sunshine and an hour's gossip. I had to explain to them that I was not selling anything, but giving them the gospel, and in my explanation I quoted my text, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." I had no sooner got the words out of my mouth, than one of the women laughed, a scornful laugh, and said, "T'owd text agean," and all the women joined with her in laughing at the old text again. I awoke from my dream with their laughter ringing in my ears, and was glad that it was a dream. And yet, I fear, that that is the way that many are treating the most wonderful words that mortal ears have ever heard. Old as the text may be, and often used, I cannot leave it out of this story; it tells us what God has done for our blessing, what it has cost Him to spread this feast. I might quote other texts, not so well known perhaps, but none the less wonderful. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:9-10.

How far surpassing all our need and desires must the feast be that cost God such a price! And who shall describe the price that His beloved Son paid, for the Father and the Son were one in this. He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor! The poverty of the manger was a great price to pay, but it was not enough; His life of sorrow, for He was the Man of sorrows, was a great price to pay, but it was not enough; the agony of Gethsemane, with its sweat of blood, was a great price to pay, but it was not enough; nothing could avail but the cross of Calvary; there He who knew no sin, was made sin for us; there He died for the ungodly. The Bible says, "Christ died for the ungodly." One sentence of five words — golden words. How much they have meant to me and to thousands of sinners. Many times I have pondered them, and said with moistened eyes and worshipping heart, "Why, Lord, that means me! That is the price that Thou didst pay for me!" It was the price He paid that this Supper might be spread, made ready for needy men. That is what our redemption cost Him, and that was the price that He paid that God might bless us righteously. The Supper is a great one because of what it has cost, and because of the multitude that will enjoy it, and because of the greatness of the God who has provided it; and because of His gracious desire that all men should enjoy it.

04.05. The Supper Spread

The Supper Spread Jesus said "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." — John 6:32.

"Thou bringest love and gladness forth

From Thine exhaustless store,

To me, deserving but Thy wrath,

The life for evermore."

God knows the needs of men and as the faithful Creator He gives "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness," as Paul the Apostle told the Lycaonians many years ago. Thus He spreads a feast that our bodies may be nourished, even though some of us never thank Him. But men have not bodies only, they have immortal souls, and the need of the soul is infinitely greater than the need of the body. God gives the abundance of the earth for the feeding of the body, but for the soul! for the salvation of the soul He has given the abundance of the heavens — He has given His only-begotten Son. He could not have given more than that and less would not have done. And now He bids the hunger-stricken, sinful sons of men to come in to His Supper. "All things are ready; there is enough for all, and all who come will be welcomed and saved and satisfied.

What is it that sinful men need first and most? When those four zealous friends of the palsied man brought him to the house where Jesus was, and let him down through the tiling at His feet, they thought that He would immediately work a miracle, and by a word put strength into the shaking limbs of their afflicted friend. We can understand their astonishment, and perhaps disappointment, when instead He said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." But the Lord knew better than they; He knew that the forgiveness of sins was that man's greatest need; his sins first and then his sickness, his soul first and then his body. The forgiveness of sins is the first of many blessings that God offers to men, and all who enter the door and sit down at His Supper will find that this is the first of the dishes on the table. And I am glad to be able to make known the fact and describe it in the very words that Paul used in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. They are Holy Ghost inspired words, and one thousand nine hundred years have not changed the need or taken the power out of the words. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man [Christ Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Acts 13:38. Of course there are many who despise this blessing; those Pharisees and scribes who scorned the Saviour's grace, would not have taken a single step to get it, because they had never felt the burden of their sins; but we shall not listen to them or their ilk. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" and only those who have tasted of this dish can speak of its sweetness and commend it to others. David was one of these. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven," he exclaimed, and those who know tell us that his exclamation means, "Oh the blessednesses of the forgiven man!" His cup ran over with relief and joy, and, I should add, thanksgiving.

During the war, it was on the Sunday of the Dogger Bank engagement, I addressed a gathering of soldiers in South Shields. There was one lad of the Royal Engineers there who listened to my words with great earnestness — so much so that I made up my mind that I would speak to him when the meeting was over. He anticipated me and asked if he might have a talk with me. We sat down together and I asked, "What's the trouble?" He broke down completely and said, "I've got a big sin on my soul." "Tell me about yourself" I said. And he poured out a sad tale of folly and sin though he was only nineteen. "It seems to me, Edward," I said, "that you have got a lot of big sins on your soul." He confessed that he had, and sobbed out "I'm glad my mother is dead, she would have broken her heart over me." He was ready for forgiveness, poor lad. "I want you" I said, "to read this verse," and I turned him. to Isaiah 53:5. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." I explained to him that the verse was about the Lord Jesus, and I put myself alongside him and told him how the great Saviour had suffered for our sins on the cross that we might be saved. He drank in the truth and feasted on the gospel story, and then we knelt and thanked God. As I shook hands with him that night outside his billet he said, "I haven't been able to sleep for many a night, I've been so miserable; but I'll be able to go to my bed to-night and say, 'God has forgiven me'."

Men were badly needed in Flanders and young as he was he had to go, and he found time to write to me perhaps the last letter he ever did write, for my answer came back, "Missing." In that letter written during the worst of February weather, amid sleet and rain and cold and mud and all the miseries and dangers of the trenches, he wrote "I'm so happy." Why was he so happy? Because he had entered the feast and was rejoicing in that first dish on the table — the forgiveness of sins. He had tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious; his sins were forgiven for His Name's sake. That is the beginning of the feast and there is more to follow. We read, "Being justified by faith, we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." How well that dish suits the palate of those whose consciences have troubled them and who, like David, have said to God, "Against Thee, and Thee only have I sinned" and have longed to have peace with God. I knew a band of lads, I had almost said a gang, they were not Y.M.C.A. boys, nor the sort that you would expect to see rushing to the gospel meetings. But one of them was induced to go and hear an earnest evangelist who had come to the town, and he not only heard but believed. Of course he was the subject of many a jest. He did not mind that. The nightly gospel and not the variety show was now his delight, he had got into God's feast. A week passed and he returned to his home from one of these meetings, and there was gathered this band of his old friends to greet him. The laughter started at once. "Now, parson," they said, "preach us a sermon." To their astonishment he stood on a chair, and said "I can't preach, but I can sing," and he began.

"O the peace my Saviour gives,
Peace I never knew before;
All my life has brighter grown
Since I learnt to know Him more."

Before he reached the end of his song there slipped from the room his own brother and another, and when they looked at each other outside the door, the tears were on both their cheeks. The joy

of that lad as his soul feasted on the peace that the Saviour had given him, and as he poured out the story in his song, had broken them down, and they too pressed in to the feast. Yes, peace with God is a sweet dish, and I who know its sweetness would urge on all who don't to enter into the feast and taste it now. Did you ever read the story of those four leprous men who sat outside the gate of the besieged and starving city of Samaria? It is an interesting and instructive tale, and is told in 2 Kings 7:1-20. They sat there until death seemed to be closing in upon them on every side, and they decided that their only hope of life was to cast themselves on the mercy of the besieging army. But when they reached the camp of the enemy they did not find a single man there. They found instead, what they were needing most, plenty of good food. And the story tells us, "they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver and gold and raiment and went and hid it, and came again and went into another tent, and carried thence also." I want to use the story as an incentive to those who have entered God's feast, not to be satisfied with one dish, but to go from dish to dish, as those men went from tent to tent. God's grace has provided this great feast of many dishes, and Faith appropriates what God has provided, and the more faith appropriates the more will God be delighted.

I speak of one more dish. It is set before us in John 3:1-36 "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." This carries us beyond all our expectations; we compare it with that Old Testament Scripture, "He brought me into His banqueting house and His banner over me was love. I sat down under His shadow, with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste," and we say this is even better than that. This gives us the "bairns" place and assures us of a Father's care as long as life shall last, and is the pledge that the best that heaven can give shall be ours for ever. It tells us of the Father's love which is the richest, sweetest portion that heaven can set before our souls.

04.06. "The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind"

"The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind"

"Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, and the halt, and the blind . . . Go out into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled."

"Call them in" — the poor, the wretched,

Sin-stained wanderers from the fold:

Peace and pardon freely offer:

Can you weigh their worth with gold?

"Call them in" — the broken-hearted,

Cowering 'neath the brand of shame,

Speak love's message low and tender —

"'Twas for sinners Jesus came."

"Bring them in" — the careless scoffers,

Pleasure seekers of the earth,

Tell of God's most gracious offer,

And of Jesus' priceless worth."

It is a man's own loss if he refuses the God-sent invitation. The feast will go on without him and God's house shall be full. The poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind will come in, compelled by the great Servant, from the streets and lanes of the city. But who are these? Again the Master-artist is at work describing those who are fit subjects for God's grace, and who will most certainly appreciate that grace when they know their need for it. The poor cannot pay, the maimed cannot work, the halt must be brought, and the blind are helpless without a guide. Not one of them is self-sufficient, they are dependent people. Every man and woman on earth comes into this category, only some have not discovered this, and others are too proud to own it. Some boast, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," but to them the Lord replies, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." It is not easy to confess the truth, it cuts clean across our natural pride, and the discovery of it is a bitter experience; but it is the way to the blessing, and it is better to confess the unpalatable truth than hug the pleasant lie.

All are poor; the Lord has described us all as "debtors, with nothing to pay." A man's bank balance or broad acres do not enter into this question. The millionaire is as poor before God as the man

who sleeps on the Embankment with neither penny nor purse. You might be able to scatter money with the munificence of Lord Nuffield, it would be of no account at God's door; gold cannot buy grace. A millionaire manufacturer in my native town gave a large sum of money to local charities. His Christian secretary asked him, Why? for it was an unusual move on his part. "Because I want to go to heaven as well as you" was his answer. But not such as he with his fancied ability to pay pass in to the Supper; it is the poor that are welcomed and those who think they are rich are turned empty away.

"Our poverty of soul

To God's gate can bring no toll,

Giftless we come to Him who all things gives." To every sinner that owns the truth God has got a perfect answer. Let a man confess his poverty, and God's answer is, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Let a man confess that he has been maimed by sin, and made helpless to work for his salvation, God's answer is, "When we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly," and, "By grace are ye saved . . . not of works, lest any man should boast." Let a man acknowledge that he is halt, without the power to walk in the ways of righteousness, God's answer is, "Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only-wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever." Let a man acknowledge that he is blind, God's answer is, "To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Me (Christ)."

Why do not men understand their need of God's grace? Why don't they see that if they refuse His grace they must be lost for ever? God gives a solemn answer to these questions. We read, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine in unto them." 2 Corinthians 4:1-18. The fact is that there is a great conflict for souls being waged between Satan, the god of this world, and the great Servant who has come from heaven to compel men to come in to God's Supper. I will tell you of the conflict for one soul, and how it ended. It was on a ferry boat, crossing the beautiful Sydney harbour, that I was introduced to a man of some standing in the shipping world of the city. He had graduated from the University and had made good in his business life, but that did not satisfy him; he had a great thirst for knowledge and was determined to know the truth as to things. In his search for truth he was attracted by Theosophy, which was in the way of being popular in his circle at that time, and for a while he was well satisfied and sure that what he held for truth could not be challenged. Satan had succeeded in blinding his eyes. One day he was seized with a sudden illness and his doctor ordered an immediate operation. Now came the test. He set about to work himself up into an ecstatic state of mind to face the ordeal; he succeeded, and this lasted until he got between the sheets in his bed at the nursing home. Then to use his own words, he "got the wind up." The great Servant was opening his blind eyes. He had a few hours to wait for the operation and he was in a panic; his hope had failed him, it had burst like a bubble. He asked for a Bible and began eagerly to read from the New Testament, and he had read through the four Gospels before he was called

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04.07. The Door to the Supper

The Door to the Supper "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." — John 10:1-42.

"O God, through Christ, the living way,
My Father and my God,
So near, and I so far astray,
Brought nigh Thee by His blood."

Yes, Christ is the door to the Supper, the only way of blessing for sinful men, He said so Himself. "I am the door," and again, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." John chapters 10 and 14. The words have been so often repeated and become so familiar that they seem to have lost their force and meaning; may the Holy Spirit of God put fresh unction and power into them for every one of us to-day.

Some people seem to think that God ought to have opened a dozen ways into His blessing, so that they could have chosen the one that suited them the best; they turn from the blessing because they do not like the way to it, but there is none other. This is said both clearly and conclusively in Peter's words, when, filled with the Holy Ghost, he addressed the Christ-rejecting leaders of the Jewish nation. "Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:1-37. God has bound up the blessing of sinners with the glory of His Son and never will one of them be saved apart from Him. The great Servant who has come from heaven to compel the needy into God's feast of blessing will compel them only through this new and living way — Christ. There is no room for argument, no other way of blessing is possible either in time or eternity. God has spoken, and His word is final.

We should rejoice that this is so, for Christ Jesus the Lord is both accessible and attractive and most suitable to sinful men. Multitudes can bear witness to this, and it is this that the Bible means when it says "He is gracious." The four Gospels have been written that we might have no doubt about this. They show the Lord to us in a fourfold and complete way, and are well calculated to meet and win the most callous heart. They tell us that when the disciples would have driven the children away, He drew them to the warmth of His own heart and blessed them, and they were not afraid of Him and did not flee from Him. They tell us of the leper who came to Him, and was not repulsed. If he had come to Peter he would have cried, "Don't come near me," and John would have said, "Keep your distance," but Jesus had compassion on him and stretched forth His hand and touched him, and he, poor wretch, had not been touched for years, and the touch of that compassionate hand must have healed his stricken soul as truly as those words of power healed the plague of his body. These Gospels tell us how He wept over Jerusalem, the city that hated Him and was to murder Him, as He foresaw its doom, and how tears of divine sympathy flowed down

His cheeks when He saw the sorrow of two of His friends weeping for their dead brother; for foes and friends He wept alike, and His tears were the proof of an impartial, invincible love. But it is His cross that makes Him so irresistibly attractive, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men." He was crucified; the Gospels tell us of this; and who can read that four times told story and remain unmoved! John the Apostle who stood by the cross, gives it to us in the fewest words. He tells us what he saw and heard: the cry, "I thirst," the triumphant word "It is finished"; the thorn-crowned head bowed in death; the side pierced with the soldier's spear, and the flowing blood and water. Of all this he was a witness, and he says, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." John 20:31. Alas that the record should have been made in vain for so many!

Let us hear what John Bunyan can tell us of the effect of a sight of the cross. "Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side by a wall, and that wall was called Salvation, Isaiah 26:1. Up this way therefore did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus until he came to a place somewhat ascending: and upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below it in the bottom a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the Cross, his burden loosed off from his shoulders, and fell from his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in and I saw it no more.

"Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death. Then he stood awhile to look and to wonder: for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks . . . Then Christian gave three leaps of joy, and went on singing —

"Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be

The Man that there was put to shame for me." In this way did the pilgrim pass through the door into God's everlasting feast. And let us listen to John Newton. He had got as far from God as a man out of hell could, and in the hold of a fast sinking ship, when all hope had been abandoned, he cried to God for mercy, and saw as in a vision the Saviour on the cross, and prostrate at His feet he was saved, and afterwards wrote:

"I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies of blood,
Who fixed His eyes of love on me
As near His cross I stood.
That look of love and sorrow said:
My life for thee I give;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou mayest live!

O never till my latest breath

Can I forget that look;

It seemed to charge me with His death,

Though not a word He spoke.

That look of love and sorrow said:

My life for thee I give;

This blood is for thy ransom paid,

I die that thou mayest live." That was the way that John Newton entered into the blessing, and he could not forget it, nor did he intend that any one else should forget it after his death, as one who has written of him has said, for he gave instructions that the only epitaph on his grave should be,

John Newton,

Clerk,

Once an Infidel and Libertine,

A servant of slaves in Africa,

Was, by the mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

Preserved, Restored, Pardoned,

And appointed to preach the Faith

He had so long laboured to destroy. And if I may be permitted to humbly put myself alongside these men, who were great sinners, greatly saved, I will tell you the way that I found the door to the Feast. I was a convicted and repentant sinner, feeling deeply my need of the Saviour, and a servant of the Lord put his arm round me and said, "You'll trust Him to-night, won't you, dear?" I knew who he meant when he said, "You'll trust HIM," and I answered, "Yes." He said, "Let us sing,

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done,

I am my Lord's and He is mine;

He drew me and I followed on,

Glad to confess His Name divine,

Happy day, happy day,

When Jesus washed my sins away."

Why did I, on the following day, print the Name JESUS in capital letters, and put it where I could see it constantly? I had found the way to the great Supper, I had passed through the door of salvation — It was Jesus Himself, and He was not only the way into the Feast, He was the Feast itself. He was all in all.

If John the Apostle, and John Bunyan, and John Newton, and many another John, through infinite mercy found this one way of blessing open for them and if they entered in with gratitude and joy, why not you? The door is open still, and this great Saviour's words are still the hope of despairing souls, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." The multitude that no man can number, who shall sit down at God's Feast, have every one of them entered by this one way: there is none other.

04.08. How the Guests are Fitted for the Feast

How the Guests are Fitted for the Feast

"Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Colossians 1:12.

"It is the Father's joy to bless;

His love has found for me a dress,

A robe of spotless righteousness

O Lamb of God in Thee!"

—

"For our robes, so white, so radiant,

Witness as they shine

Of the sacred blood that washed us,

Thine, O Lamb divine." But how are needy, naked sinners, whom these guests, gathered from the streets and lanes of the city and from the highways and hedges represent, to be made fit to sit down and feast in the presence of God? The parable of the Feast at the Marriage of the King's Son given in Matthew's Gospel clearly shows that a garment is needed — there spoken of as the wedding garment, and every man's conscience tells him that he must have some fitness for God's presence if he is to be at peace and happy there.

I knew a fine Christian, he was brought into God's great Supper as a young officer in the British Army. His ancestral home was in the South of Ireland, and as soon as he could obtain leave he went there to confess his faith in the Lord Jesus. He was anxious that all his old acquaintances should find what he had found, and amongst these was his old nurse, a Roman Catholic. "O, Master Eddy," she said, "don't you be worrying yourself about your old nurse, sure, she paid half-a-guinea for a shroud that his Holiness has blessed, and if her old carcase is wrapt in it when she dies, she'll go straight into paradise, and no purgatory at all." Of course she was deceived, poor credulous old soul, but not more deceived than legions who think that in a garment of their own righteousness they will be able to enter the glory of God.

"We are doing our best," say they, "we are doing our best."

One lesson of the parable is that those who enter the feast, being "poor and maimed and halt and blind," are as entirely dependent upon the Master of the house for fitness to enter as for the invitation to be there. And of this we may be sure, if He invites, He will give the fitness, but only those who know their need are ready to accept His gift of it, the robe of righteousness that He provides.

I had addressed a meeting of Christians in Toronto, Canada, when a happy looking man came forward and said to me, "I have to thank you, sir." "Have you, and what for" I asked. "Well, twenty-seven years ago in St. Helens, Lancashire, you were used of God to the salvation of myself and wife." "I am delighted to hear that," I said, "for I was only there once in my life and I remember the meeting well." Said he, "We were invited to hear you, two self-righteous churchgoers, who never imagined that we could be wrong; and what should your text be but, 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' You did not spare us, and we went away from the meeting very angry, but our eyes had been opened, and we saw that we could not trust in ourselves, our only hope was in Christ whom you preached." The following evening a lady, who introduced herself as the wife, corroborated her husband's story of their discovery of the need of a righteousness not their own. Every one who enters the feast must learn what those Lancashire people learnt, and what Toplady had learnt when he sang,

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling,
Naked come I, Lord, for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace,
Foul, I to the fountain fly
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

There are two things that a man who is honest before God must confess, first, he has sinned, second, he has no righteousness to cover him before God. If any man has not yet discovered these unpleasant but inexorable facts, he should read Romans 3:1-31, where we read, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and, "There is none righteous, no not one." What can we do? Nothing. What will God do? Everything. His word declares, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," and, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." How happy are all those to whom these great sayings apply; they have brought comfort and peace to many. And as to righteousness, the same word of God is equally clear. It tells us that God has declared His own righteousness — His own consistency with Himself, and all His attributes — "that He might be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." What is it that enables God righteously to justify, or declare righteous all those who believe in Jesus? It is the value that He sees in the atoning blood.

I listened with great interest to an old French missionary, who had laboured for many years among the Moslems of North Africa. He said the men delighted to gather round the Christian preacher in the Market Place and ply him with questions and riddles of all sorts. One day they were endeavouring to prove to him that Mohammed and his religion was far superior to Christ and the Christian Faith, when an old man spoke up and said, "We believe in Mohammed, and have more than two hundred and fifty prophets, and are all in rags; this stranger believes in Christ and has only one prophet, and is well dressed, let us listen to him." The Christian missionary was better dressed than the old Moslem imagined, and he was able to tell them that he wore a robe, invisible to the eyes of men, but beautiful in God's eyes — a robe of pure righteousness, which robe is Christ. And every one that comes to God renouncing his own righteousness is arrayed in this

same spotless robe. The great men of olden times longed for this fitness for God's presence. Moses prayed, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," David said, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with Thy likeness." What these men prayed for and hoped for is given to those who believe as a present possession, for Christ "is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." He became what we were when He was crucified, that we might become what He is now, the righteousness of God in Him.

What a glorious time that will be, when God will look upon His assembled guests in His glory, and see them all conformed to the image of His Son, everyone of them having His likeness; but even now the Christian can say, "As He is, so are we, in this world." This is God's bright design, the purpose of His love, that the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind, should appear perfect and blameless before Him in His glory to rejoice in His presence for ever. But if any man still thinks that his own righteousness, the works of his own hands, are a good enough covering for him before God, let him consider the parable of the marriage of the king's son in Matthew 22:1-46. There we read of a man who refused the garment provided by the king, and presumed to appear at the Feast in a suit of his own make. But the king came in to view the guests and his eye fell upon this intruder, and searched him through and through; he looked beneath the gaudy rags in which he trusted, and exposed the pride and obstinacy of his heart. To the demand, Friend, how camest thou in hither without a wedding garment?" he was speechless, without excuse. Could he then plead for mercy and beg for a covering not his own? No, it was too late for that; it was too late. The sentence of the insulted king went forth. "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness." Immediately that sentence was executed; he was cast out of the Feast and his rags became the fetters that bound his soul in everlasting misery. He was searched, silenced and sentenced. It is divine love that has given the warning. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

04.09. "Until He find it"

"Until He find it"

"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing . . . I have found my sheep which was lost." Luke 15:5-6.

"He found me, the lost and the wandering,

The sinful, the sad and the lone;

He said, I have found thee, beloved,

Forever thou art Mine own.

O soul, I will show thee the wonder,

The worth of My precious blood,

Thou art whiter than snow on the mountains,

Thou'rt fair in the eyes of God."

—

"It was Thyself, O Lord, that sought

With tender yearnings, deep,

The loveless soul that sought not Thee,

The worthless, wandering sheep." The Lord had more to say. His heart was full of the word He had brought from heaven and He cried, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He did not ask for hands that could work, or purses that could pay, or brains that could solve great problems, but ears that could hear, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," and every word from His lips was the word of God. What a crowd gathered in response! Publicans and sinners, the scum of the city, men and women with empty hearts and blasted lives, all pressing about Him. What drew them there? They knew well that He had no sympathy with their sins, then why did they come? They came because they felt that He loved them, that He cared for them, that He would not spurn them, sinners though they were. And those Pharisees and scribes that stood scornfully on the outer ring, why were they there? They were there to carp and criticise and condemn; and now they see their opportunity and seize it. "This man," they say, "receiveth sinners." They could think of nothing worse than that to say of Him, and they said it with venom. He was despicable in their eyes with that mob around Him when He might have had their honourable company. How they hated Him! But they spoke the truth in spite of their hatred. That which degraded Him in their eyes was His glory; and they then and there gave to the evangelist a most blessed text. I take up their words and strip them of the scorn with which they clothed them,

and sound them forth with eager lips as the very gospel of God. "This Man receiveth sinners." Thank God! and again, Thank God! And that countless multitude that will yet fill God's home on high will be there, every one of them, because "This Man receiveth sinners." The sneers of these scornful and self-righteous men became the occasion for the unfolding of the very heart of God, and from those lips that spake as never man spake there flowed this three-fold parable, which has been the wonder and joy of multitudes. It is truly one — three in one. The Shepherd who seeks the sheep is the Son; the woman who seeks the silver is the Spirit, and the father who welcomes the prodigal is the Father — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Triune God — concerned and active, not in the spreading of the great Supper only, but in filling it with guests, in the salvation of the lost — these very publicans and sinners despised by the Pharisees — and in your salvation and mine. It is as though the Lord said to them, You are grieved and offended because I receive sinners, but I receive them because the Father receives them, I am here to show you the Father, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But if the Father was to welcome and pardon prodigal sinners, the Shepherd must first seek the wandering sheep, and I need not quote that Old Testament word, "All we like sheep have gone astray" to prove that the sheep that the Shepherd seeks are sinful men, such as you and me. So it is that I must speak of the Shepherd and His search for the sheep before I reach the supreme parable of the Father's love, the one is indispensable to the other.

It is the persistence of His love for the lost that He unfolds in these few words. "He goeth after that which is lost until He find it." He does not tell all that this would cost Him ere He could lift it safely to His shoulders, we must go to other of His words for that. But these other words were plainly spoken and we learn that His love was a suffering love as well as a persistent love. A great foe claimed the wanderer, and judgment threatened it, it was in imminent danger of perishing, and if it was to be rescued and saved the foe must be defeated, the judgment must be borne, the danger faced. There was no other way; if there had been, God would have found it. "If it be possible" Jesus prayed, "let this cup pass from me." It was not possible; the Shepherd must be smitten for the sake of the sheep. "I am the good Shepherd" He said, "the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth . . . I am the good Shepherd and know My sheep . . . and I lay down My life for the sheep." John 10:1-42.

"He tasted death's waters, offensive and bitter,

Yet dared He to drink, for the lost He would save;

His great love upheld Him, strong, infinite, quenchless,

And for His lost sheep He went down to the grave." But having laid down His life to ransom His sheep, He lives again to keep them. He holds them in everlasting security in the hands that destroyed the power of death, and upon His shoulders He has placed them; they are carried home by omnipotent ability, and not one of them shall perish; no power on earth or in hell can change His word; they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

"His own He has rescued from ruin eternal,

His blood He has shed for the life of His sheep;

What creature on earth or in hades can challenge

His right His redeemed ones in safety to keep?"

There is one word that stands out brightly in this three-fold story, it is "I have FOUND." The Shepherd found the sheep; the woman found the silver; the Father found the son. The sheep, the silver and the son were saved; no one will question that, but it is not that that the Lord is showing here, but that they were lost and found. They were lost to whom were they lost? To the Shepherd, the woman and the Father. But we do not talk of a thing as lost that has no value. We do not seek for that that is worth nothing; and when we have found that that we had lost, ours is the joy. It is the joy of the finders that thrills through this three-fold parable, it is the joy of the Triune God. "Rejoice with Me," says the Shepherd Son. "Rejoice with Me," says the Holy Ghost; "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad," says the Father.

It is a wonderful thing that sinners should be so precious to God, that He should set such a value on them as to give His Son for their salvation; and that His Son should have come from heaven and gone down into the depths of judgment and death that they might be saved, and that the Holy Spirit of God should have come from heaven to labour with them to bring them to repentance. It is wonderful, but it is true, for nothing less than this is the teaching of this parable. And twice the Lord tells us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Empires may rise and fail, kings abdicate or be crowned, these are things that shake the world and fill the chief pages of our newspapers, but they do not move heaven; but if one sinner repents and turns to God, if the Shepherd finds one sheep, there is joy in heaven. Incredible! Yes, we would have said that if Jesus had not told us, but He knows surely what heaven values and He said, "Likewise I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

I have read a story told by an Englishman who went deer stalking in the Highlands of Scotland. One day the old gillie, who was his attendant said, "Turn your glasses on that spot on the mountain side, sir, and you will see a lost sheep." And sure enough he was able to discern the poor creature on a ledge of rock, above it unscalable crags, and beneath it a precipice dipping sheer down 500 feet. "However could it have got there without flying?" he exclaimed. "Do you see a few yards down from the top of the cliff a narrow ledge of rock from which all the grass has been eaten, and again to the right another, and lower down another, and still another just above the one upon which the sheep is now?" asked the gillie. "Tell, that silly creature, tempted by those green looking ledges, has scrambled from one to another, and can't get back." "But can't anything be done to save it?" asked the tourist. "Nothing" was the answer. "Even if anybody was foolish enough to risk his life in trying, the poor beast is in such a nervous condition now that at the sound of anyone approaching, it would leap over the precipice, and there's an eagle just waiting for its prey. Nothing can save it." I borrow and repeat the story, because I want to say that if your soul is in as great and imminent danger as that sheep was, JESUS CAN REACH YOU AND SAVE YOU!

04.10. That which was lost

That which was lost

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it."

"What moved Thee to impart

Thy Spirit from above,

Therewith to fill our heart

With heavenly peace and love?

'Twas love unbounded love to us

Led Thee to give Thy Spirit thus."

—

"Praises for the Holy Ghost

Sent from heaven at Pentecost,

'Tis through Him alone we live

And the precious truth receive." In considering the activities of the Godhead for the blessing of men we cannot leave out those that lie in the hands of the Holy Spirit. We have seen that He is the Servant compelling needy men to come in to the great Supper, and now His work is portrayed again in the central story of this great three-fold parable. He has come into the world, sent by the Father and the Son, to be the Servant of their glory and to seek the lost for their joy, but He must also have His share in that joy, for the joy of the Godhead is one; and though He seeks no glory for Himself, it is right that we should honour Him and rejoice in His unwearied and never ceasing labours of love. The lost piece of silver was not easily found, the woman had to light a lamp and search diligently for it before she could say, "I have found that which was lost." It was hidden in the dust of an out of the way corner and would have remained there but for the diligence of the woman.

It has been the way of sinners to hide from God from the very beginning; it was the first impulse in the hearts of guilty Adam and his wife in Eden. "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the Garden." Genesis 3:1-24. They had lost their God, but He had also lost them; they were lost souls and He came to seek them crying, "Adam, where art thou?" And it is thus that the Holy Spirit is seeking Adam's sons to-day, He is searching diligently for them. The reason why Adam hid from God was because he had become a disobedient man and he feared God's just judgment; he did not know His mercy or His heart of love. Men hide from God

to this day for the self-same reason; they do not know His thoughts and feelings towards them; they are ignorant, and ignorance of God is darkness; and darkness needs light. The woman lighted a lamp. The Holy Spirit has lighted a wonderful and unquenchable lamp. He inspired the Holy Scriptures, He is the Author of them, "Thy word is a lamp," is clearly said of the Word in the Word itself. The Holy Spirit uses the Word that He has inspired; He uses it to expose sinful men in their hiding places, and He uses it as the infallible record of what God has done for their redemption. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the world for His great work is just as real as was the presence of the Lord Jesus when He came into it to save sinners. The difference is that the Lord became incarnate, He could be seen and handled by men, while the Holy Spirit is not incarnate and consequently not visible to mortal eyes, and because men cannot see Him they ignore Him, to them He is non-existent. But to those who have believed He is real, they have felt His power and they walk in the light which He has brought to them. The wind is unseen, but its presence is felt and the effect of it is seen. So it is with the Holy Spirit of God. He strives with men, this we learn from the Old Testament — Genesis 6:1-22 — and men resist His strivings — this we are told in the New Testament — Acts 7:1-60. And when the history of souls is unfolded in the great day of judgment, multitudes will be compelled to confess that they have resisted His strivings and missed the blessing of God in consequence.

I have no doubt that all who have believed the gospel could give some account of the gracious way of the Holy Spirit with them. Mr. J. Wilson Smith of Berwickshire, a one-time officer in the Royal Scottish Regiment, was well known for his long and faithful labours in the gospel throughout the Cheviots. He was to hold an open-air meeting on a certain Sunday afternoon, not many miles from Wooler. A fine old Christian lady felt a great urge to invite a neighbouring farmer's wife to this meeting, but she got very small encouragement when she did so. "Open-air meetings are not for the likes of me. I go to church, not as often as I should like, but as often as I can. I don't need these open-air meetings," was the answer to the invitation. "Well, Mrs. Dunn," said the Christian lady, "don't forget, 'Ye must be born again'." "What do you mean by that?" came the sharp response. "Come to the meeting to-morrow afternoon and perhaps you will find out," was the quiet and wise answer. I knew this Christian lady, and knew that she prayed for her neighbours, and I am sure that she asked that she might be guided by the Holy Spirit to invite this special one to that special meeting, and I am sure that the Spirit in His search for that religious but unregenerate soul gave her the words to speak to her. Anyhow, Mrs. Dunn could not forget them. As she went about her work she said over and over again to herself, "Ye must be born again! Ye must be born again! I wonder what she meant." She continued to wonder to such purpose that at 3 o'clock on the following afternoon she was standing with many others waiting for the open-air meeting to commence.

I knew Mr. J. Wilson Smith intimately for many years, and I never met a servant of the Lord who prayed more about his service, or sought more sincerely and earnestly the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God for the messages that he had to deliver. On this particular afternoon he did what was unusual for him, without a preliminary hymn or even a prayer, he announced his text. "Ye must be born again." And as his fine clarion voice repeated the text again and again, the effect upon Mrs. Dunn was deep and immediate. "Dear me," she said, "the very same words, what can they mean?" She discovered that they meant something that had never taken place in her soul's history. The Holy Spirit was shedding the light of the lamp upon her in her hiding place, and

bringing her out of it. And she did come out of it, for she abandoned all her confidence in her religious observances, and it was my part in the matter and my joy to follow up the work and lead her actually to the Saviour's feet.

I must add another incident in which the Holy Spirit showed His diligence and over-ruling hand in this search for souls. It is the case of a great friend of mine. As a young man, he began to realise that his endeavours to lead an upright life and his steady progress in his profession did not satisfy the deeper needs of his soul; he was unhappy, and he felt he was not right with God. It was the Spirit's work within him awakening him to his need of Christ. He was a methodical man and caught a certain train to the City every morning, but one morning, to his great annoyance, he arrived at the Railway Station just in time to see his train disappearing Cityward. When the next train came in he stepped into the compartment nearest to where he was standing. Sitting in the opposite corner to the one he took was a man reading a New Testament who looked up, and as though he was an old acquaintance, asked him why he was so unhappy. He was amazed, for how did this stranger know that he was unhappy! But the whole truth came out, and before the train reached its terminus that morning, my friend had found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner repenting.

There are many dark corners in the house in which sinners hide from God. With one it may be religion, with another pleasure, another becomes engrossed in business and hides in his success, and the longer they are hidden from God, the more thickly do they become covered with the dust of their sins. But the Spirit of God continues His patient pursuit of them, searching diligently until first one and then another is found. Saved by the precious blood of Jesus, but brought to own their need of it and to rely wholly on it by the work of the Holy Spirit. The work done for them by the Lord Jesus and the work done in them by the Holy Ghost result in their being found for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

04.11. The Prodigal

The Prodigal

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

"Man, earthy of the earth, an-hungered feeds

On earth's dark poison tree —

Wild gourds and deadly roots, and bitter weeds:

And as his food is he."

We need not search the night clubs for prodigals, or go down into the underworld of the great cities to find them, they are everywhere, and the man or woman that stands up and says to God, "I thank Thee I am not as other men," is a lineal descendant of the Pharisee of Luke 18:1-43. It was not the "riotous living" that made this younger son a prodigal, but the heart that was in him, and God looks at the heart. "Father," he said, "give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And his father richly endowed him with goods. He gave him enough to enable him to make a great and honourable success in life. But he had other plans, and no sooner had he got possession than he turned his back upon his father and breaking loose from all restraint, travelled far away from home, and lived his life for his own pleasure without any reference to his father's will. With what force do the Lord's words smite the conscience, and what a multitude does He describe in a few words. Here is a man, and most of us know him well, God has endowed him with great riches, He has given him a mind that can think, and hands that can work and a heart that can love, and every other faculty and organ that go to make up a man, and, greatest of all, an immortal soul. So that in all God's creation there is nothing like him; neither angel nor beast can compare with him,

"Mind that can compass the stars with its span;

Creature of mystery,

Marvellous man!"

What is he doing with his portion of goods, these great gifts? He is spending it all upon himself and without reference to God who gave all to him. He is the prodigal.

He may not be as blatant a prodigal as the rich fool of Luke 12:1-59, who talked to his soul, and said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But he is the prodigal nevertheless if he lives for self and ignores the claims of God. But may not a man do what he likes with his own? — so thought the prodigal. The answer to that question is in the words of Scripture, and is a solemn and unalterable decree from the mouth of God, "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue confess to God. So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:11-12.

This young son of his father was as much a prodigal when he decided to leave his father's house as he was when he shared the swine's field and food; he had a prodigal heart and, "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." As a matter of fact he was morally a better man in the swine field than when he left his father's house, for when he had come to the utter end of his resources, he began to have right thoughts of his father, and all his thoughts of him had been wrong up to that point.

How restless and restive some men become at the thought of their dependence upon God; independence was what Adam aimed at, "Ye shall be as gods" was the lie with which the devil deceived him, and this desire to be self-sufficing and independent of God has characterised every son of Adam since. But where does this flight from God carry men? Into the far country; and what is the far country? It is the world; and what is the world? It is the devil's sphere, where he exercises his subtle wiles to deceive man and make them happy for a while without God that he might finally destroy them; the devil has no pity, no mercy. The Bible says the world is made up of three things — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life — lust and pride. Men and women are investing their all in it, and they do not know that it is a bankrupt concern that can pay no dividends.

Yet that is not how things appear to the world's votaries. I listened to an open-air preacher, he was a fluent and forceful speaker, and chiefly because he was speaking out of his own experience. He told the people that the world had almost damned him. He had gone in for it whole-heartedly, and had found that the best it could give was "froth and bubble." Listening to that same man was a young lady who said she did not agree with the man at all, she spent her time in the social whirl and was enjoying every minute of it. I was asked if I could explain the contradiction. My answer was, Here is a man who has come into a fortune of £10,000 and he sets out to live at the rate of £20,000 a year; what a man of wealth he seems to be and what a life he lives. Yes, for six months, and then bankruptcy! The young lady was living on her capital, and bankruptcy, moral, spiritual and eternal, lay before her and every other prodigal.

It is surely bad enough that great gifts should be squandered without return, but the tragedy is that the soul is risked and lost at the same time. Suppose a man could gain his utmost ambition in the world and lose his soul — what's the profit in that? Of course they are old words, but they came from the lips of eternal Truth and are eternally true. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

I was introduced in the North of England to a young Norwegian, a cultured and attractive fellow. He was the son of a successful business man and had come to England to perfect himself in our language. I said to him, "Wouldn't it be a splendid thing if you yielded your soul to the great Saviour at the very start of your visit? That would be worth coming to England for." "No, no," he said, "I want life, I want pleasure, I get that in England." "What sort of pleasure are you wanting?" I asked. "Oh, the horses, the races, the theatres! I want horses, theatres," and his face glowed in anticipation. He had made up his mind, and my warning that these things were sometimes the devil's soul-traps did not move him, and after a few days he went up to London where he could gratify his tastes to their full bent. A few months passed, three, I believe, when I received through the post a copy of the Daily Telegraph. A paragraph in it was blue-pencilled; it told of a young man who had been found dead in the bedroom of a London hotel with a towel twisted round his throat.

The verdict of the Coroner's jury was "felo de se." He was the young man of my story. He had sold his immortal soul for sinful pleasure and it had slain him. Crowds are doing it eagerly, willingly they barter their souls to the devil for the excitement of the race-course, the theatre and worse places. Instead of God's salvation they choose the downward road, the world's way, that may not in their case run to a suicide's grave, but most certainly ends in hell-fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

"Heart with a vacancy

Nothing can satisfy,

Filled with some pitiful bauble or toy;

Pleased by variety;

Palled by satiety,

Groping for happiness, yearning for joy;

Steeped in iniquity, folly and pride,

Thrusting its Monarch and Maker aside.

Deity bled for thee!

Pitied thee, pled for thee!

Proffered His treasures eternal in vain.

Bulk of Humanity,

Cursed with insanity,

Trample all offers of Grace with disdain

Thinking it wiser their God to defy —

Shrouded in dark degradation to die!"

Thank God, not all travel to that terrible end, many are awakened to their danger before it is too late, and the grace of God saves them, and gives them life and peace instead of disappointment and death, and heaven and eternal glory instead of hell and eternal woe.

04.12. The Far Country

The Far Country "There arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."

"Where is the world?

I looked for it, 'tis gone —

A globe of glass,

Cracked, shivered, vanished,

Scarce gazed upon

E'er a silent power dissolved the glittering mass." The prodigal journeys into the far country because he thinks it will do better for him than God will. He hopes for good things from it for it beckons to him with a pleasant smile, and makes great promises. It appears to be a nursing mother from whose breasts he may draw the milk of complete satisfaction. For a while he is not undeceived, it gives him the heartiest of welcomes, and spreads out its wares for him as Vanity Fair did for Christian and Faithful in Bunyan's Book. But at last he discovers it to be what it is, not a kindly mother that cares for her children, but a veritable vampire that will suck the blood of his soul and cast him aside at last as a worthless thing. If I were to quote Solomon to prove this, the king who tested every phase of the world, and declared it all to be "vanity and vexation of spirit," I might be charged with putting forward one-sided evidence, so I will not quote him, nor any Bible text, nor any saying of a Spurgeon or a Moody, but I will quote one of the world's own poets, a man, titled, wealthy, and talented, who could say, "I awoke one morning to find myself famous." He wrote after a few years of it,

"I fly like a bird of the air

In search of a home and a rest,

A balm for the sickness of care,

A bliss for a bosom unblest." And hear the confession of a man who was at one time a pampered leader of the gaiety of the world, he wrote: "I threw the pearl of my soul into the cup of wine, and went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes, I lived on honeycomb; I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless ease. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in disgrace. Where I walk there are thorns, and like many or all who have placed their heaven in this earth . . . I have found the horror of hell."

He wasted his substance, and the substance wasted can never be regained, it is gone for ever. Then it is when the prodigal reaches this point in his experience that he discovers the world's true character. The mighty famine arises; and he begins to be in want, and is wanted no more. I heard of a young man who came into a large fortune at the age of 23. In a few years it had all gone, it had melted away like snow, and he had nothing left but a great quantity of corks; the corks were

his only possession. But what were they and why did he keep them? It had been a notion of his whenever he split a bottle of champagne with a friend to ask him to initial the cork, and he kept these as souvenirs of the good times he had had, and now the fortune was gone, and the champagne was gone, and the friends were gone, and the corks were left. The poetess was not far wrong when, having observed that sort of thing, she wrote,

"Feast, and your halls are crowded,

Fast, and they'll pass you by

Succeed and give, and they'll let you live,

Fail, and they'll let you die." But the prodigal of the parable had not yet reached the nadir of his fortunes; when he began to be in want the gay side of the far country had no more use for him, but a certain citizen of it to whom he joined himself thought that he could still squeeze some service out of him, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. The degradation and horror of that could only be appreciated by the Jewish audience that listened to the words of the Lord. That certain citizen is the devil; and whoever found any pity in the devil's heart? Though he transforms himself into an angel of light, as the Bible says he does, there is no mercy in him, he is "a murderer from the beginning": yet as surely as a man flies from God, he flies into the arms of the devil, whose other names are, "the dragon, that old serpent, and Satan."

It was not until he reached the level of the grunting swine, and was so hungry that he would fain have filled his belly with their food, that the prodigal came to himself, and began to assess things at their right value. What must have been his feelings as he brooded amid the wreck of his life? It has been the experience of many sinners. Thompson expressed it well in his great poem,

"In the rash lustihood of my young powers

I shook the pillaring hours,

And pulled my life upon me, grimed with smears;

I stand amid the dust of mounded years —

My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap,

My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,

Have puffed and burst like sun-starts on a stream." The blinders are off his eyes, he sees at last, but where can he turn in his misery and despair? Who will help a wretch that the world does not want, and who may well be described as "the devil's castaway"? Memories of his father's house come back to him. The bounty of that house was proverbial, the very servants had bread enough and to spare; no beggar ever called at that house in vain, and he, a son, was perishing with hunger. "I perish with hunger" was the cry of his soul. And if his father's house was a house of plenty, what of his father himself? He will go and see, and he will cast himself upon his mercy and as he makes that decision he is encouraged to believe that his misery will move his father to pity.

God is the ruined sinner's only hope; I proclaim the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the ruined sinner's only hope and more than friend. He loves the souls of men and the cry of need

ever reaches His heart. When a sinner sinks to the lowest depths of his degradation he may still look up and meet a God whose heart yearns after him with unspeakable love. We have a telling incident in Old Testament history. Nebuchadnezzar, the great king, because of his pride had been reduced to the level of the beasts, and for seven years he ate grass like an ox, until his hair grew like eagle's feathers and his nails like birds' claws. At last his reason returned to him, he came to himself, and where could he look when he realised how debased he had become? He would be an object of contempt to the meanest of his slaves and would shrink away from their sight; but then, at that very time and in that condition, he says, "I lifted up mine eyes to heaven." He could turn to God. But here is something greater than that. The prodigal says, "I will arise and go to my father." But his father had risen up before him, and had prepared everything for his return and welcome. God is ahead of the sinner and heaven's rich provision and the Father's welcome awaits every prodigal that arises to return to God.

04.13. "I will arise and go"

"I will arise and go"

"I will arise and go unto my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned'."

"Lord" from Thee I went astray,

Lured by magic song.

Through dim places far away

I have wandered long.

Now when lost are moon and star,

Shines the light of Home afar."

—

"Then within His home He brought me

Brought me where the feast was spread,

Made me eat with Him my Father

I who begged for bondsman's bread."

Look at the prodigal as he arises from the swine field to go to his father; his burdened conscience and the load of shame that weighs upon his soul make the going heavy; his need drives him homeward but he does not run, and often he hesitates, for he has gone so far away that it seems impossible that he should ever reach his father's house again. It would be impossible if it depended on his efforts, or even upon the sincerity of his repentance, but another and a greater factor enters the story, it is the father's love. "When he was yet a great way off" — the word is the same as the far country — "his father saw him," — How keen are the eyes of love! "And had compassion on him" — How tender is the heart of love! "and ran," — How swift are the feet of love! "and fell on his neck and kissed him." Love cannot be restrained. He covered him with kisses, for that is the word. Consider well the activity and extravagance of the father's love Is that the way that God greets and treats returning sinners? It is nothing less than that that the parable teaches. But when the Lord told this story was He not exaggerating, did He not lay on the colours too brightly? That were impossible, for He is the Truth, and nothing but the truth and the whole truth could come out of His mouth. But why should God act in this way to those who can bring nothing to Him but their sin and shame? There is but one answer to that question. "God is love," and the love that fills His heart for men finds its relief and its delight in covering the multitude of their sins by His kiss, and driving all fear out of their hearts by His love. I speak out of my own experience, which answers most blessedly to the words of the parable.

"Yet a great way off He saw me,
Ran to meet me as I came;
As I was my Father loved me,
Loved me in my sin and shame."

It was now the time for the prodigal to speak, and his own need and his father's love gave directness and brevity to his speech, "Father," he said, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Here was sincerity and true repentance. He made no excuses; he did not cast the blame upon others; he did not even plead for mercy. In that sacred, solemn hour all others were forgotten but his father and himself — his sin and his father's love. This is the way that the sinner comes to God and is welcomed by the love that is greater than his sin. Then the whole truth comes out, for all was known before, and all is confessed and forgiven, and were this not so, no sinner could be happy in the presence of God. Let us anticipate for a moment and consider this son seated at his father's table, and suppose that his father had not known all his sins and forgiven all. He is not happy, his eye is on the door; every time it opens he is afraid that someone from the far country is about to enter the house to tell his father of some shame of his of which he does not know; says the son to himself, "If my father discovers all, he will spurn me from his table and drive me from his doors." But no, he is afraid of no report of his doings in the far country reaching his father's ears; he can say, he knows all, even the worst; he knew it all before I confessed it, and he has forgiven all he knows. "Thou God seest me," is a word that has made many tremble, it is a word that fills the heart that knows the gospel with peace and joy, for it means that God has forgiven all He has seen and known, there is nothing hidden from Him. The father's answer to his son's confession is more than forgiveness for his sins, and food for his hunger, and the kitchen for his shelter, he is to have what he never had before. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," is the command which willing servants hasten to obey, while the son stands by and submits with an amazement that robs him of speech. He is to come into his father's house not as a slave but a son, and he must be there in such a fashion that his father shall not be ashamed of him, but be able to look upon him with complacency and pleasure, and nothing but the best will do. The ring was the pledge of an endless love and the shoes were for a son recognised as a son and not a servant. And this is the way that God acts according to His eternal purpose to all whom He receives. Infinitely more than Adam lost in Eden is given in sovereign grace.

"From the riches of His glory
Brought He costliest raiment forth.
Brought the ring that sealed His purpose,
Shoes to tread His golden courts.
Put them on me — robes of glory
Spotless as the heavens above,
Not to meet my thoughts of fitness
But His wondrous thoughts of love."

There was nothing more splendid in the father's house as he entered there by his father's side than that once prodigal boy, for he was dressed in the best that the house could produce, and not a servant in the house could say he was not fit to be there. But who shall speak of what the Father has done and will yet do for all who believe? They can say, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Colossians 1:9. "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever, Amen." Jude 1:24.

"Had I an angel's raiment — fair
With heavenly gems unpriced,
That glorious garb I would not wear,
My robe is Christ."

Thus sang an old saint of God long ago, and every one that has come to the Father by Christ, the new and living way, may sing the same glad song.

Then they began to be merry, and as they feasted on the fatted calf, it was the father's joy that filled the home; it was he who said, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." They began to be merry, and that divine and heavenly merriment shall never cease, for it is the joy of God in the blessing of men.

"And now in His joy He singeth,
In His joy He singeth of me,
And all the heavens make music
As the gladness of God they see —
'He was dead — he was dead, and he liveth,
He was lost, was lost and is found!'
This is the song that He singeth,
The marvellous joyful sound,
Through the open doors of heaven
Afar through the starless night
Is borne the hymn of rejoicing,

The music of God's delight." This story of the love of God and how His love acts is incredible to all but a God-given faith, but those who have that faith believe it because Jesus told it, and His word is the word of the living God Who cannot lie. And how complete is the blessing, it is exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think. Like the prodigal, they would have been satisfied with bread and a place in the kitchen, and that would have been infinitely beyond their deserts; instead

God has forgiven them for Christ's sake, He has brought them into favour in His Beloved One, and they are permitted to hear the Beloved saying to His Father, "Father . . . Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me . . . and I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them, and I in them." John 17:1-26.

What an answer to the cold and bitter sarcasm of the Pharisees is this story of the love of God for sinful men! And what an answer to the devil's lie in Eden! In this love, so amazing, so divine, the weary sinner finds complete repose and, made fit for the Father's presence, worships at His feet.

04.14. Joy in Heaven

Joy in Heaven "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

"There is joy in heaven to-night,
And the angels all look on,
Yet it is not their's that deep delight,
Though their praise swells loud at the glorious sight
Of another repentant one.
The delight is Thine, O God,
For in Thee we find the source
Of that stream of love so deep and broad,
'Tis a stream that none can fathom or ford,
It has flowed by Calvary's cross.
Blessed Lord, we hear Thy voice
Saying, Friends, rejoice with Me,
And our hearts are filled with Thine own deep bliss,
We can share Thy joy in a world like this,
And throughout Eternity."

Joy in heaven! Joy in the presence of the angels of God! Do then the angels of God rejoice? They do surely, but this is not their joy, it is the joy of God — the joy of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is the joy of God that fills heaven when one sinner on earth repents! and all who are there see it, and participate in it. It is a most wonderful thing, and as we consider it we learn what is most to be valued on earth: not gold, or fame and worldly honours, but men, the souls of men, sinners though they be. But could there be anything else but joy in heaven? Well, sorrow and crying and pain and death belong to this world where sin reigns, and these sad things are the progeny of sin, and sin cannot enter heaven where God dwells, and yet — we read some strange and wonderful words in Genesis 6:1-22 "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." Think of that — God grieved at His heart! grieved because men were prodigal men, selling their precious souls to sin and the devil. Was there no sadness in heaven when God was grieved at His heart? Was Jesus sad when He

wept over prodigal Jerusalem? Yes, the tears on His cheeks and the lament on His lips were proof of that, and He was God manifest in the flesh, and when He wept the sorrow of God poured itself out in human tears, and heaven was sad. So I conclude that in those ancient times when God grieved over the wickedness of men, there was sadness in heaven. Does anyone suppose that it gave God pleasure to sweep that generation away with a flood? Judgment is His strange work, and a necessity when He executes it, but mercy is His joy. The memory of that judgment soon passed away, and again "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God," and the result of that search was sadly recorded, "They are all gone aside, they are altogether filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Psalms 14:1-7. And must there not have been sorrow in heaven because of that, sorrow because men sought not God, nor desired to?

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son into the world." Then there was joy in heaven, and the joy was great. The midnight sky was lit with the glory of the Lord, and His angel came down and announced to the shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Because the Saviour had come to turn men back to God from destruction, the joy of heaven broke all its bounds, and a multitude of the heavenly hosts proclaimed their gladness by praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." Then said those shepherds one to another, "Let us go even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. That Babe was Emmanuel — God with us and the name that was given to Him was JESUS — which means Jehovah the Saviour. No story is better known in Christendom than that; would to God its meaning were understood. He had come from His eternal throne to open up a way of repentance for lost and prodigal men, that they might turn, and turning meet a pardoning God; and the joy of heaven at His birth into the world was in anticipation of that. But for this He had to die and rise again from the dead on the third day, and such was the value of the souls of men that He came for that. The gospel that Paul preached, and there is no other true gospel, was, "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. His resurrection was as necessary as His death, for in that same chapter, written to those who had believed this gospel, it is said, "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins." It was after His resurrection that the Lord said to His disciples, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:1-53. The gospel of God is a call to men to repent, which means turn and return; thus the prodigal repented when he arose to go to his father — God offers an eternal forgiveness to all men, it is this that is proclaimed in the gospel, but those only who repent receive this priceless boon. Repentance is a turning to God from the sinful way, because it is realised that it is the way of death, and that God is other than He is supposed to be, that He is not as men have imagined Him, a hard master, an almighty tyrant out of whose presence they had better keep as long as they may, but that He is full of tender pity, that He calls them to come to Him from their wanderings, and will welcome them when they come with the kiss of forgiveness. He gave His only begotten Son to judgment and death that He might do this righteously — that He might be a just God and a Saviour, and of such value are the souls of men

in His sight, that He rejoices over every one that repents.

I have seen a wayward but repentant son weeping for his sins and the sorrow he had caused his father, upon that father's shoulder, while the arms of the old man embraced him and tears rolled down his cheeks, and everyone in the house wept in sympathy with the father's joy. It was an echo on earth of the joy of heaven. I have heard a mother say when her son had turned to God, "Now Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Her joy was heaven's joy reaching down to earth. I had preached the gospel on a Sunday evening in Detroit, U.S.A., and a lady said to me, "My nephew was with me to-night and was very much moved, I wanted him to stay and speak to you, but he is reticent and did not care to, but if you will come to my home he will see you there." "Certainly," I said, "I'll come with you with pleasure." I was told that he was in his early twenties, and that his mother, more than 1,000 miles away in Canada, had long prayed for his salvation, and knowing that he was to attend this particular gospel meeting had decided to spend the whole time in prayer for him. We waited and waited for him and wondered why he did not come. He came at last when we had almost given up hope of him, and a wonderful joy rang in his voice as he said, "I have found Him." "Do you mean that you have found the Saviour?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "and I'm sorry to have kept you waiting so long, but I wanted my mother to be the first to hear the news, so I went into the city to telegraph it to her." But she was not the first to hear the news, before the electric wires carried it to her, heaven had got it. How greatly she rejoiced, yes, but her joy was the joy that had begun in heaven, she was near enough to God to participate in His joy.

There will always be sorrow for sin in the heart of the one who repents, but repentance is more than sorrow for sin it is a complete change of mind, that turns the whole man as the helm turns the ship. The Thessalonians repented when they turned to God from idols. Saul of Tarsus repented when he cried out to Jesus, whom he had hated, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" A young man whom I met repented when he said to me, "I've had a look into eternity and I want to be saved." Repentance comes when the light shines into a man's heart and he becomes honest to God and confesses the truth, and casts himself upon God's mercy. When the publican stood afar off and would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he repented, and there was joy in heaven over him and he went down to his house justified. But repentance does not save the sinner, it is God that does that.

"It is not thy tears of repentance or prayers,

But the blood that atones for the soul."

Yet no man is saved apart from repentance. Repentance and remission of sins go together in the sinner's blessing.

We do not read that anything else causes this special joy in heaven in these gospel days and this fact shows us what God's great interest is. He does not rejoice in the discoveries of science, whatever is discovered is His creation and He knows all things from the beginning, nor does He rejoice in the successful efforts of men to improve the standard of living, for that is merely a material and temporal gain, but He does rejoice when sinners turn to Him, when He finds that which is lost, for the sons of men are more to Him than shining worlds. He gave His Son for their salvation, and when they repent, they come into harmony with Him; they were dead but are alive

again, they were lost and are found, and it is meet that heaven should make merry and be glad.

Sometimes we turn to the Scriptures and read of a time that is coming, the very thought of which thrills the soul. It is in Revelation 19:1-21 "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come." That will be when the whole multitude of the saved are gathered home, and the work of Father, Son and Holy Ghost in regard to them is completed, then will heaven be the scene of continuous and eternal joy, but that joy begins now when one sinner repents — "They began to be merry."

04.15. The Elder Son

The Elder Son

"Now the elder son was in the field: and as he drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing . . . and he was angry and would not go in." The two sons in our parable do not represent those who are sons by faith in Christ Jesus, but sons of God in the sense in which Adam was a son, by creation. Luke 3:38, and as one of the pagan poets, quoted by St. Paul, had said of all men, "We are His offspring." Acts 17:28. Man was created in the image and after the likeness of God and set in the earth as a steward to hold it for Him. From that high honour he departed and fell when he gave his allegiance to the devil instead of to God, and he became what we see him now to be, not God-centred, but self-centred, a prodigal Adam and not an advancing and much to be congratulated ape. The race is a prodigal race, whether Pharisee or publican. Yet the heart of God yearns for men as the heart of a father yearns for a wayward son. It is this that the parable teaches.

I have heard it argued that the majority of men are not like the younger but like the elder son, and to be heartily congratulated on their upright lives and good citizenship. Well, the elder son is a problem and not easily placed. But it must be noticed that it was he who said the good things about himself. It was he who said, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." Certainly he could blow his own trumpet, and he had a high estimate of his father's indebtedness to him. But look at him — an angry and jealous man! Consider him well; that which had made his father most wonderfully happy and filled his house with music, had filled him with bitter and hateful feelings. Look at the heart of the man, there is murder in it; we feel that he could have choked this vile son of his father's, if he could have demeaned himself enough to lay his hands on him; certainly he would rather he had perished in the swine field than come back to his father's house. Then he turns on his father and pours his spleen upon him. Why, through these "many years" of which he speaks, he might as well have been a thousand miles away from his father, for he had not a feeling in common with him; he had no sympathy with the compassions that filled his heart; he was morally farther away from his father than his wayward brother.

Hear him talk, "Thou never gavest me a kid." Not even a kid! what resentment, what scorn is in those words. He charges his father with unfairness, unrighteousness, with a total lack of appreciation of all his honourable service. The only righteous man in the house was himself! Then the utter selfishness that was in him came out, "that I might make merry with my friends." That was what his brother had been doing in the far country, at heart he was the same. And he would not go in. A quaint old preacher used to say, "The younger son was too hungry to stay out, and the elder son was too angry to go in." The prodigal was driven to his father's house by his need, the Pharisee refused to be drawn by the father's grace. He may represent the Jew, of whom Paul wrote, "They please not God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway; for wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

1 Thessalonians 2:16, but he also represents those self-righteous people who will not have the grace of God, and they are many.

I would rather be inside the house with the prodigal than outside with the Pharisee, for inside is the Father's love, outside is the wrath of God, and what a terrible thing it must be to be out of sympathy with God, to have not a chord in one's being that thrills to the joy of heaven, to be an alien to the life of the Father's house, and to choose to be outside of it instead of inside! Such was the elder son, and what will he do? A great blasphemer of God is reported to have said as his life ebbed away, "O thou almighty but most indulgent God, hell will be refuge if it hides me from Thee," and it seems to me that hell will be preferable to heaven to the man who has the unregenerate heart of the elder son. But why did the father go out and entreat him, and say, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine"? The father's heart yearned for the elder son as much as for the younger son, and the grace that was in him when he went out to him ought to have dispelled his anger, and opened his eyes to see what a father he had got; and it may be that the father recognised that he had not wasted his substance as the younger son had. God's grace puts no premium on vice, and the man who keeps himself from the grosser sins is not so great a sinner outwardly as the profligate. He may be only a fifty pence debtor in contrast to the five hundred pence debtor. Moreover, this man, if we can carry our thoughts back to the days in which the Lord lived, was one of those who never missed the services at the synagogue, he would be careful to keep the fasts and be strict as to all the outward observances of the law, he has his counterpart to-day in the religionist. The father did not charge him with gross conduct, he recognised the outward respectability and put all that he had within his reach, but he would have none of it, he would not go in. Can we not feel the sob in the father's words? Here was that that marred the joy; the father might have rejoiced over two sons; one of them refused to give him the opportunity and was a grief to his heart. As long as the door was open, he refused to enter in, but when the door was shut, ah, what then? In Luke 13:1-35, we read, "When once the Master of the house hath risen up and shut to the door, then ye shall stand without and knock and say, Lord, Lord open to us," and further they will say, "we have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets." There they are, the elder sons who would not have the grace of God, outside the closed door. "But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." Luke 13:27-30.

And, further God will be angry. "Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant . . . None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper" Luke 14:1-35. And what will the angry Pharisee do in the presence of God's anger?

04.16. The Rich Man's Doom

The Rich Man's Doom "And in hell, he lift up his eyes, being in torments . . . I am tormented in this flame."

"Thy song is at an end,

Thy harp shall solace thee no more,

All mirth has died upon thy grave,

The melody that could not save

Has perished on death's sullen wave,

That flung thee on that shore." No man of proper feeling could speak lightly of the doom of those who "die in their sins." Next to those three mysterious hours of darkness endured by the Saviour on the cross of Calvary, there is no subject so solemn and appalling, and yet since it has its place among the truths of Holy Scripture, it cannot be ignored. But here the preacher of the Word must put a curb on his imagination lest he dishonour God and stumble men; his thoughts must be formed and controlled by what is written. The Feast prepared for all men, and the Father's welcome to the worst of sinners, precede in this Gospel the story of the rich man and Lazarus, and this I believe is divinely ordered. First a full and eternal salvation offered to all, then the solemn warning to those who are disposed to despise that salvation. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The rich man's doom is the answer to that question. There is no escape. The warning was given to the proud Pharisees, who hated the Lord because of His care for sinners, and who considered themselves quite good enough for God without forgiveness and grace, and who supposed that such wealth as the rich man wasted on himself was evidence of God's favour. The Sadducees also mingled with the crowds that thronged to listen to the Saviour's words; they had persuaded themselves that there was no life beyond this, and would consequently congratulate the rich man not only on his wealth but on his wisdom in using it for his own pleasure. Their pernicious doctrines and influence were spreading among the people and had to be exposed. The progeny of these two sects is numerous to-day, more numerous perhaps than ever before, hence these warning words are needed now as they were when the Lord spoke them. Truth does not become outworn by time, it is eternal.

It was the Lord's own hand that drew aside the curtain that we might look into eternity; and by His own mouth this most solemn of all parables, if indeed it is a parable, was uttered. Who could tell us the truth as to the future but He? And love was behind the telling of it, for it is the way of true love to warn when its woings fail. It is not the final doom of the wicked that the Lord here describes, but the sufferings of the intermediate state; that which lies between the death of the body and its resurrection at the judgment of the great white throne. Revelation 20:1-15. The souls that share the rich man's place and state in hades are remanded there until that last dread assize. The rich man clothed himself in purple and fine linen and made good cheer in splendour every day. He

lived for the present and forgot the future — he forgot eternity, and his sins and God. This alas, is the folly of thousands. He lived as did the rich fool of Luke 12:1-59 and as those did who despised the great Supper in Luke 14:1-35. He was a self-centred man, who gratified his fleshly pride and lust to his full bent; he left God out of his life and reckoning, and cared nothing for the stricken beggar at his gate, but left him to suffer and starve and die. Such a life could only move God's displeasure and wrath. But wealth and self-will cannot arrest the march of time, nor resist the power of death. Death is no respecter of persons, it claimed both the beggar and the rich man and neither could refuse its claim. The beggar's name was known in heaven, it was entered in the book of life there, and when he died angels carried him into Abraham's bosom — a Talmudic designation for the place of blessing. The rich man died also and was buried and forgotten by the successors to his wealth.

There does not appear to have been any interval between his unwilling departure from this life and his entrance into conscious torment in the next. "I am tormented in this flame," is the cry of his soul, that had indulged its slightest whim in his former life; the cravings remained, but the slightest gratification was denied. This man, no longer rich, makes no appeal to God for mercy; he had lived without Him, and died without Him, and must abide without Him and without hope for ever. He does not pray for release, for he knows that that too would be useless. He has reached that woeful hour in his soul's history when the written word must have its full meaning, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still," and as there could be no change in his condition, there could be no release from his prison. One drop of water is all he craves, and that at the hand of the once ignored Lazarus, but that also is a relief that cannot reach him, for the great gulf is fixed never to be bridged, not even by almighty mercy, and the fountain of living water is not on his side of that fixed gulf. This lost soul had full consciousness of his own misery and he had carried into hades a memory that could only add to his torment; and he was conscious moreover of the blessing in which Lazarus rested, in which he might have shared. It is a remarkable thing that he should then plead for his five brothers. It may be that he was responsible for the way they were living; he had set them the example and encouraged them in self-indulgent lives, and he would have them warned, for it would seem as though his torment would be increased five-fold if they came where he was, as a result of his influence and example. He pleads, If only some apparition from the unseen world would warn them, someone whom they had known in his earthly life, they would take heed and repent. No, answers Abraham, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them . . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." By this parable the notion that the soul sleeps at death until the resurrection is shown to be false; and that more pernicious teaching that the dead will have a second opportunity of salvation is exposed, and that still further lie that the spirits of the dead are anxious and able to communicate with the living is shattered. I am sure that some spirits do communicate through mediums at Spiritistic seances, for not all is fraud in those circles, but they are evil spirits — demons such as possessed men and women when the Lord came to earth, these impersonate the dead to deceive souls. The rich man was conscious, he had no hope of salvation, he could not communicate with his brothers himself and heaven refused to allow one of the blessed to do it.

Faith cometh not by seeing apparitions and signs and wonders, but by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; there is no hope for those who refuse the word of God.

I know that some, desiring to rob this parable of all its solemn meaning, and to do away with the thought of suffering after death, have endeavoured to make it illustrate the fact that the Jew has forfeited and lost the favour of God and the Gentile has come into it. It is true that this has taken place as Romans 11:1-36 clearly tells us, but this favour of God was and is only for this life, and does not extend to the next, and this parable tells us of the next life, where all national distinctions cease to be. Moreover if the rich man represents the Jew, and Lazarus the Gentile, the whole of mankind is covered by these two races, then what section of mankind do "the five brothers" represent?

Because men naturally hate the thought of their responsibility to God, and judgment after death, they argue against it, but even while they do so their consciences tell them it must be so. I was introduced to a man of considerable intellectual powers, a great student, and one who seemed sincere in his search for truth. We had a long talk together in which I pressed the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ upon him. Several times in the course of our conversation he said, "I'll never believe in hell." My answer was, "I am not asking you to believe in hell; what I want is that you should own the once crucified, but now risen and glorified Saviour as your Lord." His final words were, "I'll never believe in hell." That night he found it hard to sleep; his conscience and his mind were in conflict, and he argued with himself, until very weary he dozed off to sleep early in the morning. It was the month of December. He awoke suddenly to see his bedroom lurid with fire, and his first thought was, "I'm in hell." It was a great factory on the opposite side of the road that was ablaze, flames leaping from the windows. His relief was beyond words, but he began to ask himself, "If there is no hell, why should I have thought that I was there on seeing the fire?" He realised that his conscience had spoken before he had had time to marshal his arguments, and, a thoroughly sobered man, he came to listen to the gospel and fled for refuge to the one and only Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord. Six months afterwards, from across the seas he wrote, "I have found in Christ the solution of all my difficulties — He is the wisdom." But we rest not either in man's conscience or his reason, neither is the standard of truth. We turn from man to God; we believe His word, and thank Him for its warning of love.

04.17. Eternal Punishment

Eternal Punishment "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Matthew 25:46.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:15.

"One last word of solemn warning

To the world below —

One loud shout that all may hear us,

Hear us e'er we go.

Once more let that Name be sounded

With a trumpet tone,

Here amidst the thickening darkness,

Then before the throne."

If objection is raised to my interpretation of the rich man's doom on the ground that it is a parable, I would remark that it is not so called; but even if it has that character, like every other parable of the Lord it was spoken to teach us some great truth, and what can that be but that that lies clearly on the surface of it? If it is further argued that "tormented in this flame" and "great gulf fixed" is figurative language, I would answer that it is figurative of something surely, and if the figure is appalling, what must the reality be? The subject is too solemn for argument, and if the interpretation given is not in harmony with the whole of the written Word, it must be rejected. The Word of God is the test and the standard, and upon this subject of such tremendous importance it speaks not only in parable but in plain and unmistakable doctrine.

Naturally we shrink from the thought of eternal punishment as once we did from other solemn truths. The heinousness of sin, for instance, is not a pleasant contemplation until we discover that the all-cleansing blood of the Son of God has made a full atonement for us before God; death, too, fills us with fear until we learn that it has been robbed of its sting by the death of Jesus. But eternal punishment is different; if it is the truth, there is no remedy, no release for those who come under it, and it is this that makes it terrible.

We must admit that our thoughts and opinions are useless. We may rightly investigate the things that belong to this life and sphere and form opinions about them, for they lie more or less within the range of our understanding, but if we are to know anything about the unseen world and the life beyond this, we must get that knowledge from God; it must be by REVELATION from Him and not by our INVESTIGATION. And in this lies the difference between faith and the greatly flattered

"modern" mind, which is practically synonymous with unbelief: the first accepts the revelation that God has given to us; the second refuses it and relies upon its own investigations. It is just here that difficulty in understanding comes in. In the things of God faith must come first; it is "by faith we understand" (Hebrews 11:1-40).

God's revelation is in the Bible. We get our knowledge of heaven from the Bible, we know nothing of heaven apart from it, but it speaks of hell as well as heaven. If we accept the one we cannot consistently reject the other. Take the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you" (John 14:2). If there had been no place and state of blessing beyond this life for us, He would have told us plainly; and if there had been no judgment to come, no retribution for sin, no hell, would He not also have told us? But the strongest language in the Bible as to these things came from His own lips. He spoke of some who would die in their sins and the impossibility of such going where He would be (John 8:21; John 8:23-24). He said to the proud self righteous hypocrites of His day, "How shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:14). He said, "Fear Him which, after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him" (Luke 12:5). He it is who will say to some in the day of judgment of the living nations, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41), and of these He said, "these shall go into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). He spoke of "outer darkness" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30), and "of their worm that never dies and the fire that is not quenched" (Mark 9:46). Who dares to say that he will listen to the Lord and believe Him when He speaks of blessing, but refuse to hear and believe when He speaks of judgment? The consciences of all men everywhere admit that there must be retribution for wrong-doing, and they act upon this in their dealings with each other; for laws are made by them and penalties inflicted upon the breach of them. Yet some would deny this right to God that they feel they must exercise themselves. "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things" (Romans 2:3). God is not less righteous than men; His claims and authority must be upheld, and His judgment where these are flouted will be a righteous judgment.

Others admit that God must judge evil-doing who deny that His judgment is everlasting. To such our answer is: The Bible says it is. But it is argued that "everlasting" and "eternal" when used in the Bible do not mean "never ending," The word occurs about seventy times in the New Testament, and I give some examples. "To be cast into everlasting fire." (Matthew 18:8). "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). And in the same verse, "the righteous into life eternal." "Is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark 3:29). "In the world to come, life everlasting" (Luke 18:30). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:15-16; John 3:36; John 5:24) "The commandment of the EVERLASTING GOD" (Romans 16:26). "An house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). "In Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). "The author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9). "Having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). "Who through the ETERNAL SPIRIT offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). "Called us unto His eternal glory" (1 Peter 5:10). "This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). "Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 1:7). What other language could God have used to have conveyed to our minds the thought of judgment and punishment without end? And if the punishment is for a time only and not everlasting why should He have used the same word to

describe it as that which describes the blessing of the saved and the eternity of His own Being, and not have said so in language about which there could have been no question?

Another argument against the truth is that reason revolts against the eternity of punishment for a lifetime of sin; but whose reason revolts against it? Quite recently there was a case of a man who received a life sentence for the attempted murder of a policeman; his reason revolted against it, he thought the sentence too heavy, too terrible; he said so, and appealed against it on that ground, but his reason was no match for the sentence of the law, his appeal was dismissed. It is not for the criminal to say what the sentence shall be; the judge decides that, and when God judges He will do it in absolute justice; "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Romans 2:3). He has told us what that judgment will be before any come into it, and He has done this in love that warns of it that men may escape. But further, it is evident that the state of those who die in their sins and upon whom the judgment that comes after death will fall, remain unchanged. We do not read of any hope of repentance on their part in eternity. Three times over the Lord repeats the solemn word, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44-45; Mark 9:48). It is generally said that "their worm" symbolizes the gnawing and remorse of the conscience, and it may indeed be this, but there is surely more in it; "their worm" speaks of corruption, and in this corrupt condition they remain unchanged for ever. Consequently the fire, symbolical of God's judgment, abides on them, it never dies out. We do not mean that these unrepentant sinners will continue sinning in hell, for as men in prison are restrained from crime, so will the lost be under the restraint of God's judgment in the lake of fire; but the sinful condition will remain, for we read, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Revelation 22:11). And John 3:36 is a decisive word: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." He "shall not see life" shatters the false hope of the universalist, and the wrath of God abiding on him meets the error of the annihilationist.

Now if there is no judgment for sin, or if that judgment is of a limited or temporal sort; if, for instance, sin can be expiated by a period in purgatorial fires, why did Christ die? And do we not here come to the heart of the whole question? If the punishment for sin is not everlasting, it did not require an infinite sacrifice to atone for it, and a lesser person than Christ could have made it. But the fact that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" that men might not perish, is proof enough that they would and will perish apart from Him. It is the "whosoever believeth in Him" that escapes this awful doom. To deny eternal punishment is to belittle the greatness of God's gift, and the work and death of Christ, and to make sin against God but a matter of small account. The cross of Christ, on which He gave Himself a ransom for all, is the great proof of God's love for men and the length He would go to save them; He could not have done more, and less would not have availed. But that cross is also the great proof that God cannot pass by the sins of men as though they were nothing at all. He would not be a God of holiness and truth if He did; hence the gospel that proclaims His love and grace also reveals His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18). How shall those who have refused to repent of their sins to God, and have neglected His great salvation, escape His wrath? His goodness and long suffering have been expended on them, but all in vain, they have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and must be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Thus the Bible teaches, and to reject its clear statements and believe instead the reasonings of the human mind is blind

folly. The greatness of God's love has been revealed in the gift of His Son for our salvation (see John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10). The universality of His mercy is manifested in the offer of salvation to all without any exception, but the eternal punishment of impenitent sinners will be an eternal witness to the infinite character of His wrath against sin, a wrath that will be as perfect and just as His mercy. But judgment is God's strange work. He will find no delight in it, though He does delight in mercy. We read that in heaven they say, when God judges, "True and righteous are His judgments" (Revelation 19:2). That is not a joyous song; but there is joy in heaven, though it is not when judgment is executed, but when one sinner repenteth, and in that joy God's heart reveals itself, it is His own joy in which all heaven shares.

FINIS

05.00. The Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost. His Coming. His Personality. His Activities.

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." John 16:26. By J. T. Mawson.

It is important to see that the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world introduced an entirely new era in the ways of God with men, and that this new era is marked by the presence of the Holy Ghost in a way that was never known before. In Old Testament days the Spirit of God visited the earth and energized men for certain great exploits, or moved them to write the Holy Scriptures, but He never dwelt here as He does now. John 7:39 will be sufficient to prove this.

"But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

Mark what is here stated. Believers on Jesus were to receive the Spirit; but for this they had to wait until Jesus was glorified, and He could not be glorified until His death and resurrection were accomplished. The order of events was as follows:

1. The Incarnation of the Eternal Word, the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14; John 1:18), for the declaration of what God is.
2. The death of Jesus, by which the love of God has been fully revealed and sinners redeemed (1 John 4:9-10).
3. The resurrection of Jesus, the signal proof of the completeness of the work of redemption and God's seal upon that work.
4. His ascension to the right hand of God; the undeniable evidence of God's perfect delight in Him and in the work that He had finished.
5. The descent of the Holy Ghost; to gather men out of this world and unite them to Christ, so that He may have His church for Himself and reap the full harvest of His travail and death. The two great facts of this present period are that the MAN CHRIST JESUS sits on the throne of God in heaven, and that GOD THE HOLY GHOST dwells in men on the earth.

05.01. THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Lord Jesus often talked with His disciples about His death and resurrection, but they always failed to understand Him; they expected to see Him sit upon the throne of David and make Israel glorious in the earth. So that when He allowed men to put Him upon the cross, and died without resisting their violence, these poor disciples were dismayed and heart-broken. They thought that the Lord had been utterly defeated and that His mission was a complete failure and that all their hopes were for ever blasted. But just as the rising of the sun at morn flings back the gloom of night, so the resurrection dispelled the darkness into which the death of Jesus had plunged them; their doubts and misgivings vanished when they saw the Lord, and they knew that what they thought was defeat was glorious victory. As He instructed them in things concerning Himself from the Old Testament writings (Luke 24) they must have realized the blessed fact that He had gained more glory upon the cross than He could have done had He taken the throne, and that only by that death of suffering and shame could God's purpose of blessing be brought about in the midst of the children of men.

It is scarcely needful to call evidence as to the Lord's resurrection, but as the coming of the Holy Ghost was entirely dependent upon it, it will be well to note that He was seen and handled and heard by many of His disciples on many occasions after He rose from the dead. They had looked into His grave, and found it empty, they had handled Him and found that He had a body of flesh and bone, which no spirit has; they saw in His body the wounds which were made at the cross, and never afterwards did they doubt the fact of His glorious bodily resurrection; it became the central fact of their testimony. To deny this is to attempt to overthrow Christianity, for it is written: — "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17).

If Christ is not raised, it is proved that He was unequal to the task which He undertook, that our sins were too many, and death too strong for Him, that God Himself has been defeated, and that the devil has gained a supreme and final victory. If Christ is not raised the work of redemption is not accomplished, and consequently the presence of the Holy Ghost in men is an absolute impossibility, for He can only dwell in those who are redeemed. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and in that resurrection we see the mighty triumph of God, and the irrefutable pledge of blessing for men.

It was on one of the occasions on which the Lord revealed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection that He spoke very definitely to them as to the coming of the Holy Ghost. In Luke 24:49, it is recorded that He said —

"And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." And Luke, who also wrote the Acts, tells us in Acts 1:8-9, that He also said —

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the

earth.

"And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Now these disciples, believing the word of the Lord implicitly, abode together in Jerusalem, and continued in one accord in prayer and supplication, awaiting the fulfilment of the Lord's promise.

They had grasped the fact that they were to represent the Lord during His absence and to spread the fame of His mighty victory; they were evidently also conscious of their own inability for this great work, and so they waited in earnest supplication upon the Lord for the coming of Him by whom they were to receive power, that in His strength they might go forth and bring men as captives to the feet of Jesus.

Turning to Acts 2:1-47, we find there the account of the coming of the Spirit.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Peter explains all this to the multitude that gathered together, in Acts 2:32.

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, 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 the account of the actual coming of the Holy Ghost to take up His dwelling place upon earth, and He remains with us to-day. His presence has never been withdrawn.

05.02. THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Before dealing with the mission and activities of the Holy Ghost on earth, let us see what the Bible says as to His Person. We often hear Him spoken of as an influence, or a power, but this is certainly not the teaching of Scripture. It is true that He exercises an influence, and is the power by which God operates in the souls of men, but He is a Person, and not only a Person, but the third Person in the Godhead — the Holy Ghost. In Matthew 28:19 we read —

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," The Holy Ghost is co-equal with the Father and the Son. THE FATHER is the source of love and life, the spring of all good and blessing for men. THE SON is the perfect expression of the Father, the Revealer of all this good and blessing to men. THE HOLY GHOST is the One who, by His power and wisdom, interprets that which has been revealed, and makes the revelation a reality in men. The three Persons in the Ever-blessed Godhead work together for the salvation of men, and if we keep in mind the three prepositions "for," "to," and "in" in this connection, they will help us to understand the relative position of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the carrying out of this gracious purpose.

05.03. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We will now turn to John 3:3.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Two things stand out clearly in this statement. (1) The badness of men by nature. (2) The goodness of God in undertaking to make a new start in them for their blessing. "Ye must be born again." This is an absolute necessity, and this statement gives the lie direct to the vaunting boast that good dwells in every man and merely requires development.

Let us note the fact that these words were not spoken to an outwardly gross and vicious man. Nicodemus was a model for his fellows, upright and correct in his conduct, but with startling clearness the truth is set before even him: flesh is flesh, there must be a new start. "Ye must be born again."

We are told that what humanity needs is to be cultured, educated, religionized; that men ought to be placed in better environment, their standard of life raised. It is argued that a change from the slums to garden cities, that suitable recreations and the like, will bring them up to the platform that will make them satisfactory to themselves and their fellows, and pleasing to God. Well, I for one would like to see all slums disappear, and the lot of man made easier; the miseries and hardships of multitudes can give no pleasure to the Christian; but these things are the foul brood that sin has begotten in the world. Man has a fallen sinful nature, and to make him more comfortable in this world and to change his environment will not change that. We must not lose sight of the fact that the fall took place amid the most beautiful surroundings that human eyes have seen on earth, and that the foulest crime that ever stained the sad annals of humanity was perpetrated in a garden. It was in a garden that the traitor kiss was put upon the cheek of Jesus, and the man who did that dastard deed had been in company with Him for three years. He had been taught, and fed, and protected by Him, and in spite of these circumstances and conditions, the best that man could have, his heart remained unchanged. And the truth must be told, though it may hurt us to hear it, the heart of Judas was but a sample of yours and mine.

If you demand my authority for such an assertion, I will turn you back to Jeremiah 17:9.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Or further back still, to Genesis 6:1-22.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

It is useless to plead that great progress has been made since those far-off days, for the Lord Jesus said "That which is born of flesh is flesh." "Ye must be born again."

All are corrupt alike by nature, from the mansions of Mayfair to the hovels of Shoreditch; from the highest grade of society to its lowest dregs; flesh is flesh, and nothing but this absolutely new start which God's Spirit alone can produce, can make men acceptable to God. "Ye must be born again." The truth as to the fall and the utter badness of the heart is not pleasant to the unregenerate man; it suits the pride of his heart better to believe that he has descended from the ape, and that the ape arrived through various stages of evolution from the lowliest form of life, for then he can reason that if he has made such wonderful progress, in the past, the future is big with possibilities. But, alas! it is the Edenic lie, "Ye shall be as gods," which he has believed. This is the will-o'-the-wisp that is leading him through the night of his ignorance, to the black doom of eternal despair. Happy is the man who accepts God's truth as to himself and owns that he is a fallen sinner, for then he is ready for the unfolding of God's great plan for his blessing. On the side of God's goodness in this matter we have "the water and the Spirit." The water certainly is not baptism, it is that which cleanses — not the guilt of a man, the blood does that — but which gives him a new and clean nature; it is the truth of God applied to his heart, which produces repentance in him, and makes him turn from his evil way to God. It makes him hate the sins which once he loved, and long after those things in which he once found no pleasure. In short, it is the introduction of an entirely new nature, not produced by the will of man, but by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. Psalms 119:9 will be sufficient to prove this interpretation of the use of water.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." And Ephesians 5:26 is even clearer still.

"That He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word." And speaking to His disciples in John 15:3, the Lord said —

"Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The water is the word. The truth of God is applied in convicting power by the Spirit of God to the consciences and hearts of men, for just as He moved upon the face of the waters in the days of creation, so He moves now upon the souls of men to bring form out of chaos, to make the light shine where the darkness has reigned, and to bring life out of death. He is the untiring Servant of God in this gracious work, and happy is the man who yields to His influence and power.

Having quickened the soul out of death, the Spirit of God turns the eye to Christ as the only hope and Saviour; and faith in Him settles the question of guilt for ever, for God, "is just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." It is verily a glorious day for a man when he casts himself unreservedly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, for then a complete change of ownership takes place, he is no longer the slave of Satan, but he belongs to the Lord, and as a result receives the Spirit of God.

Two passages from the Epistles will make this clear. Ephesians 1:13-14.

"Christ, in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."

Also 1 Corinthians 6:19.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." In these two passages three important questions are answered.

1. Who are indwelt by the Spirit?
2. When are they indwelt?
3. Why are they indwelt?

05.04. WHO?

WHO?

"The immanence of God in humanity," is a favourite phrase in the mouths of some, and by it is meant that God dwells in, and manifests Himself through all men. But Scripture teaches the very opposite. Notice the Lord's own words in John 14:17.

"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."

How clearly the distinction is here made between the world of men and the believing "YOU." Those who are addressed in the verses quoted had "heard" and "believed the gospel of our salvation"; they are addressed as "saints," and "faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1-23). They are "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2) and are included in the "us who are saved," 1 Corinthians 1:18. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, we read —

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But nothing could be plainer than 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Now mark well the next verse.

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

These are they who were indwell by the Holy Ghost, their bodies had become the temples of God, but they had first to be washed, sanctified, and justified; in this way they were prepared for this wondrous indwelling.

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9).

05.05. WHEN?

WHEN? The "When" of the indwelling is equally plain; it was "after that ye believed", or 'having believed' (N.T.) ye were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. This is plainly illustrated by the case of Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:43-44. For while Peter bore testimony to Christ in those blessed words: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive the remission of sins," the Holy Ghost fell upon all who heard the word. Faith came by hearing, they believed the glad tidings, and were at once sealed by the Holy Ghost, as belonging to the Lord. When a man thus believes the gospel, and surrenders himself to the Lord Jesus to-day, he become His property in deed and in truth, and receives the Spirit at once. When a farmer buys sheep in the market he puts his own mark upon them, he does not go about marking other men's sheep, but he stamps those that his own money has purchased. In like manner the good and great Shepherd marks off His own sheep by the indwelling of the Spirit.

05.06. WHY?

WHY? Of equal importance is the "Why?" of the indwelling, and for this we must look at 1 Corinthians 6:19. It is here that the Lord's rights are emphasized. Are you a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ? Then you are God's property. "Ye are bought with a price," and the greatness of that price no mind can grasp, no tongue can tell. The love of Christ was so great, His desire to possess us so strong, that He endured the speechless pangs of Calvary and shed His precious blood. More than this He could not have done, and no lesser price would have availed.

Now every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is the rightful property of God. A man has money to invest, and with it he purchases a row of houses; as soon as they pass into his possession, he advertises that the houses are "To let." He has purchased that property to let it out to others. But here is another man, who also purchases a house, but instead of advertising for tenants, he resides in it himself. Now judging by the conduct of some Christians we should be led to the conclusion that God had acted according to the former, for they have given much room within their hearts and lives to the world, the flesh, and countless other things. But the truth is that Christians have been chosen, purchased, and redeemed by God, that He might dwell in them Himself, and by the Holy Ghost He has taken possession of that which He has purchased. It is His will and His right to occupy us altogether. He would have us, spirit, soul and body, yielded up to His control. This is the "Why?" of the indwelling. He claims our bodies as His temples.

05.07. THE COMFORTER.

THE COMFORTER.

We will turn again to the Gospel of John, for the Spirit is mentioned more often in that Book than any other, except the Acts of the Apostles. The reason for this is that a very full unfolding of Christianity is set before us in it. It will pay you well to search out all the times that the Lord uses the personal pronoun "My" in John. You will find it to be the characteristic word of the Gospel. He says, "My Father," "My Father's house," "My Father's name," "My joy," "My peace," "My glory," "My love," "My name," and so forth. From these blessed possessions He derived infinite joy, and true Christianity simply means that those who are His own — those whom He can call "My sheep," "My friends," "My brethren," — share these things with Him, for He gives not as the world, but shares all He possesses with His loved co-heirs. But these things cannot be understood and enjoyed apart from the Holy Ghost, hence the place He occupies in the Gospel. In John 14:26 the Lord Jesus says —

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 15:26.

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me."

John 16:7-15.

"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. . . . Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; . . . He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shew it unto you."

Every word that fell from the lips of Jesus is of the utmost importance, and I would ask you to note particularly how He speaks of the Holy Ghost. He does not speak of Him as the Comforter merely, but "Another Comforter." That means, on the face of it, that He was to take the place of One who had already acted the part of Comforter. That One was Jesus Himself.

He had been their Teacher, Guide, Protector, and Friend. He had guarded them in danger, comforted them in sorrow, and made Himself altogether indispensable to them. Now it was expedient for them that He should go away, then the Holy Ghost would come and fill the Lord's place in all this wondrous activity of love. And this brings before us in a vivid way the character of the Spirit of God. We are apt to dwell upon the fact of His holiness, and it is most necessary that we should, for He is the Holy Spirit of God; but do not let us forget His love and tenderness. We see in Jesus the embodiment of tenderness and love, for every beautiful grace dwelt in Him; but in all this He was the perfect expression of the character of God. Now the Holy Ghost is God, so that dwelling within us is One who, though intensely holy, is exactly in character what Jesus was when here on earth. He is with us as the Comforter. How shall we illustrate this blessed office?

Upon the curbstone yonder there stands a timid little girl; she must cross that crowded thoroughfare, but she is filled with fear at the sight of the whirling traffic. She dare not venture alone, and she looks about for guidance and help. Presently there comes along one whose face gives her confidence, and he, seeing her standing there, divines her need, and taking her small hand in his strong palm, he leads her safely through all the dangers and sends her on her way, light of heart and happy. He is a comforter. That is the place that the Holy Ghost takes with regard to us, and it will be with exceeding joy that He presents all the blood-washed ones at last to the One who bought them in the eternal glory of God. By Him they are kept through faith unto salvation. But the Holy Spirit is not only here to guide and lead God's people through all the difficult ways in life: He is with them to minister constant comfort and joy to their hearts by unfolding the glories of Christ. If a beam of sunlight is allowed to shine through a transparent prism, it is decomposed into its constituent rays, and we are able to admire its glories in the red, green, blue, gold, and purple. Now the Bible is the prism through which the Holy Spirit makes the glory of Christ to shine, and as we are taught of Him, we are able to discern the golden ray of the divine glory of Jesus the blue ray of His heavenly character and grace — and the red ray of His suffering and death; and as we are engaged with the all-varied glories of Him who is so precious to us, we are comforted, helped, and greatly rejoiced. The natural man cannot see or know these glories, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal them to us, as is plainly stated, in 1 Corinthians 2. It is in this way that He turns the affections of God's people from the trifles of earth, and fixes them upon the glorious and ever blessed Man who sits at God's right hand.

05.08. OTHER RESULTS OF HIS COMING.

OTHER RESULTS OF HIS COMING. The Holy Ghost is also the Spirit of sonship. Those whom He indwells are the sons of God. This is plainly put in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

"For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).

Suppose the King pardoned a poor criminal, lying under a death sentence, that he set him at liberty, and finally took him to the royal residence at Windsor. We can understand how grateful the man would be for His Majesty's clemency, but we can also see that he would be very uncomfortable in the palace, he would be more at home in the prison than there, for he has had no training for court life. But if the King could give him the spirit of the Prince of Wales, everything would be changed, he would then be able to enter into the King's ways and thoughts, and he would be perfectly at home in the presence of his benefactor. Now what the King could never do, God has done. He has given the Spirit of His Son to all who have truly believed in Him. Apart from this they could not have been at home in the Father's presence, but since they have received the Spirit of His Son, they in measure are able to enter into the thoughts of the Father, they can appreciate and reciprocate His great love, and understand that they are placed in His sight in all the favour and love that belongs to His dear Son, and this will be their joy in heaven for ever.

Now mark well the character of God's love. It is so great that He will have us who are saved with Himself in heaven for ever. But He loves us so much that He will not keep us waiting until we get to heaven to enjoy it; He has given to us His Spirit, that the ineffable bliss of heaven might fill our hearts now.

Now it is evident that as the Lord alone could accomplish the work of redemption, so none but the Holy Ghost can give effect to that work in the souls of men. The work of God is beyond the power of men; the power of the Holy Ghost is alone competent for it. The things of God are beyond the range of the wisdom of men; the wisdom of the Holy Ghost alone can search them out and reveal them to us, and no man can understand them apart from the teaching of God the Holy Ghost.

If this were understood, Christians would be delivered from reliance upon the strength and wisdom of nature, and become useful vessels in the hands of the Spirit. They would be satisfied with that which was from the beginning, and be able to detect and reject as spurious every doctrine that is not of God.

Thus far we have confined our thoughts to the individual aspect of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, but it is also most important for us to see that His presence on earth has bound all God's people into one compacted whole. This must be so if one Spirit dwells in all. Hence we read in 1 Corinthians 12:12 — "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body."

Every one who has truly believed the gospel, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins to men, is indwelt by the Spirit, and by this same Spirit is united to Christ the glorified Head of the body, and every member thus united to Christ is necessary to all the rest. Each has his place in this wondrous unity, even as the members of a human body have each their place and function in the body in which they are placed. But space fails for further reference to this great aspect of the truth, but if you will prayerfully consider 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, where it is unfolded for us, you will be convinced of its importance.

Oh, that this truth may lay hold upon heart and conscience in these days of cliques, and sects, and divisions, and that all of us who love the Lord might have grace to depart from iniquity, and endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

Finally —

"Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:30-32).

06.00. Things Most Surely Believed

Things Most Surely Believed

J.T. Mawson

06.01. The Miraculous Conception:

1. The Miraculous Conception: the Fact and the reason for it In a recently published book a popular preacher gives his views as to the great facts of our Christian faith. He begins with the birth of our Lord and questions the miraculous conception and Virgin birth. His reasons are that only two of the New Testament writers speak of it: that nothing is based upon it, that the notion arose in the early church because it was supposed that natural conception was sinful, for which he quotes Psalms 51:5. There is nothing new in these views. Men who have pledged themselves to preach and testify to "the Faith once delivered to the saints," have become bold and more bold in rejecting the truth as to our Lord's entrance into the world. To quote from one of them: "I cannot help including the birth stories among things that do not matter. There are some things that matter a great deal. There are some life and death matters, if it comes to that, but this is not one of them. It does not matter." It is my purpose to show that it does matter, that it is one of the foundation stones of our faith, and that apart from it the whole edifice of the truth must collapse and fall. Indeed, if it is not as revealed to us in the Word, there is no truth at all except that which would condemn us for ever, for apart from the miraculous conception and birth of our Lord there is no Saviour for men.

Many are the names and titles that describe the person and glories of our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He is the Word who was with God in the beginning, and who was God; the Creator of all things, the Light of men, and the Life-giver; He is the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, His Beloved in whom is all His delight; He is the Resurrection and the Life; He is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person, who upholds all things by the word of His power; He is the Wisdom of God and the Power of God and the Lord of Glory, the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, having an everlasting throne and ruling with a righteous sceptre; the Same yesterday, today and for ever; He is the Root and the Offspring of David, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End; He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, the Bread of God and of life, the Door of Salvation, the Son of Man with power on earth to forgive sins; He is the only Saviour and universal Judge, the Lord, having a Name which is above every name, before whom every knee must bend and in whose hand lies the destiny of every creature; He is the One who liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for ever more and hath the keys of Hades and of death; He is Emmanuel, God with us, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; He is the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; and the bright Morning Star; the true God and Eternal Life; and the I AM.

Some of these names belong to Him as having become Man, and as having died and risen again; others describe what He was before the pendulum of time began to swing, or ever the world was made — what He is in His own uncreated, unchangeable and eternal Being. To these latter belong "the Word," "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father," and "the Son" whom the Father only knows. By these names, He is distinguished as to His personality in the Godhead, but being one with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the Godhead, He shares in every title that belongs to God, such as "the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords; who

only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen or can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:15-16), We should not be subject to the Father's decree, "that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father," if we did not acknowledge this.

We are to consider the entrance of this august Person into the world and to enquire what manner of birth was His who bears all this glory. That He was born of a woman is not disputed; He was a true and proper Man and not a phantom; and yet we must not, we cannot lose sight of the fact of who He was before He became Man. Every other man born into the world began to be at his conception, and came into the world as a personality that had had no former existence; but our Lord Jesus Christ was rich before His poverty in Bethlehem; He thought it not robbery to be equal with God before He was found in fashion as a Man; He was the Word before He became flesh; God's own Son who was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, made of a woman, when the fullness of time had come (Galatians 4:4). This glorious pre-existence surely means that the birth of our Lord into this world was not as the birth of any other man that had ever been born; it was an incarnation, the coming of a Divine Person into a condition in which He had not been before, to carry out all the will of God and be the Saviour of us men. His birth was a unique event; the greatest, the most amazing that had ever happened; greater by far than the creation of man at the beginning, and unless our minds are darkened to the true meaning of it, we should certainly expect that it would be brought about in some other way than by the ordinary laws of nature; we feel that a Divine Person must have a supernatural birth, and this feeling is established and confirmed by the Word of God.

We open the New Testament and find on the first page of it the story told in simple language and in about 250 words. It is a subject on which the imagination might have run riot, as it did in the numerous fables and legends that gathered about it as spirituality declined and superstition advanced in the early centuries of the Christian era; but in this God-breathed account of it, the imaginations of man's mind are excluded, and every sentence of the story bears the Divine imprimatur. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying. Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins." This then is the beginning, the door through which we enter into the New Testament and into the realm of infinite and eternal blessedness that it reveals to our souls. It is the beginning of the revelation of God to man, and we must not refuse the beginning if we are to advance to its climax and completion. The fullness of time had come, and the voice of the Son spoke and said, "A body hast Thou prepared Me . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). It is said that only two of the New Testament writers make mention of the Virgin birth; well, if that is so, two witnesses are enough, and at their mouth every word shall be established; but does not this saying, "A body hast Thou prepared Me" give a third witness? It surely involves the miraculous conception; it proclaims the fact that the will of the flesh or the power of man had no place in it, but that the will and wisdom of God combined to prepare that holy incorruptible body within the womb

of the Virgin-mother.

Matthew's Record

There are two accounts of this great event. Matthew's Gospel records the communication to Joseph by the angel, and Luke tells us of the annunciation to Mary. And when we discern the respective characters of these two Gospels and the way the Lord is presented in them, we have no difficulty in seeing how perfect these records are, each in its own place. Matthew unfolds the glory of the Lord as King. His Gospel is "the book of the generation of JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF DAVID, the Son of Abraham."

He came as the Heir to the throne of David and to establish and fulfil all the promises made to Abraham. But here was a difficulty; while Jesus Christ was the long-promised Heir, Joseph stood in the direct line of succession and was the legal heir, as this genealogy proves. And this was recognised by the Lord's messenger when he saluted him as "Joseph, thou son of David." He was an obscure village carpenter, proving the truth of the words of the prophet that the tabernacle of David had fallen down and lay in ruins (Amos 9:11), and yet he showed traits of true royalty according to God, in his mercy to the weak, and as he thought, failing, and in his trust in the Word of God and obedience to it.

It was right that he should have been addressed by the angel, not only because of his own personal concern as to the condition of his espoused wife, but also because of his care for the integrity of the succession to the throne of David. It might appear a foolish and futile thing to have been concerned about the latter, seeing that six centuries had passed since the sceptre had departed from the house of David, but faith holds on to the promises of God, even when human strength has failed and every visible hope has fled; and Joseph was a man of faith. And being a man of faith, he did as he was bidden by the angel of the Lord and took Mary unto him as his wife, without hesitation or further misgiving; and by so doing, he cast the protection of his name about her, and made her first-born Son, his Heir — the legal Heir to David's throne. And this would be a matter of the greatest importance to those pious Jews who were looking for the Christ, the Son of David, and for whom this Gospel was written in the first place. But there was a matter of even greater importance than what was due to Joseph and the integrity of the Royal line and the necessity of Jesus Christ being the legal Heir to the throne; there was God's own integrity and His faithfulness to His Word. And these were made good and revealed in the words, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." That was the most astonishing prophecy that God ever gave through a prophet's lips; it meant as we hope to show the intervention of God in a new and personal way for the deliverance of His people; it foretold something that would be outside and apart from all the power of man, and it was fulfilled when the espoused wife of Joseph conceived by the Holy Ghost and brought forth a Son, whose name was called JESUS, the Saviour of His people from their sins. In that lowly Babe, the Virgin's Son, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, the Son of David and Heir to his throne, Jehovah the Saviour, and Emmanuel, the two Testaments are bound together; the hopes of the Old and the faith of the New unite in Him, and we can with exultation take up the prophetic word and join with Israel and say, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be on His shoulders: and His Name shall

be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth for ever. THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL PERFORM THIS" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Luke's Record The Gospel of Luke was written to a Gentile believer and has the world in view rather than Israel; consequently there was not the same necessity as in Matthew's Gospel to show that the birth of the Lord was in accordance with the prophecies made in the Old Testament to Israel. In it, the Lord is presented as true Man, born of a woman, come in grace to all men, and there was not the same need to give Joseph the prominence that he has in Matthew's Gospel, where the true heirship to David's throne was vital. But there was need that all people to whom "the good tidings of great joy" as to the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord were brought, should know from whence He came and how, that they might understand and appreciate the fact that His coming was all of God and in sovereign grace. The annunciation to Mary, a lowly daughter of David's house, and espoused to a working man, brings out this grace in its unsurpassable richness and charm.

Gabriel's message from God to Mary is divided into three parts. First, the salutation which proclaims the greatness of the favour that God was to bestow upon her, unknown and poor though she was. She was chosen by sovereign grace, from among all women to be the vessel by whom God would bring about His great purpose. Second, there was the revelation of what this purpose was. "Fear not, Mary," said the angel, "for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." He that was to be born to her was to be the Son of David, and to have His father's throne: that she might have understood, seeing she belonged to the house of David, but how could He be JESUS — Jehovah the Saviour? How could He be called the Son of the Highest? The Highest is the title of God in His supremacy over all the earth, and in heaven; the One whose word and ways none may challenge, and who will manifest Himself thus in the coming Millennial Kingdom. How could the Son of her womb have the right to be called His Son? We do not wonder that she asked that question; it was a right and proper question to ask, and it brought out the third part of Gabriel's message from God which enlightened her as to how it was to be brought to pass. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." This last utterance of the angel, who stands in the presence of God, requires no comment. It drives away all doubt. This conception was miraculous, it was by God's power, it was God's work. Man and his corruptible seed had no part in it; the Son of Mary was holy and undefiled, He was the Son of God. "It is not here the doctrine of the eternal relationship of Son with the Father. The Gospel of John, the Epistle to the Hebrews and that to the Colossians, establish this precious truth and demonstrate its importance, but here it is that which is born by virtue of the miraculous conception, which on that ground is called the Son of God" (J.N.D.). And if unbelief says it is contrary to every law of nature and impossible, faith answers in the words of Gabriel, who knew God's power so well, "with God nothing shall be impossible." The Necessity of the Virgin Birth The fact that men need a Saviour, a Deliverer, is evident everywhere, and has been all through their history since the

fall. And the first promise that one should appear followed swiftly upon Satan's triumph over man in Eden, and it came forth from the mouth of God. "The Seed of the woman," said He to the victorious serpent, "shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel." If Adam had been able to recover himself and bruise his tempter and conqueror beneath his feet, God would have stood aside and let him do it, but there could be no hope from him or from any that he could beget. If he had fallen a prey to Satan's subtlety when he stood erect in the plenitude of his powers, how could he by any means recover what he had lost now that he was defeated and fettered and lying under the sentence of death by God's just decree? and all his progeny were powerless like himself.

"By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and death passed upon all men for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). The hope was not in Adam but in the woman's Seed. It was He, whoever He might be, who was to destroy the great destroyer of our fallen race, and deliver us from his power. The New Testament tells us plainly who He is. "For this purpose," says 1 John 3:8, "was THE SON OF GOD manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." And Hebrews 2:15 tells us that THE SON — in whom God has spoken in these last days — because "the children were partakers of flesh and blood, also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It is plain from these Scriptures that the Seed of the woman is the Son of God, and we are told that "all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him. Amen." The first promise prepares us for the Virgin birth and we are not surprised to read, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel." And if unbelief declares that to be impossible, faith answers, Yes, with men it is impossible; and that is the great and solemn fact that this God-given sign throws into prominence, it is the very lesson that God would teach by the manner of His intervention. Men are unable to save themselves. and unable to find amongst even the best of Adam's fallen children one man who can redeem his brother, or give the just ransom for him. Every man needs a Saviour for himself, and because of that, God has stepped in and has provided the Man — the Kinsman-Redeemer, but He has done it in a way that humbles the pride of man and sets him aside. "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." The Virgin's Son would owe nothing to man; His very presence in the world would be independent of man. His coming into the world would be God's work. It would be God's intervention in miraculous power and sovereign mercy — the salvation of the Lord. So we read that in due time, Mary brought forth her firstborn Son and "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." Thus came Emmanuel, apart from all the power of men and outside the abodes of men, for not only could not men produce the Deliverer, but they did not want Him when He came. Does it Matter?

Like produces like. This is one of the fundamental laws of nature as established by God. It is stamped upon the Creation chapter — fish, fowl, and flesh were all ordained to bring forth each "after his kind." And man could do no other than this. "Adam," we read, "begat a son in his own, likeness, after his own image" (Genesis 5:3). And so it has been throughout all the generations of men. Sinful men beget sinful children. Therefore it is written, "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Psalms 58:3), and "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6), and "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In the great penitential Psalm, David confesses, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me," which

simply means, 'I have come of a sinful stock, my very nature is sinful, ' and this is true of every man born into the world. Does it matter then or does it not, how the Lord was born into this world? Had He come by natural generation, would He not have been as every other man? To deny the Virgin birth is to deny His pre-existence in the Godhead, and to deny the holiness of His Manhood, and apart from these two great truths as to His glorious Person, He could not have been the Saviour.

It is said that nothing is based upon this great truth in the New Testament. But everything is based upon it; it is the foundation of everything that follows. I stress the fact that it meets us on the first page of the New Testament, that it is the door through which we enter into the full revelation of God. Apart from it, we have no intervention of God for His own glory and our salvation; Jesus is not the great I AM, but a mere man like the rest of men, and we have no sinless Saviour. How, apart from the miraculous conception and the Virgin birth, could the Lord have said, "I know whence I came. I proceeded forth and came from God. . . . Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:1-59); or how could Peter have applied to Him the words of the Psalm, "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27), or the Apostles have spoken of Him as God's Holy Child, Jesus (chap. 4:30). Or how could Paul have spoken of Him as "Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Romans 9:5), or as "the Second Man, the Lord out of heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47); or how could John have insisted with such persistence on the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, and is now the great object of faith, the true God and Eternal Life? For ourselves, we linger with the shepherds as they gather round the Babe in the manger; we press into the house with the Magi from the East and worship the young Child with them. We own Him to be truly Man — sinless and holy; but more, for we confess Him, as did Thomas, when He saw His wounded hands and side after He had risen from the dead, **OUR LORD AND OUR GOD**. And we say as we consider the manner of God's intervention for His glory and our eternal blessing, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and It shall be recompensed to Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

06.02. The Sinlessness of the Lord Jesus

2. The Sinlessness of the Lord Jesus

It will be for our profit to consider what sin is as God shows it to us in His Word, for if we have superficial thoughts of it we shall not appreciate the sinlessness of our Lord, nor the necessity and significance of His offering of Himself without spot to God; nor shall we feel how necessary it is for us to cleave to Him, the Holy and the True.

Three words are given in Scripture to define sin; they are brought together in Exodus 34:7, Psalms 32:1-11 and Psalms 51:1-19 — they are transgression, iniquity and sin. These words are not mere synonyms that could displace one another and nothing be lost, for each has its own terrible meaning. TRANSGRESSION is revolt from, it means a tearing of oneself away. God has declared His will for men, but they prefer their own wills, and in the pursuit of their own wills they tear themselves away from God. INIQUITY means twisted, crooked, perverse. God has laid down a road for the feet of men to tread, and that road is as straight as His everlasting sceptre, but men have made for themselves crooked ways (Isaiah 59:8); they are a crooked and perverse generation (Php 2:15). SIN means missing the mark. God has set up His mark, the end at which every man should aim. God Himself should be the end and aim of every man's life, but every man has substituted self for God, and set up his own mark to displace God's; and has missed the very mark and purpose of his existence. Along with sin in this threefold character goes GUILTY; it permeates the life of every man who has not been honest before God. His effort is to appear different from what he knows himself to be, to cover up and hide his sinfulness and even to imagine that he can deceive God Himself as to it. Then the New Testament gives us a striking definition of sin in 1 John 3:4 where we should read, "for sin is lawlessness," and that covers all that sin is; it is not a mere yielding to the sudden and capricious impulses of our nature, but the determination that lies deep in a man's will, though perhaps seldom expressed, to go his own way and be independent of God. As we consider what sin is as it is defined for us in the Scriptures, we are conscious that we must plead guilty before God to transgression and iniquity and sin, and confess that it is not only in practice that we are sinners, but that we are sinners in our very nature that what we have done springs out of what we are, the fruit reveals the nature of the root. But we are equally conscious that in this respect our Lord stands out in complete contrast to all that we are; our minds recoil from even the suggestion that there was sin in Him; our spiritual instinct tells us that He was not as we are, that He would be of no use to us if He had been, and we find that these instincts are confirmed by the plainest possible statements in the Word of God. The flesh and blood that He took was wholly apart from sin; His body was a holy body prepared for Him by God; as a man He was "holy, harmless and undefiled"; He was as holy in His manhood, nature and life amid the sordidness and sin of the world as He was in the beginning, when by His divine power and glory He created the heavens and the earth. This holy manhood could not have been apart from the miraculous birth. In no other way could the everlasting Word have come in flesh. Hence in announcing His birth to the Virgin-mother, the angel of the Lord declared, "That holy Thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." And from the moment that the

Holy Ghost came upon the most blessed of all women, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, her Firstborn Son was wholly for God; His own words were, "Thou art He that took Me out of the womb; Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts" (Psalms 22:1-31).

Heaven and earth and even the nether regions confessed His holiness; God and men and demons bore witness to it. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him at His baptism, not as a burning flame, but as a dove, indicating surely that there was nothing in Him that was obnoxious to the holiness of God's Spirit, but everything in absolute harmony there with Him; and the Father declared that His eye had searched, and found only that in Him that delighted Him. At the very beginning of His public service to God and men, the demons recognized Him and confessed Him as God's holy One (Mark 1:1-45), and His Apostles, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and in the full light of His life and death and resurrection and ascension to glory, bore witness again and again to this essential fact of our Faith: this fact apart from which our Faith is a delusion and a lie. The Sinless Sacrifice for Sin

It stands out in the Epistles as a thing to be noted and cherished, that when the question of sin and the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus as our substitute in regard to it arises, His sinlessness is emphasized. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made Him to be sin for us, but adds that He "knew no sin." 1 Peter 2:24 tells us that He "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," but assures us that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). 1 John 3:5 tells us that He was manifested to take away our sins, and adds, "in Him was no sin." Surely nothing could be clearer than that no sacrifice but a sinless sacrifice could meet the claims of God's holiness against sin, and if Jesus had not been sinless He could not have stood in the sinner's place; He would not have survived the judgment and we should have had no Saviour. The necessity for this sinless offering was foretold in the types and shadows of the Old Testament. The passover lamb had to be "without blemish, a male of the first year" (Exodus 12:1-51); and every sacrifice that was offered to God had to be of the same unblemished sort. "If there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 15:20). "But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you" (Leviticus 22:20). If God could not accept the blemished sacrifice as foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ, how abhorrent is the thought that He who was the Substance of all the shadows and the Fulfiller of all the types, had a blemish or the taint of sin in Him! And that such a thought might have no place in our minds, we are told that when the time for the offering up of the sacrifice came, He "through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). Was that offering accepted? It could not have been if it had not been a sinless offering. It was accepted. The Word of God declares that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins," but that this Man's "one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." That one offering was so free from all taint of sin, so essentially, inherently and intrinsically holy and excellent, that He having made it has sat down at the right hand of God, never to arise again for such a work; and so complete and efficacious is it, that the Holy Ghost can bear witness that God will remember no more the sins and iniquities of all those that believe, and that through it they have the title now to enter into the very presence of God (Hebrews 10:1-39). Not Sinless Only But Wholly Good

Now absence of sin would not have been enough, and we cannot stop at the fact that there was no sin, either in the nature or acts of the Man Christ Jesus; we look for positive good, for we read, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17), and we find this positive goodness in Him at all times and in every circumstance; it was His glory. "He went about doing good, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38), and for this He was anointed with the Holy Ghost. He was conceived by and anointed with the Holy Ghost. There is a beautiful type of this in Leviticus 2:1-16, where the unleavened cakes mingled with and anointed with oil tell of the life of Jesus, permeated and empowered by the Holy Ghost, of which the oil is a well-known type; the absence of leaven teaching that there was no evil in Him, for leaven is everywhere in Scripture a symbol of evil. But our subject is what He was more than what He did, though we cannot separate the one from the other. Where every other man transgressed and revolted from the known will of God, He could say, "I do always the things that please Him" (John 8:29). Where every other man had sinned, and missed God's mark, He could say to His Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4); and where every other man had loved iniquity and turned out of the right way, it is said of Him. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" (Hebrews 1:9). And there was no guile in Him, He was even the same that He said from the beginning (John 8:25). The more deeply the life of Jesus is studied, the more impressive does His holy dependence upon God and His obedience to His Word and will appear, and He was obedient without murmuring, though the will of God involved Him in a life of suffering and a death of shame. His heart went with all that He did. This is beautifully set forth in Isaiah 50:1-11, where the Spirit of Christ speaks in the prophet saying, "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 learned. The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." And in this connection I would quote a beautiful series of the Lord's own sayings that we might contemplate them with wonder and joy.

"My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

"I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30).

"I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38).

"The living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father" (John 6:57).

"I and My Father are One."

"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always" (John 11:41).

"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" (John 12:49-50).

"That the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John 14:31).

"I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

"I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4).

"It is finished" (John 19:30).

I might quote many more of these sayings of His, but these are enough to prove to us that He was the blessed Man of Psalms 1:1-6, that walked not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful. But His delight was in the law of the Lord, and in His law did He meditate day and night. In nature and life, in thought and word and deed, in spirit, soul and body He was always and altogether the holy One of God.

06.03. The Temptations of the Lord Jesus

3. The Temptations of the Lord Jesus Of what character were the temptations that the Lord Jesus endured? This question arises definitely out of the fact of His sinlessness, which was our subject in the last chapter.

There are some who do not seem able to understand any other sort of temptation than the incitement to do evil, which is the modern meaning of the word, and they argue that temptation can have neither force nor meaning to a man unless there is within him the desire, or at least the liability to yield. Now we are all familiar with that character of temptation, and it is recognised in the Scriptures, where we read,

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed" (James 1:13-14). Yet, we are also told in the same Scriptures, "God did tempt Abraham" when He bade him offer up Isaac (Genesis 22:1). This must have been some other kind of temptation than that of which James speaks; it was certainly not an enticement to do evil; it could not have been, for it is as impossible that God should tempt a man in that way, as it is impossible for Him to lie. It was a testing of what was in Abraham; his faith was put into the crucible and it came out of it, as we know, as gold tried by the fire. And this character of temptation is spoken of more often in the Scriptures than that of enticement to sin. The Two Kinds of Temptations

Peter speaks of both. He says, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1). That means that when the enticement to sin assails the Christian, instead of gratifying the desire within that answers to the temptation without, he resists it, and suffers in the flesh. He says, No, Christ suffered for my sins. I will not allow and gratify that which caused Him to suffer, the Just for the unjust to bring me to God. But in 1 Peter 1:6-7, he speaks of "manifold temptations;" these are not enticements to do evil, but the trial of the Christian's faith. They are tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, pain, bereavement, tears and other burdens and vicissitudes of life (Romans 8:35), by which Christians are tested, and which discover whether God is greater to them than their sorrows and adversities, and nearer to them than their circumstances, and whether they can wholly trust in Him at all times. Plainly then, temptation is often used in Scripture when enticement to do evil is not the subject at all. Enticement, if yielded to, betrays the bad that is in us, but this other kind of temptation tests us and brings out the good if we really rely upon God, or it may reveal to us our self-confidence and folly, as it did in Peter's case.

Because people do not distinguish between these two kinds of "temptation they argue that — since the Scripture says that the Lord Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15) — He had to resist the assaults from without, and to watch a traitor within, though He ever fought this twofold battle successfully. We have heard it said by earnest though unenlightened Christians that in their conflicts with evil they have been comforted

by the thought that the Lord had to struggle as they struggle, and that because He overcame in the struggle so may they hope to do. He did indeed overcome in every temptation, but the temptations were entirely from without and never from within as ours so often are; and they certainly may be more than conquerors through Him that loved them, but it will be on other ground entirely from that that they suppose. The Lord Tempted Apart From Sin

I impugn this popular teaching; it is a lie. It means that there was liability in the Lord to sin even though He did not yield. Such a view of Him is not found in Scripture; it is false; it is derogatory to His holy person and damaging to the faith of His saints. Our Saviour, High Priest and Leader was and must ever be beyond the possibility of sin. The idea is chiefly built upon the passage already quoted from Hebrews 4:15; but there is no doubt on the part of those who are able to judge in these matters that the words, "yet without sin" in the Authorised Version, are a faulty translation and, should be "sin apart," or "from sin." (Those who have a Scofield Reference Bible will find it so given in the margin; see also J.N.Darby's New Translation.) He was tried by every kind of temptation except that kind. He was never enticed as we are, for there was nothing within Him that answered to sin without, except holy suffering because of it. This is the truth that must be emphasised. From the first breath that He drew until He committed His spirit into His Father's hands, He was holy unto God; no adverse will within Him ever warred against God's will for Him; no sinful thought or selfish desire ever spoiled the fragrance of His life; there was no fly in that sweet ointment. He was the well beloved Son in whom was the Father's full delight, doing always the things that pleased Him. He was in the world that reeked with moral putrefaction, surrounded by sin, hated by sinners, assailed by the devil and tested by every trial and He suffered as no other man had suffered or could suffer because of it all;

"Yet spotless, undefiled and pure

Our great Redeemer stood;

While Satan's fiery darts He bore,

And did resist to blood." The difficulty that some find of understanding any other sort of temptation than enticement to sin may be because they have known no other. Their conflicts have only been with the evil that is within them, the conflict described in Romans 7:1-25, and they have hardly started on the heavenly pilgrimage, and know little or nothing of the trials of the way: of the discouragements and difficulties of it, and the assaults of Satan in his endeavours to drive them back from it or turn them aside into an easier path. But it is this that is in view in the Hebrew Epistle where we read so much of the way the Lord endured temptation. Christians are not there viewed as struggling in the Slough of Despond, they have got beyond that, and are pilgrims, and warriors, and worshippers; partakers of the heavenly calling, leaving the world behind them and pressing onward to the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Now Jesus is the Author and Finisher of this way of faith. He began at the beginning of it and trod every step of it to its completion, and He knows every trial and difficulty in it, and how Satan besets with many wiles and threatenings those who are following Him in it, for He has experienced them all, and was tempted in all points on that road and in that life of faith, apart from sin, and consequently He is able to sympathise with, and succour them in their hours of weakness and distress and in every time of need.

I quote from Lectures on Hebrews, by S. Ridout, "We read of one of John Bunyan's characters that at the close of his life he said, wherever he had found the footprints of the Lord Jesus, there he had coveted to put his feet. How beautiful that! but sweeter far is the thought that our blessed Lord, when here on earth, searched wherever the feet of His weary saints would have to tread, and He not only coveted to do it, but He did put His feet just there. He has gone through all the circumstances of the wilderness, He knows what all the testing and trials of it mean in a way infinitely beyond the experience of the ripest saint, for He has passed through it, apart from the deadening, dulling, wasteful experiences of sin. We pass through the wilderness, alas, too often yielding to sin. Our blessed Lord passed through never yielding in thought for one moment to a thing that was not in accordance to His Father's will." The Lord Jesus led the way in this path of faith and testing and suffering, and this is the meaning of such statements as, "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). And again, "Though He were Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). That does not mean that He learnt to obey, He never needed lessons of that sort; His very nature was wholly subject to God, but He learnt what obedience entailed in a world that was ruled by the devil, the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. He who is the Lord of hosts, came down into a life of obedience and dependence on God and faith, and He was thoroughly tested in it. As every girder in a great bridge is tested before it is put into its destined place in the bridge, so was our Lord tested under the utmost pressure and He was never found wanting. There was no resistance to God's will in Him, no resentment, no murmuring, no fault, no flaw; the yoke of God did not chafe His holy soul, He delighted to bear it both day and night, and having passed through every test, and graduated in the school of suffering, He has fully qualified to be the Author of eternal salvation unto all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). The Temptations in the Wilderness But now leaving that phase of temptation in which we have a part and in which we may have the succour and sympathy of the Lord, we come to the great conflict in the wilderness, when He in whom was all goodness, and who was the God-ordained Leader of the forces of Light met the spirit of evil, the Prince of the powers of darkness. We may learn many lessons as we contemplate these temptations of the Lord; and as we watch His ways we may see how we may overcome, though we must always remember that if we meet Satan at all we meet a defeated foe. Jesus met him when he was flushed with four thousand years of triumph over men. But our subject is not what He was as a pattern for us, but rather what was involved in the conflict for God and men, for Himself and the great adversary. The Lord had appeared according to the ancient word to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" but these whom He had come to bless were the devil's captives. He held them as prisoners in his palace, and was "the strong man" who was determined to keep his goods from all molestation. Moreover he trusted in his armour and thought himself invincible — it is all described by the Lord in a few terse sentences in Luke 11:21-22 — for forty centuries he had bound men as captives; he had forged many weapons to effect this and apparently he had done as he wished among them, no one had appeared who could spoil him of his armour or dispute his rights to the children of men. The question had been asked by the prophet in former days, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? and shall the lawful captives be delivered?" so hopeless did it all seem to be. But Jehovah had answered, "Even the captive of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the

terrible shall be delivered . . . and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am the Saviour" (Isaiah 49:24-26). But this deliverance of the devil's captives awaited the coming of the One who was "stronger than he," and against whom his most subtly forged weapons would utterly fail. That JESUS was He, we know, but He had to prove Himself in direct conflict with the devil. Before He could do one public work of mercy or speak one public word of grace this issue had to be tried.

Then further the devil had claimed the kingdoms of the world; he dominated them and arrogated to himself the right to dispose of them as he pleased, but Jesus was the destined and rightful Heir, and the devil knew it; could he outmanoeuvre Him and deceive Him and bring Him under his dominion as he had done Adam? He was to be permitted to try, and to tempt the Lord to the utmost of his power, and by his efforts bring into manifestation what was in the heart and mind and will of the Lord, and prove whether He loved righteousness and hated iniquity or not, and whether He was able and worthy to wield the universal sceptre. And there was still another matter at issue, this second Man had come as the image of the invisible God: as His representative; could He hold the ground for God against all attacks where the first man had basely surrendered his trust? Was God to be glorified in and through man? Was He to look upon One, who would sacrifice every worldly advantage and Himself also for His will, and overcome the adversary by complete dependence and absolute, unquestioning obedience? This was a great issue, everything in the age-long conflict between good and evil, depended upon it. In this encounter with Satan, Jesus was alone and wholly dependent upon God; no disciple was near to cheer Him and no angel ministered to Him until the fight was finished. This isolation from all aid from others is emphasised by the fact that He was carried into the wilderness by the Spirit to meet the foe: away from the abodes of men to the haunts of the wild beasts. And the fact that the temptation is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and not in that of John, would teach us that it was in His manhood weakness and dependence upon God that the fight was waged, and not by the Godhead power that dwelt in Him; for John's Gospel is the Gospel of His divine glory, the glory of the Son brought down into Manhood; while the Synoptic Gospels show us, the same Person, truly, but as "the woman's Seed," the lowly Man of sorrows, who had no resources but in God. The First Temptation

It has often been said that in these three temptations of the Lord "all that is in the world, 1. the lust of the flesh, 2. the lust of the eyes, 3. the pride of life" appear; and have no doubt that this is true, for these three phases of the world are the weapons in which the devil trusts in his enslavement of men, and it is in this order that they are recorded in Luke's Gospel, which gives us the moral and not the historical order of them. In the proposal that Jesus should make the stones into bread there was a subtle suggestion of kindly interest in His welfare as well as a reflection upon God, as there had been when he tempted Eve in Eden. Are you the Son of God, and hungry? Surely God has forgotten you, or is indifferent to your need! Use the power you possess and relieve your hunger. Thus might the temptation be paraphrased. It was met by a perfect answer. "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of GOD." God and His word were all to Jesus, He would not use His power on His own behalf or to take Himself out of the place of dependence upon God. He could endure hunger but not independence of God. He sought no ease or comfort for Himself, His meat and drink were the will of God and to finish His work. The lust of the flesh had no place in His heart nor was there a joint in His armour where a doubt as to God's goodness could be thrust; and where Adam and Eve were overthrown and wounded to death, Jesus stood firm and unscathed. The Second Temptation In the second temptation the world's kingdoms were set

before His eyes, with all the power and pomp and splendour of them, which dazzle and fascinate men, and for which they will sell their souls and deny their God. And these kingdoms all belonged to Jesus, but God's way, and the only way by which He could secure them in everlasting righteousness was by suffering and death. "You shall have them," said the tempter, "by an easy way. I will give them to you if you will but worship me: acknowledge me as greater than yourself and God; take them from my hand and all shall be yours." But those glittering kingdoms had no attraction in that hour for the holy One of God. He would not take them from any hand but God's hand, He could trust God to put all things beneath His feet when the due time came, but that time was not yet. His eyes were upon God, and He met the temptation with an uncompromising answer, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." The Third Temptation The third temptation was the most subtle of the three, and the devil backed it up by a partly quoted text. He proposed that the Lord should cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple, and by such an exploit gain a double advantage — Put God to the test, and prove Him, as to whether You are the special object of His care according to the word quoted, and at the same time convince the multitude in the courtyard of the temple that You are the Messiah, the Son of God. The trap was laid in vain, and His answer, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," showed how thoroughly Jesus perceived the devil's purpose. It was no business of His to put God's word to the test to see whether God would honour it or not, no doubt as to it ever entered His mind, it did not need to be proved to Him; nor was it His business to vindicate Himself before the people. "My times are in Thy hands" was the whole spirit of His life and activities, and He would not take them out of God's hands.

GOD was the answer of this ever-dependent and so ever-victorious Man. He looked to GOD for His sustenance; GOD filled His heart to the exclusion of all other glory; His whole confidence and trust was in GOD, God's will was His law, God's way was His delight; He set the Lord always before Him and He was not moved. It was thus that He was tested and came through the testing stronger than the foe. By resisting all the efforts of "the strong man" to turn Him from His devotion to God, He bound him fast and went forth in the power of the Spirit to make his goods His spoil; for the grace and mercy of God showed themselves in Him and He went about doing good and delivering all that were oppressed of the devil. He was in the midst of men as a living Deliverer, the Master of Satan who had oppressed them so long.

How miserable and inadequate and dishonouring to the Lord is the teaching, that He met no personal devil in the wilderness, but merely retired into it to consider various schemes by which He might press His claims upon men and prove His Messiahship to them, and that the temptations were nothing more than plans of campaign that He considered and rejected. It is by such teaching that the devil would hide from men the fact of his defeat. The Final Temptation But the overcoming in the wilderness was not the end of the conflict, the devil wielded the power of death and by it kept men in bondage all their life-time for fear of it. And Jesus had come to wrench that power from him, and He could only do this by dying. It was not a living Deliverer that could emancipate men from the tyrant's power — blinded by the devil they rejected Him in that character — but a dying Redeemer. He had come to die, this only was the way, of obedience to God and of love to men. And it was as the shadow of that death crept darkly over His path that Satan returned to the attack, to tempt Him to draw back from that way of suffering. The horror and shame and woe unspeakable that lay before Him pressed heavily upon the spirit of the Lord, and He began to show to His

disciples that it was to a cross and not to a throne that He was progressing. And Satan seized the occasion and using the impetuous and unwary Peter as his spokesman, he endeavoured to turn the Lord from His fixed purpose to do the will of God even to death. "This be far from Thee [pity Thyself] this shall not be unto Thee." But the Lord detected the foe in that friendly guise, and the temptation to think of Himself was met with stern rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan," and then to Peter, "thou savourest not the things that be of GOD." As in the wilderness before He entered upon His public service so now at the end of it, GOD was the sole object of His life.

It was in this same spirit of dependence and full subjection to the will of God that He went through the agony in Gethsemane, when Satan marshalled all the powers of darkness to appal Him and drive Him back from making the great sacrifice; but He came out of the trial saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it;" and so onward to the cross. In the days of His flesh He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him out of death, and was heard in that He feared," — or, for His piety — His whole-hearted dependence upon God and His trust in Him (Hebrews 5:7). Satan was utterly foiled, he was beaten at every point in the field, and Jesus, whom he could neither decoy nor drive from the path of God's will, by dying has destroyed his power and has become the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. He went down into death, committing Himself into His Father's hands, and the Father's glory has raised Him from the dead, and now He can say to all who bow down before Him. "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." And the devil is a defeated foe. He has no authority or power over the saints; he "trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees."

They have but to resist him and he will flee from them, for they are no longer his prey, but the blood-purchased possession of the Saviour who has delivered them, and they are to share in all the results of the great victory of the Lord over him for "the God of peace shall shortly bruise him under their feet" (Romans 16:20).

06.04. The Deity of the Lord Jesus — The Necessity for it

4. The Deity of the Lord Jesus — The Necessity for it

We can understand the envy with which the kings of Egypt would view the rise and progress of Israel. They had held that nation as slaves for many generations but had been compelled by the will of Jehovah to release them, and had seen Jerusalem become the most magnificent and wealthiest city on earth under the rule of David and Solomon. Small wonder that at the first evidence of weakness Shishak came up against that city with a great army and pillaged the Temple and the king's house, and took away the priceless treasure of them, including the shields of gold that Solomon had made. Then Rehoboam, that feeble and foolish son of a great father, does not appear to have put up any resistance; he let the glory of the city go without protest. What did it matter? He could substitute brass for gold, and brass looks like gold, almost; peace seemed cheap at the price. And so it was when he went up to the house of the Lord, brazen shields went up before him instead of shields of fine gold, and when his religious duties were done they were committed to the guard for safe keeping as though they were the real thing (1 Kings 14:1-31).

What the king of Egypt did to Jerusalem, the devil, who is the god and prince of the world, has done for Christendom. For ages he had held mankind in darkness and bondage, but deliverance came at the advent of the Lord Jesus, who lived among men and died and rose again. Then God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. Multitudes were delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love, and there was established on earth the kingdom of heaven which was enriched by heavenly treasure: the pure gold of God's truth concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. But with the decline of living faith and the rise of profession with out reality in these modern days, the devil has seen and seized his opportunity, and has laid his envious and ruthless hands upon these treasures and has robbed Christendom of its shields of gold. He could not have done it if there had not been traitors within who were pledged to hold and fight for these treasures of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." They have been his allies in this. The truth as to the person of the Lord is the finest of the gold of our faith; what He is in His own eternal being gives character to it all — "God was manifest in the flesh," not, "Jesus was a manifestation of God," as some say, but that He is Himself, in His own person, God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-14). But this fine gold has been surrendered at the devil's bidding; and leaders in Christendom who ought to have defended it to the death, have surrendered it with other priceless treasures for popularity with the world and in fear of "modern scholarship." Indeed they seem to be well pleased to let these great truths go, for their insubject minds prefer their own investigations to God's revelation, and man's effort to uplift himself is more to them than God's intervention for his redemption, and they have seized the opportunity to substitute their own base brass for God's fine gold. A Christ of their imagination is more to their liking than the Christ of God,

a Christ who is stripped of the glory of His eternal Deity, and being stripped of that supreme glory is stripped of every other glory that could be acceptable to God and of use to men. And they think that they are the gainers by the change. "We are rich and increased with goods" they boast, "and have need of nothing," and they know not that "they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" and need to turn again to our Sovereign Lord and buy of Him gold tried in the fire that they may be rich (Revelation 3:17-18). The pretence of approach to God is kept up, but the brazen shields go before them instead of shields of gold, and God will not have their counterfeits. "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me," are our Lord's own words, and they are recorded for us in that Gospel which reveals to us the glory of His divine and eternal being, which indeed is not absent from any part of Scripture; and nothing less than this wilt do for God. The brazen imitation may suit and fascinate men, but it is an abomination to God, nothing but the pure gold can He accept, and in vain is their worship of Him as long as they teach the doctrines and opinions of men for the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And nothing but the pure gold of this gospel will satisfy the soul of a man when he is fully awakened to his deep need. When the light of God streams into his conscience and he sees the exceeding sinfulness of his sin, and the greatness of his peril and how far his sin has removed him from God, he will spurn the brass of man's imaginations as a mockery and a sham and confess that there can be for him no salvation in any other Name, but the Name of JESUS — Jehovah the Saviour. As to this, the late Handley Moule wrote, "The human soul, once fully awakened to its needs, to its mysterious greatness and to its mysterious but awfully real sinfulness, can find rest only in the Saviour, who is, in equal truth, one with man and one with God. Such a Saviour bridges as with living adamant the gulf of doom and sin which severs creature from Maker. A saviour who is not quite God is a bridge broken at the farther end."

It is here I would begin; before endeavouring to show that all Scripture bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the eternal Word, "the Christ, who is over all, God, blessed for ever," I would urge the necessity for it. It is a necessity to God, if He is to be known by His creature, and to find His delights in the sons of men, redeemed from all iniquity and purified unto Himself as a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and a necessity to man if he is ever to know God as his God, to be forgiven, and at peace, and find his soul's everlasting satisfaction in Him. The human soul would grope in vain for light if it were not so; it would cry out hopelessly in its misery, for there would be none to help; there would be "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded," as it was when the prophets of Baal cried all the day long to their false god (1 Kings 18:29). We should be a lost race, wandering stars cut off from our central Sun without hope of restoration to our true orbit and with no outlook but the blackness of darkness for ever, if Jesus were not God; "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father."

Consider the cry that broke out of the awakened soul of that pagan jailer at Philippi, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" What answer could satisfy that bewildered man, trembling on the brink of a lost eternity? There was but one answer that could satisfy him. Suppose instead of that one and only answer Paul had said, "Believe in Adam, or Abraham, or Moses or John the Baptist." What a mocker of the man's misery he would have been; or suppose he had said, for he was a greater man than them all, "Believe on me and thou shalt be saved." Would not the soul and conscience of the jailer have revolted against the outrage and have turned from him as a blasphemer and an imposter? But how fitting, how satisfying was the answer that he did give, "Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house." The whole gospel of God was involved in that answer; it put that seeking sinner into vital contact with Him who of aid had said, "Look unto Me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none beside Me" (Isaiah 45:22), it satisfied him, for it gave him a perfect, because a divine, Saviour. The necessity for the Word to become flesh did not arise only when that great event took place, it was there from the beginning when sin entered into the world. The patriarch Job felt the necessity and voiced it in memorable words when he said, as he searched for a way by which a man could be just with God. "He is not a man as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let Him take away His rod from me, and let not His fear terrify me: then would I speak, and not fear Him; but it is not so with me" (Job 9:33-35). It is not difficult to interpret what his feelings were, for they are the feelings of all who are awakened by God's Spirit to their need. He said in effect: "I know that I have sinned against Him, and if He were a man as I am, I could, having the feelings of a man, understand how I have offended Him; I could go to Him and make restitution for the wrong I have done to Him and so be at peace. But He is not a man as I am, and I cannot measure the demands of His justice against me. The gulf between us is unmeasurable from my side; He is almighty, holy and just, and I am weak, sinful and unholy, and there is no one that I know of to stand betwixt us, who could speak from Him to me, and from me to Him." See how accurately his awakened conscience had gauged the situation: he desired one who could stand betwixt God, infinitely holy and just, and the sinner, guilty and afraid, and put his hand upon them both: He must be equal to God and equal to men. And says Job, "I do not know such a one. I have felt the need for Him, I have longed for Him and sought for Him but I have not found Him." And Job, be it noted, who expressed his soul's deep longing in these words, was the man who came nearer to perfection than any man of his day; and if he was hopeless and despairing because he had no Daysman, it is plain that the Daysman, the Mediator could not arise among men if He is to come at all He must come from above and when He comes, He must be able to put His hand upon God; He must be God's equal; pure as God is pure, holy as God is holy, great as God is great: no one less could intervene, or be of any use in this supreme matter to Job or to any other man. Yet He must come low enough to put His hand upon men. He must pass by angels and be one of us, yet sinless, or His touch would defile the throne of God and be unavailing for us. He must represent God and yet be able to identify Himself with us and to take up our vast indebtedness and speak for us. He must be God and man.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity, and the One whom Job could not find on earth has come from heaven, and JESUS, the Virgin's Son, is Emmanuel: GOD WTH us. Being God, He knew according to God's perfect estimate what the effect to the universe of man's sin was. He knew how the majesty of God was challenged by man's disregard of His will, and what the demands of the eternal throne were in regard to the violation of its just decrees. He knew how man's pride and self will had made him the lawful capture of Satan, and how great was the gulf that separated him from his God, and how powerless he was to right the wrong. He knew the penalty that had to be paid and the work that had to be done and knowing all this He came, saying, "A body hast Thou prepared Me . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). He became the Son of Man, that He might stand in the place of men, and be lifted up as their substitute and representative and meet the bill of their indebtedness. This involved Him in all the sorrows of Calvary, and there "He gave Himself a ransom for all." If He had

not become man He could not have died, if He had not been God His death would have been without value, but now His death accomplished and the ransom paid, He is "the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."

He stooped from His eternal glory and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He put His hand upon us, degraded though we were, and He did it tenderly, graciously, so that we are not afraid. He is full of grace and truth and there is no terror for us in His hand; we do not shrink from Him, for He has touched us with the hand of a man, yet He was never less than God, and God has touched us in Him. He has put one hand upon us and the other He has placed upon the throne of God. With the one hand He has offered the fullest satisfaction to every righteous claim of God and with the other He bestows fullness of grace upon men. He brings us to God and gives us a place in His presence without fear, and in everlasting peace, a place established upon an infallible and immoveable foundation of divine righteousness laid down by Him who is God and Man in His own blessed person. But if the necessity on man's side was great, it was even greater on God's side: the fulfilment of His purposes and the revelation of the deep love of His heart towards men as well as the glory of His Name all depend upon the Deity of the Lord Jesus. How could God reveal Himself to men who were cut off from Him by their sins? How could He win their hearts from their fear and hatred of Him and deliver them from the darkness in which they groped? How could men love God if they did not know Him, and how could they know Him, since "no man hath seen God at any time unless the only-begotten Son which is in His bosom come forth to declare Him?" It was certainly necessary that these things should be done if ever that great word was to be fulfilled, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying. Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, "for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4). Before all this could be an accomplished fact the sin of the world must be borne away, and who could do that? It is recorded that, "John (the Baptist) seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We are familiar with the words, so familiar that we are but lightly impressed with their immensity and meaning, "The sin of the world!" Think of it! Think of the sin of one city, what man could take that away? or of one street in a city, or of one house in that street, or of one man in that house? Could any man take away his own sin and stand before God, "holy and without blame before Him in love"? for nothing less than that will suit Him. The questions have only to be asked to prove to all who are not wilfully blind that this work could only lie in the hands of the eternal God. Yet as John saw that lowly Stranger from Nazareth moving towards him among the multitudes of Israel, he proclaimed Him to be the taker away of the sin of the world and in that word he proclaimed His Godhead power and worth. No wonder that he was compelled to add, "This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me." That which is written in Revelation 21:1-27 shall come to pass for "the words are true and faithful" (Revelation 21:5). The same voice that cried, "It is finished" on the cross at Golgotha shall be heard saying, "It is done" and God shall rest with the multitude of His redeemed sons, in His own love that has been declared by the Son, and shall be all and in all. Meanwhile He declares, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life." God Himself is the Fountain, and the thirst of the human soul can only be assuaged and satisfied with God, and God is fully revealed to us in

JESUS. For "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world received up into glory."

06.05. The Deity of the Lord Jesus

5. The Deity of the Lord Jesus In the history of the church on earth no greater theologian than Athanasius ever arose to champion the truth of God against error, yet great and faithful as he was, he confessed that "whenever he forced his understanding to meditate on the Divinity (Deity) of the Logos (the Word) his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought the less he comprehended; and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts" (Gibbon). We do not wonder at that when we consider the immeasurable greatness of the Subject and the limited capacity of man's understanding. This inability of the human mind by its own effort to discover and know God was clearly recognised by men of intelligence in ancient times. Zophar the Naamathite challenged Job as to it, when he asked, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" (Job 11:7). And Agur the son of Jakeh appealed to Ithiel (whose name meant, There is a God) for help when he confessed his ignorance of God. "I have neither learned wisdom," said he, "nor have I the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven and descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists; Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established the ends of the earth? What is His name and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?" As far as we know Ithiel had no answer to that appeal. The modern mind is not more capable in itself of grasping the things of God than were these great men of old, for "It is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And if the things of God are outside man's range how infinitely above him must God Himself — the Father and His Son — be! And yet we must know Him; the awakened soul is conscious that all its blessing lies in the knowledge of God, and pants for this knowledge as the hart pants for the water brooks. When "the Word became flesh" and dwelt among men, He revealed the great secret as to how God was to be known when He said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:25-26). These words from the lips of the Lord Himself, declare that the knowledge of God cannot be gained by laborious and brain-wearying investigation, no matter how sincere the labour may be, but only by revelation; they strike at the root of the pride of the human intellect and prick the bubble of those who "vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds" reject the revelation and think to find out God by their own searching; they shut out the reasonings and imaginations of the self-confident mind, which always, alas, since man is fallen, and "alienated in his mind by wicked works" exalts itself against the true knowledge of God (Colossians 2:18; Colossians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 10:5). And they show that there are two sides to the fact of revelation. There is activity on God's part and receptivity on ours. God is revealed, and the babes receive the revelation; the light shines and there are eyes that admit it; the truth is declared, but it is also believed; God must speak and men must hear, for faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." And we are as dependent upon God for the babe-nature and the opened eyes and the believing heart, and the listening ears, as we are for the revelation that these perceive, appreciate and appropriate. In Old Testament times there were certain limited revelations of God's attributes and ways. The heavens declared the glory of His power, and the

firmament showed His handiwork. The law given at Sinai announced the uprightness of His kingdom and the justice of His throne. He showed Himself often in His providential care for men and as the covenant-keeping God; and proclaimed His name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." But these partial revelations, rays from the eternal splendour, only served to make those who received them cry out for a fuller, a complete knowledge of His heart and nature, as when Moses said, "Show me Thy glory" (Exodus 33:1-23) and David pleaded, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles" (Psalms 43:1-5). Those soul longings have been answered in a manner that neither Moses nor David could have conceived; the glory has appeared and the light and the truth have come in the Son of God, for "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son (lit, in Son) . . . Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). And the Son in whom God has spoken and who has declared what God is in His very nature and has glorified Him on the earth, said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and "I am the truth" (John 14:6).

We are dependent upon the Holy Scripture for all our knowledge of this full revelation, for we were not on earth when the Son of God dwelt among men, but we are thankful indeed, that the Father sent forth the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide the men who companied with Him, to bear an infallible witness to what they heard and saw. "That which we have heard," wrote one of them, "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life . . . declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). There is a peculiar dignity and authority about the Scriptures. It could not be other wise, since they are the words of the living and almighty God. For instance, they do not set out to prove that God is, they state the fact and show the effect of His presence and power, and they tell us that it is only the fool — the man void of all understand — that says in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalms 14:1). They open with that majestic statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But the New Testament is more than the equal of the Old, in this dignity and authority. It does not set out to prove that the One we know as Jesus is God, equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost. It states the fact and shows the effect of it. So that the Gospel, which I think may be justly called the greatest book in the New Testament, opens with the sublime statement, "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God: and the Word was God." The "beginning" of Genesis signifies the moment when the voice of God called the worlds into being, and the pendulum of Time began to swing, but the opening words of John's Gospel carries us further back than that and tell us that when the first creatorial word was uttered the Word was there. Whatever may have been the activities of the Godhead anterior to creation, He had His part in them, for then He was with God, His delight and companion (Proverbs 8:1-36), and He was God, God's equal, "His Fellow," in all things purposed and done — "In His existence, eternal, in His nature, divine; in His person, distinct" (J.N.D.) "All things were made by Him." His was the voice that commanded and it was done; that creative life-giving energy which abides only in God, wrought with divine power and wisdom through Him; "and without Him was not anything made that was made." Two, other passages in the New Testament definitely and fully predicate the creation of all things to Him. In one of them, words are taken up from the Old Testament (Psalms 102:1-28) as having been addressed to Him by God

Himself, "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the works of Thy hand: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years fail not." This ascription to Him, who creates for His own purpose and dissolves what He has created when it has served that purpose, but who abides, unchanging and eternal in His person and being, occurs in an Epistle addressed to Hebrew Christians, that they might be properly impressed with the glory of their Lord and the greatness of the salvation that they had in Him. The other passage was written to Gentile believers and tells us "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:1-29). Jew and Gentile, alike must recognise and acknowledge His glory, and none who believe, whether Jew or Gentile, must have any doubt as to the greatness of the One whom they have confessed as Lord and Saviour, and in whose hand lies their destiny. He is God the Creator: as to power almighty; as to wisdom infinite; as to authority, supreme; as to being, eternal. The opening of the Gospel according to John could not be plainer in its statements than it is, and they are framed by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to meet every opposition to the truth that might arise in the human heart; and interest is awakened by these statements as to whether any on earth would believe and confess the truth of them as they were known and confessed in heaven, and we may be sure that heaven was engrossed in this same question. As we pass from page to page of the Gospel, we see a ray of the light break first into one heart and then into another; here a man and there a woman is brought to bow in worship at the feet of the Sovereign Lord of all, and so to tacitly confess that He is indeed God; but it is not until the end of the Gospel is reached, (chapter 21 is a beautiful postscript to it) that His disciples behold Him and own Him in His full glory. It was on that second "first day of the week" when the disciples were gathered together, and Thomas the unbeliever with them; in disposition and temper he was a veritable materialist and had declared that he would believe nothing that he could not see and handle — that Jesus stood in the midst, and showed to the astonished eyes of His obstinate follower the wounds that He had sustained and which remained in His incorruptible body. It was enough for Thomas; he was an infidel no longer, but falling down before His Master, he voiced the faith and adoration of all his brethren, in those true and memorable words, "My LORD AND MY GOD."

If the Lord Jesus had not been what Thomas confessed Him to be, but only a good and true man He would have rebuked him for uttering foolish words, for it would have been an unspeakable wickedness for one man to accept from another man that adoration which only belongs to God; but He did accept it because it was His right, and He went further and declared the blessedness of all those throughout the ages who should perceive His glory and confess it and render like homage to Him: saying, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen yet have believed." In this great and convincing incident we see how the end of the Gospel answers to the opening words of it. The place that the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Father, has in the thoughts and affections of the Father and the Holy Ghost is instructive. I will quote certain passages from the Gospel of John which show that He was the worthy and adequate Object of the Father's love when on earth and the One for whose glory the Holy Ghost labours now. "We beheld His glory, the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14); "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18); "The Father loved the Son, and

hath given all things into His hands" (John 3:35); "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John 5:20); "The living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father" (John 6:57); "The Father hath not left Me alone" (John 7:29); "Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life" (John 10:17); "I and My Father are One" (John 10:30). And that we might know that this love that the Father had for Him and the delight that He had in Him were not confined to His life on earth, but that they were eternal in their duration, we hear His words, "Father. . . Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). But now that He has gone back to the Father we learn that the Holy Ghost has come from thence to bear witness to Him. As the Father once looked down upon Him, so now the Holy Ghost looks up to Him, and would turn the eyes of all His disciples in the same direction. We read, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). "But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26). "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16:13-15). The revelation of God is complete, and we know God now as Father, Son and Holy Ghost: three Persons yet one God. It was this that came into full manifestation when Jesus was here, for "in Him all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:19, see also Colossians 2:10. Darby's N.T.) and "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). The Father is the source of all blessing for men. The Son has brought the blessing to men. The Holy Ghost makes the blessing good in men. And each person in the Godhead is engaged in making the revelation a reality in the souls of men for we read, "No man knoweth the Father save THE SON and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27).

"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but MY FATHER which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

"God hath revealed them unto us by HIS SPIRIT: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer. A power commensurate with the love that moved the Father to send the Son, and works in the hearts of those who have humbly yielded to the Lord, so that they are not now groping in darkness, or wearying themselves in a vain search after God by human effort, for the true light is shining and "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:20-21. N.T.)

06.06. The Deity of the Lord as seen

6. The Deity of the Lord as seen in the opening of the New Testament

It was not the business of earlier writers of the New Testament to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. To them this great truth was not a matter of debate, it was their whole faith, and the standpoint from which they made their inspired-by-the-Holy-Spirit records. It has been said that just as the golden threads were inextricably woven with the blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen of the High Priest's ephod and girdle (Exodus 18:1-27) so is the Deity of Christ woven into all that these men wrote; and that is true, yet the type is feeble and inadequate, as all material types of what is infinite must be. The Deity of Christ is more than interwoven into the Gospel records, it is the warp upon which all that is recorded in them is wrought; it is the root out of which all truth grows; it is the fountain from which all blessing flows. If it could be torn from these four Gospels they would be meaningless shreds, and the glorious faith of the Son of God would be compelled to take its place along with other vain, worldly philosophies, having some interest perhaps to scholars, but void of all saving value for sinners. Those who reject it, reject the only hope, the only way of deliverance for men, for all Scripture shows that if men were to be saved, God must come down to them to do it, and also, if God does come down to men, He must come as their Saviour. Naturally we should have thought otherwise but that is most assuredly the truth. And it is with this that the New Testament opens. Upon the first page of it, in our Authorised Version, the Name of Jesus appears in capital letters, and it gives us the title and the great subject of the Book. That Name means Saviour, and He had come to save. The New Testament is the Book of God's salvation, and it shows us that God Himself is the Saviour, and He only. He might delegate great works to His angel-servants, and speak in diverse ways to men by His prophets, but this work of salvation He must undertake Himself, or it would never be done.

Let us now consider this, "Fear not," said the angel of the Lord to Joseph, "to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." He did not say that He would save sinners, Jew and Gentile, though that is most blessedly true, and comes fully to light as the truth unfolds, but in perfect keeping with this first Gospel, to "save His PEOPLE." The people of Israel were in view in the angel's announcement, and the fulfilment of the Word of God by His prophets to them. They were Jehovah's people, a people chosen of God as His own peculiar possession, even though they had departed far from Him. Their sins had separated them from Him, but He would not, He could not, abandon His rights in them, He would undertake their salvation. And Jesus was to appear to do this, because as the angel said, these people chosen of God were His PEOPLE. There are many Old Testament passages addressed to Israel which bind up their salvation with God's personal intervention on their behalf and that prove conclusively that He only could save them. I will quote a few of them, "I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isaiah 43:3). "I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Saviour" (Isaiah 43:11). "There is no God else beside Me, a just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah 45:21). "All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isaiah 49:2). "I

am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but Me; for there is no Saviour beside Me" (Hosea 13:4). It has often been said that the name Jesus carries divine glory with it; that it means Jehovah the Saviour; it is certainly clear from these great texts that none but God could save His people, and if any others pretended to be able to do this, their pretence only proved them to be thieves and robbers (John 10:1-42), but of Jesus, the angel said, "He shall save His people from their sins." Then who else could He be but God? The First Quotation From the Prophets As we apprehend the force and meaning of the words of the angel of the Lord to Joseph we are prepared for the statement that follows, "Now this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." When Mary brought forth her first-born Son the Saviour-Messiah had entered the world. He who had said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14), was not now sending a servant with a message but He had appeared Himself to be their Saviour. We are not asked to fathom this mystery of God-incarnate, it must ever baffle all intellectual investigation, but it does not stumble faith; for faith recognises that God will perform His word; if He had spoken of this by the prophet, what He had said must come to pass. And faith knows that when God moves He moves in a way worthy of Himself, to confound the wise and the proud and the mighty by that which is apparently weak and of no account. It was even so in this matter. He came into manhood and in great humility not to condemn and consume a sinful people, but to offer Himself to them as their Saviour Lord, though we know well that where grace is rejected judgment must fall. The Second Quotation From the Prophets The coming of the wise men from the East to enquire where He was who was born King of the Jews, gave Jerusalem the opportunity of not only beholding its King but of seeing its God manifest in flesh. The chief men of the city were gathered together by Herod, the Idumean usurper, and they showed that they were well acquainted with the Scriptures that spoke of His birth. But in citing Micah 5:2 why did they omit that part of it that declares His eternal being and activities? The omission seems to indicate that they had no desire for a close acquaintance with their God, the idea was not acceptable to them; an alien tyrant seems to have been more to their minds than Jehovah their Saviour. But the prophecy which they quoted not only foretold the place of His birth and the dignity of His office, but the glory of His person. Micah wrote:

"They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" — an extraordinary prophecy; but actually fulfilled when they took the reed that they had put in His right hand as a mock sceptre and smote Him on the head, (Matthew 27:30), — "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet 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 [or the days of eternity]" (Micah 5:1-2). Who could have conceived this great thing, that He whose goings forth were from eternity, who in divine, creative energy had cast the stars before Him as a golden pathway for His glorious feet, should have come forth in obscure Bethlehem, born of an obscure virgin mother, in all the apparent weakness of human babe-hood; to be the Servant of the Godhead and to tread the filthy streets of those eastern cities in His search for the diseased, and distressed and devil-possessed; and to go forth at last bearing His cross to Golgotha to save His people from their sins? What goings forth were these! Yet these were the ways of divine love, made known in the Son of Man, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. It was the only way if God was to be known as the Saviour, and if Jesus was to make good His title to

that glorious name. The Third Quotation From the Prophets

Passing over other quotations from the prophets that do not bear on our subject we come to Matthew 3:1-17. John the Baptist was a man full of the Holy Spirit, and by the guidance and power of the Spirit he bore testimony to Jesus. He refused to talk of Himself; his mission was to "prepare the way of the LORD," according to the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3. And of Him whose forerunner he was, he said, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but He will burn up the chaff with Unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11-12). With the Lord close upon his heels, this faithful forerunner declared his own limitations; he could baptise the people with water; he could bring them down into that which signified death, but at the same time he proclaimed the might of his Lord, He would lift them into the sphere of life and endue them with the power and intelligence that belonged to that life, or — dread alternative — baptise them with fire. He would gather His wheat into the garner and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Israel was His floor; and He the Lord would discriminate between His wheat and the chaff. Who but the Lord could do this? It is written, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." He had come in grace, the Lord in whom is salvation, but He had come to a recalcitrant nation, a remnant only of which would receive Him; and since He is a just God as well as a Saviour, His judgment must fall on the rebellious. "For the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea all that do wickedly shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1). "The Father . . . hath committed all judgment to the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:22-23). "What a fact of immeasurable greatness was the presence of the Lord God in the midst of His people, in the Person of Him who, although He was doubtless to be the fulfilment of all the promises, was necessarily, though rejected, the Judge of all the evil existing among His people" (J.N.D.). The Fourth Quotation From the Prophets The next quotation from the prophets which has a definite bearing on our subject is in Matthew 4:1-12. John had been cast into prison. He had been a burning and a shining light in the darkness, but as the stars fade away when the sun rises, so he passed out of sight that all eyes might be fixed upon the One who was greater than he; "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region of the shadow of death light is sprung up." The quotation is from Matthew 9:1-38 and it declares the greatness of the One in whom this great light shone, and we must not fail to notice this. "Unto us," says the prophet, "a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Father of Eternity. The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

How great are the glories of this fivefold name! too bright indeed for mortal eyes, if it were not in Jesus that they shine, but in Him they reach us as softly and sweetly as the dawn, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Here is meekness, gentleness and love. We are not afraid of a babe; we do not shrink in terror from a son, "Fear not," said the angel to the Shepherds, "for,

behold I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger." And His Name — the name of that Babe upon whom the Shepherds looked with wonder and whom the wise men worshipped — has a five-fold glory. Can we discern it in the Gospels? I think we can, indeed it pervades them and diffuses its fragrance from every page of them. His name shall be called WONDERFUL. The devil owned it when he was compelled to leave Him, having utterly failed to allure Him from the path of righteousness, (Matthew 4:11). The people confessed it when they were astonished at His doctrine. (Matthew 7:28); the soldiers who were sent to take Him confessed it when they said, "Never man spake like this man," (John 7:26); the people confessed it again when they said, "He hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37); His disciple confessed it when they asked, "What manner of man is this?" (Matthew 8:25); the devils confessed it when they said, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth?" (Matthew 8:29); and the Father proclaimed it when from the excellent glory He said, "Thou art my Son [even] the Beloved, in Whom I greatly delight."

COUNSELLOR. "Learn of Me," He said, "for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest to your souls" (Matthew 11:29), and "Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24). THE MIGHTY GOD. This is the name of God as the Omnipotent One, the mighty EL, the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, Who disposes of men as He will and is the strength and refuge of those that trust in Him. This is the central glory of the five-fold name and it shone from the lowly Nazarene when He stilled the storm on the midnight sea (Matthew 8:26); thrust back and controlled the power of death (Matthew 8:23); multiplied the loaves and fishes to satisfy the hungry crowds (Matthew 14:15); claimed the undivided allegiance of the hearts of men (Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 19:21); forgave the sins of those that sought Him, (Matthew 9:2); and said "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). THE FATHER OF ETERNITY. Our minds can travel back through the ages of time, but they halt at the frontiers of eternity; it is too vast for us to scan, yet this fourth beam of this all-glorious name carries us into Eternity whether we will or not, and tells us that every age of it proceeded from Him, and that He controls them with all their issues. If I may be permitted to go outside our Gospel I will quote from Colossians 1:1-29 where it is said of "The Son of the Father's love" (Colossians 1:13), "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17). And turning back to our Gospel I read of this Creator-Son, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matthew 11:27), and there shines a beam too bright for creature eye, a glory that no man hath seen or can see. THE PRINCE OF PEACE. There is not much said about peace in Matthew's Gospel, it belongs more to Luke's and the latter part of John's, but the reason is not far to seek. As the Prince of Peace He sent forth His messengers preaching peace in every house into which they went, but the people were not worthy of that peace for they rejected the Prince of it, and the peace they would not have returned to those who carried it (Matthew 10:13), and the Prince of Peace had to say in view of this stubbornness and blindness, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Nevertheless He was the Prince of peace, and Peter proclaimed this when He told the first

Gentiles that ever heard the gospel, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (He is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36). And all who owned His Lordship entered into peace then as they also do even unto this day. The glory shone in vain for Israel then, for they stumbled at the lowliness of their great Messiah, but the day is surely coming when it will dispel their darkness, and lift the veil that covers them and open their wondering eyes and they shall say in that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). Then of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, and He will establish His kingdom with judgment and justice for ever. And He will swallow up death in victory and wipe away tears from off all faces, for He is the Saviour of His people, JEHOVAH-JESUS.

Thus we see Him in the early chapters of Matthew, who is the Son in the glorious Trinity (Matthew 28:19), co-equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, enter into the world as man, yet Emmanuel, to be the Saviour of His people, and their Ruler, who was not a child of days, but the Lord of Eternity; and as their all-discerning and righteous Judge, and the One who will drive before His victorious feet all darkness and the power of death and fill His kingdom and the whole earth with the light of the knowledge of God which shines even now in His face for all who believe.

06.07. The Deity of our Lord in the later Epistles

7. The Deity of our Lord in the later Epistles (continued)

It is not in Paul's later Epistles only that the truth of the Deity of our Lord is emphasised, it is the fountain from which all his ministry flowed. "It is taken for granted all through his Epistles, and is the very soul and marrow of the entire series of doctrines. When this is lost sight of, all is misshapen and dislocated, but when this is recognised all falls into its place as the exhibition of infinite power and mercy clothed in a vesture of humiliation and sacrifice, and devoted to the succour and enlightenment of man" (Liddon). The Divine glory of his Lord was everything to Paul. We surely realise this as we read of his heroic life of labour and zeal and endurance and sacrifice, and consider his burning words. From the hour when he saw Him in the glory and heard His voice as he lay stricken by His power on the road to Damascus, the enthroned Jesus was the object of his faith and love and life, and he yielded to Him an allegiance that only God could claim. He delighted to speak of himself as His bond slave; to count the greatest prizes that the world could give as dung and dross and well lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He preached Him as the subject of the gospel of God, and called upon men to repent Godward, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for their soul's salvation as they would believe in God. He charged the princes of this world with crucifying the Lord of glory, and boldly declared, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema." He spoke of Him as our "great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" and as the "Judge of the quick and dead." How awe-inspiring are his words in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Of whom could such words have been written but of the eternal God? But it is not difficult to see how necessary it was that the truth should be stated in definite terms in the later epistles not only for those to whom they were first addressed but for us also. The Deity of Christ is the central fact of our faith; it is the glory of it and that that gives stability to our souls and enables us to endure when persecuted and tried; and it is that which is the object of the most persistent attacks of Satan, that and the truth of His holy manhood. Fierce was the war that raged about it in the early centuries of the Christian era, and to this day the test of everything is "What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?" If He is David's Son, "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord?" How good it is that we are not left to the vagaries of the Fathers, or to the opinions of modern theologians, or to our own deductions and conclusions, but that we have the clear, definite, unequivocal words of Holy Scripture for what we believe. The Hebrew Epistle The faith of the Hebrew Christians was being sorely tried; they had hoped that their nation would have accepted Christ as the Messiah, but only a feeble remnant had done so, and they were between two fires, persecuted by pagan Gentiles and reviled by their own countrymen. And just ahead of them lay the destruction of Jerusalem and their dispersal to the ends of the earth. The time had come for a complete and final break with all that they had held most sacred — priests, sacrifices, temple, city. What could carry them through this time of sore trial and maintain them steadfast in

the faith? One thing — the transcendent glory of their Lord and Saviour. Hence their need was the occasion for the Spirit of God to take of the things of Christ and show them to them, and to glorify Him (John 16:14), and to clothe Him with distinctions and glories which belong only to the eternal God. How wonderful are the opening words of the Epistle, "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." Lack of space and time prevent me from attempting to say anything about this range of glories that could belong to no creature however exalted, but surely the contemplation of them must bow every believing heart in wonder and worship at His feet and especially so as we realise that it is Jesus, who died for us, to whom these glories belong. But there is one passage in the chapter that we must consider. It is a quotation from Psalms 102:1-28, "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of Thy hands, They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but THOU ART THE SAME, and Thy years shall not fail." Who can this be who creates for His own glory, and who, when what He has created has served His purpose, folds it up and sets it aside like a worn-out garment, but who abides Himself in His own eternal, immutable, unchanging Being? Who can He be? Let the end of the Epistle answer the question. "JESUS CHRIST THE SAME yesterday, today and for ever." But consider this declaration of His glory: the words were addressed to Him when as a man on earth His strength was weakened in the way and He drew near unto death. It was one Person in the Godhead addressing another, and addressing Him as the words indicate, as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the One whose creatorial voice called time into being and who will have the last word about every thing; who when former things have passed away and time has ceased to be, will say, "Behold I make all things new." "It is done" (Revelation 21:1-27).

Consider what the effect of the contemplation of this glorious Lord must have had upon these sorely harassed Hebrew Christians; and shall we be less affected? It is He who has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." As He said of old to Jacob the wanderer (Genesis 28:15) to Joshua the warrior (Joshua 1:5), and to Solomon the worshipper (1 Chronicles 28:20), so He says to us, and what strong consolation His word gives, for it is impossible for Him to lie. So that we may boldly say, as those Hebrews could say, "Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Colossians 1:1-29

I have been impressed with the fact that those Scriptures in the Epistles that make reference to our Lord's pre-incarnation being, present Him to our faith as the Son and as the Creator. As the Son He stands in relation to the Father and as the Creator He stands in relation to time and all that He has created. And I am sure that it would be right to say, that the universe was made and is upheld by His power that He might fill it with the blessedness of that love wherewith the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world. In Colossians 1:13 it is said that the Father "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (New Trans.). This is the only time that the Kingdom is spoken of as the Kingdom of the

Father's Son, and there must be a great reason for it. I suggest that the reason for it and what follows of the divine glories of the Son is to be found in the danger that menaced the faith at Colosse. A subtle foe was bent upon seducing the faithful brethren in that church from Christ. He was insinuating that while it was well enough to have Christ they would be none the worse off for a little of the world's philosophy, Christ and Plato would make an admirable mixture; and if they would borrow from Jewish ordinances and curb their Christian liberty by a discreet asceticism they would be gainers in every way. The best of Judaism, and the best of Greek thought would enrich their faith. But the whole effort was to displace Christ in their souls and blind them to His eternal oneness with the Father, and to reduce Him in their thoughts to the level of a created being. And this, also is the trend of modern thought in Christendom. Even the missionary is told that he must no longer go forth proclaiming the Name of Jesus as the only name in which there is salvation, for there is good and truth, say they, in all religions, and the Moslem and the Hindu have also got messages for mankind and they should meet together with the Christian on equal terms and pool their respective wealth. In view of this how necessary to us is the Epistle to the Colossians.

How necessary it was that Paul should arise in his loyalty to his Lord, and in bold, God-given words declare the peerless unassailable glory of Christ, for only that could preserve the saints of God from this deadly error in his day, and nothing else can do it in this. The truth of God does not change, Christ does not change: the Son of the Father's love is from everlasting to everlasting, and He is the Head of His body the Church, and must have no rival. In all things He must have pre-eminence.

We read that "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." "By Him." The force which has summoned the worlds out of nothingness into being, and which upholds them in being, is His; He wields it; He is the one Producer and Sustainer of all created existence. For Him. He is not as Arianism afterwards pretended, merely an inferior workman, creating for the glory of a higher Master, for a God superior to Himself; He is the End of created things as well as their immediate Source, and in living for Him every creature finds at once the explanation and the law of its being. For He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Liddon).

We surely realise the infinite character of His glory and wisdom as the Creator, yet as the Son He has a greater glory, a glory that surpasses all creature comprehension. As the Creator He is supremely above every creature that He has made and that supremacy will yet be confessed by every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth; but the Name of Son declares what He was to the Father before any creature existed. "The Son of His love;" "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father," "Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." "Having one Son, His well-beloved." How these words move the heart, and bow us down before the Father, especially when we read that it is into the kingdom of His Son that we have been translated through grace.

Some have endeavoured to explain the mystery of this eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, and have made deductions and arrived at conclusions which have been neither wise nor helpful. I will not do that, it is better to accept what is written without asking, How? For "no man knoweth the Son but the Father."

"The higher mysteries of His fame

The creature's grasp transcends.

The Father only that blest Name

 Of Son can comprehend."

What is beyond all controversy is that He, the Son, was loved by the Father before the world's foundations, and that the Father sent Him forth, made of a woman. He gave His only-begotten Son, that the love of the eternal relationship might be revealed to us, who without it would have remained in the power of darkness for ever. The Kingdom of His Son is a Kingdom of light, and outside of it is darkness. It is a Kingdom of light, because "He is the image of the invisible God," "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He is the One who represents God to the universe He has created. Adam was created in a minor way as in God's image, but he was but a figure of Christ. It is THE SON who is the true image, and God is fully revealed in Him, not as Father only, though that surely is the most blessed part of this divine revelation, but all that the eternal God is has found its expression in Him, for "all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell in Him" — the despised Nazarene, and now "all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily" (Colossians 1:9; Colossians 2:9, N.T.). All the light of God for His universe streams from His beloved Son. All else is darkness whether it be Judaism, Grecian philosophy, Hinduism, Mohammedanism, or that Modernism that while holding to the Christian name denies the Father and the Son. For "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:22-23). And John, inspired by the Holy Ghost uses strong language, of such, in saying they are liars and antichrist. He is the true Light, the Light of the world, and shineth for every man, but "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Great and varied are the glories that He bears in this chapter, glories upon which no creature could lay his hands, or claim a title to. He is the Redeemer; the Image of the invisible God; the Creator of all things, and the End for which they were all made, and He sustains the universe that He has made by His almighty and undiminished power. In Him the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and by an infinite sacrifice He has made peace so that He will as a result of it, and by His own divine power, reconcile all things on earth and in heaven to God, and bring them into harmony with the central throne. But these are glories that belong to Him because of who He is; they are names and renown that none but He could have gained, but before He rose up and went forth to glorify God in any of them He was the Son of the Father's love. He is this in His own eternal Being. And those who have believed have been brought into His Kingdom, into subjection to Him, and as being in that Kingdom they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God's Son; and they are loved with the love wherewith the Father loved Him, for said He, "I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them" (John 17:26).

"Beware," then, since such a glorious Lord and Saviour and Head is yours, O Christian, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye

are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:8-10).

06.08. Atonement by Blood

8. Atonement by Blood

"And behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne, and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone" (Revelation 4:2-3). It is my conviction that if the glorious and eternally blessed Occupant of that throne had appeared only as the jasper stone — the clear, unsullied crystal — no created being could have stood before Him, but because the blood-red rays of the sardine blend with the light of the jasper, the worst of sinners may have a footing there in everlasting righteousness and peace. To understand what the symbol illustrates take the great Christian message which is declared to us in 1 John 1:5, "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." There is the clear shining of the crystal, but if that had been all could any man have abode in the searching brightness of it? But there follows at once the fear dispelling, peace-giving word, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." How perfectly that great fact harmonises and blends with the light! Indeed it is part of it. What confidence it gives to the soul! and what uprightness! for in the light nothing can be hidden, yet all is covered by the blood, it is the perfect atonement, equal in its efficacy to the full shining of the light. In the knowledge of this the one who believes can walk in the light even as God is in the light and can rejoice in the supremacy of the throne that shines as the jasper and the sardine Stone. Had sin never entered into the world there would, of course, have been no need for atonement by blood, and according to our estimate of what sin is will be our appreciation of it. If a man thinks that sin is merely "the survival of the tiger in humanity" which evolution will most surely destroy, as some divinity professors have asserted in defiance of the Word of God, he will deny all need of it; if he thinks that a man's sin is nothing more than weakness or a mere negation that he may overcome in time, he will resent the word that tells him that he needs a Saviour such as Jesus is; but if he discovers that his deeds are the outward evidence of a corrupted inward nature and that his "sin is lawlessness" as the Bible says it is, "for every one that doeth sin doeth lawlessness" (1 John 3:4, R.V.); if his soul bows down before the truth that "by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and death passed upon all men for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12), then atonement by blood will become a necessity to him and his awakened conscience will be satisfied with nothing less.

Atonement by blood is as necessary to God as it is to us. Apart from it His true and full nature and character could never have been known by any of His creatures, least of all by sinful men; but by it His ways are revealed and justified, for it is by the way He has dealt with this question of man's sinfulness that what He is has been fully declared.

We must face the question as to what God is as well as what we are. Would we have Him to be other than the gospel says He is? In the gospel His righteousness is declared and His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Could any creature have security and peace if it were not so? There are those who cavil at God's right to execute justice, would they care to live in a land where crime was strong and law weak? Where even the greatest criminal

lived in fear of a greater arising to crush him unchecked by the law? No, they are ready enough to support the law of the land in which they live, and to justify its penalties for their own protection, but deny the right to God which they claim for themselves. Of them the Bible says, "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that commit such things." How daring and how unreasonable is that spirit in a man which insists upon his neighbour obeying the laws of the land and yet flouts the law of God!

If the judgment of God were not according to truth and justice, if He winked at sin, and were the indulgent and weak-fatherly being that the modernist would have Him be, then an awakened conscience would be morally greater and better than He, and the devil would take advantage of His weakness and seize His throne. But we may be thankful and rejoice that God is God and that His justice will "never descend from her sceptred royalty" and compound with sin. God will maintain His supremacy and abide forever and without change in His infinite and unsullied holiness, and all His ways will be in absolute and unchallengeable righteousness.

Since that is so, what of men who are sinful and who have been guilty of rebellion against Him, and as a consequence are lying under the sentence and power of death? There could be no hope for them apart from atonement by blood. Hence the Bible, which is God's Word to men, is full of it; it is, as someone else has said, the diamond pivot upon which the New Testament turns, and it is the burden of the Old; it is woven into the very fabric of the Holy Scriptures and is the basis of all relationship between God and sinful men; apart from it there is no light, no peace, no hope for men. If we reject this the Bible has neither message nor meaning for us. The Old Testament declares, "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11), and the New Testament adds its witness by saying, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). The coats of skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve in Eden first proclaimed the fact that a victim not chargeable with the offence must suffer in the place of the guilty if he is to go free. Abel's lamb, the ram that was caught in the thicket and offered instead of Isaac, the paschal lamb in Egypt and all those offerings that were consumed upon Israelitish altars taught to all who had ears to hear and hearts to understand that there was no other way by which a man's sins could be covered and his transgressions forgiven.

Yet in those countless altars and sacrifices God had no pleasure. He had no pleasure in Israel's offerings because of the character of those that brought them. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks." There was only wickedness and no sincerity in the hearts of those who brought them and the blood of their sacrifices could not change this; but the great, the fundamental reason was that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. Hebrews 10:1-39 is the great chapter which shows us the futility of these offerings, there we learn that they called sin to remembrance every year, for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, and nobody could suppose that they could please God. Then why were they offered? They were a shadow of good things to come, and they filled up the period of waiting until the Substance appeared. The substance is Christ; it was to Him that all those ancient sacrifices pointed and of His coming they spoke with tongues that were eloquent to the ear of faith. Theories and doctrines are of no value unless they centre in Christ. IT IS HE whom God hath set forth, a propitiation through faith in His blood (Romans 3:25). He is the Propitiation for our sins, but not for

ours alone, but also for the whole world (1 John 2:2). The word atonement does not occur in our New Testament, except in Romans 5:11, and it is well known that in that passage it is a wrong translation, and should be "reconciliation." It is an Old Testament word which means "to cover" and does not mean "atonement" as theology declares. It means that the offence is blotted out by the offering; an equivalent is rendered to the aggrieved party which covers the crime. Yet atonement, or to use the New Testament word, reconciliation, is very closely allied to it, for as a result of the atoning sacrifice and death of Christ men are reconciled to God and they could not have been by any other way. And further if there has been awakened in our souls a sense of need, our eyes are turned upon Him to whom God Himself looks and in Him we have a common object with God. What an hour that was when the Son of God rose up and coming into the world said, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). We are sure that all heaven was stirred, and the attention of every creature in those realms above was entirely concentrated upon that great event, but who shall tell what it meant to God? His holy will, His glory, the vindication of His character, the revelation of His love were all committed to His beloved Son, to Jesus — the Babe in Bethlehem, and to Him we must look, for the words of the Baptist are as much for us as they were for the crowds that heard them on the banks of Jordan, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Suppose that when mankind had proved itself to be an incurably sinful stock, God had cast the whole race out of His presence, executing His judgment upon every member of it, for He could certainly have done that in pure justice, what then should we have said of Him? We should have said, God is just, and our sins are great in His sight but we are of small account. Suppose on the other hand He had waived the question of our sins aside as though they did not matter and had lightly pardoned and blest us all without any reference to righteousness, what should we have said of Him then? We should have said, God thinks a great deal about us, we are very important in His eyes, but sin is nothing, He thinks very little about sin and He is not righteous. I need not say that this latter supposition is an impossible one, for God cannot pass over sin as a thing of no account, it calls for His judgment and upon it His judgment must fall.

Then if God must punish sin, what of the sinner? Shall God be robbed of His joy in man for ever, and shall sinners never know the love that fills His heart towards them? In short, is it possible for God to pour out His just judgment upon sin and yet save the sinner? Can His justice and mercy be harmonised, and His righteousness be upheld, while His love flows out to men? Hebrews 10:1-39 is the triumphant answer to the questions. "Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once."

"Wouldst thou know in My great creation

Where the rays of My glory meet?

Where to My awe-ful righteousness

The kiss of My peace is sweet?

Where shine the wisdom and wonder

Of God's everlasting plan?

Behold on the Cross of dishonour

A cursed and a dying Man.

It has been argued that the doctrine of the atonement is an immoral doctrine, for according to it the innocent is compelled to suffer in the place of the guilty. But this is a perversion of the doctrine, and it falsifies the fact. When the Son of God came forth to suffer for guilty men, there was no compulsion but that of love. The love of God was the spring and motive of His coming. To prove this we do not quote the well-known John 3:16, though that wonderful word would be enough most surely to decide the question for ever, but we draw upon other texts not so often used, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). And when the Father sent the Son He did not send One who was unwilling to go at His command. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," proves beyond question that His coming was voluntary. He was one with the Father in this, and He took up that body which was prepared for Him by God — He became Man that He might accomplish in manhood all the will of God in regard to men. Nor did the innocent suffer for the guilty when Jesus died. We cannot attach that word to Him, for it means without the knowledge of good and evil, and He had full knowledge of all things. He was holy and not innocent; He knew what the sin of man was in its exceeding sinfulness and hated it and was Himself sinless though a Man, and He knew what the righteousness of God was and loved it and was God's righteous servant to manifest and establish it.

Yet He did suffer for the guilty, the Bible tells us this in the plainest language, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Yes, that is it, "the Just for the unjust," and in that suffering He rendered to justice a full atonement. Atonement was accomplished when the blood flowed forth from the spear-riven side of Jesus, and in virtue of it the sinner is brought to God. By it God is glorified and the sinner redeemed. The love of God and His mercy and grace are exercised in the sinner's salvation in absolute accord with His holiness, righteousness, justice and truth; the majesty of His throne is upheld and His heart flows out in blessing to men, and all who believe can say He is our God and we are His people.

There is the Godward aspect of it and the usward who believe aspect of it. The Godward aspect of it is propitiation, which is brought out in Romans 3:25. It was typified in the sin offering that was consumed without the camp of Israel on the great day of atonement. The fact that it was consumed outside the camp indicated in figure God's abhorrence of sin, and the great antitype of that comes out in those solemn words, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Here, we must confess, is a holy mystery, as deep and impenetrable as was the darkness that for three hours enveloped the cross. But we know that having taken the sinner's place Jesus endured the judgment that was against the sinner, even to being forsaken of God There was no mitigation of the judgment for

Him, but because of who He was, the holy Son of God. He was able to endure and exhaust the judgment and cry "It is finished." The blood of the sin-offering that was burnt without the camp was carried by the high priest into the holiest in the Tabernacle and sprinkled there upon the golden mercy seat and seven times before it, and that was the propitiation, that was the place where God could meet with His people. Because of the blood the throne of God has become a mercy-seat without any diminution of its holiness. This is what is meant when it is stated, "Being justified freely: by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." The requirements of His justice have been met, and He has been glorified in all His attributes and nature by that great sacrifice; the blood is equal in its value to the gold; and the gold symbolizes what God is in His absolute righteousness. Now He is just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The outward who believe aspect of the atonement is redemption and reconciliation. In Christ, who has so blessedly glorified God about the sin question, "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," and we "have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Could it be otherwise? All enmity must die out of our hearts as we see God's great desire for our blessing as it has been displayed in the death of His Son, and the more we consider His death the more we are filled with wonder at its suitability to the situation. Nothing else could have met God's claims, nothing else could have met our need; Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God and the present and eternal boast of all who are saved.

It should not be difficult to understand that the carrying out of this great work depended wholly upon what the Lord is. If He had not become man He could not have been our substitute and representative, but having become man, He was lifted up for us, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; and if He had not been the sinless Man He could not have stood for us, for how could one who had sins of his own to suffer for, be a substitute for others? But if He had not been more than man, if He had not been God in His own eternal being, His sacrifice would have had no atoning value. Who could measure and meet the claims of God's eternal justice but God? Who could understand how sin had challenged the very majesty of God and threatened the stability of God's throne but God; who could put one hand upon God and one hand upon a guilty sinner, and glorify the One and bless the other, and bring the two together in righteousness and peace, but One who in His own Person was God and man? If He had not been man He could not have died, if He had not been God His death would have been without value.

We rejoice in a full atonement; great peace fills our hearts as we consider it, for what He, our Saviour-God, has done will abide for ever, His blood can never lose its value. We know that by His one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified and we know that all things in heaven and on earth are to be reconciled to God on the sure foundation of that same offering. And when that has been effected the throne of God and the Lamb shall be the great centre from which streams of blessing and life will flow to multitudes of men who own the authority of that throne. Thus we return to our beginning, "And He that sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone."

06.09. The Resurrection of Christ

9. The Resurrection of Christ

Never had brighter hopes been buried in any grave than in the grave of Jesus and never had hearts been more bereft than the hearts of the disciples and of those women that loved and followed Him. How they must have shuddered in their sorrow as the great stone was rolled to its place at the door of the sepulchre, and shut from their tear-dimmed vision the body of their Lord. The night that followed that last Passover feast was a woeful night for them, and for all who loved the Hope of Israel; it was a night unrelieved by any solace from without or faith from within, for having, as they supposed, lost their Lord, they had lost their all and could do nothing but mourn and weep. Yet there was one thing that kept the broken hearts of those women from refusing to perform their office: they would go on the first day of the week and anoint His body. His Kingship had been rejected by the Jews: His claim to it was the charge upon which Pilate had condemned Him to the cross; the multitude had gone to their homes saying, He was no king at all or He would have come down from the cross and saved Himself; but to those women He was King, and more; and though He had lost the kingdom, yet He should lie in His tomb as like a King as they could make it possible. By some means or other they would force their way into that sealed and guarded grave and fill it with the fragrance of the spices that they had prepared, and with the sweeter fragrance of their love; this should be their last tribute to Him, and then they would return — yes, but how, and where, and to what?

Mark tells us that they reached the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. Were they blind to the golden glow of that wondrous morning? It is more than likely, for a grave was their goal, and to pour their best upon the dead their purpose; this was the only balm they knew for their death-stricken and hopeless hearts; and what charm could a sunrise have for such as they? But what a sunrise that must have been, though their eyes did not appreciate it! Let no man tell me that the day dawned as other days, or that all nature did not exult in that great hour. There must have been a triumph and a fragrance in it that never rising of the sun had known before. If when He died — He, the Creator become flesh — the sun drew a veil across its face, and all nature wrapt itself in sable garments, and the earth trembled to its very heart in horror at the deed that men had wrought, there must have been a corresponding joy when the conquering heel of life was placed upon the neck of death, and the shame of the cross was answered by an empty tomb. "HE IS RISEN." The glad news had sung its triumphant music to the ends of creation, and "the sun, moon and stars," "the mountains and hills and fruits, trees and cedars," the heavens and the earth were the glorious orchestra that accompanied the angel's proclamation.

What wonders greeted those women when they reached the sacred spot. The stone was gone and instead of Roman soldiers, brutal men who would have found a wretched joy in casting insults at them, they found a heavenly guard in possession, a messenger from God in white apparel. Heaven was not in mourning; its messenger wore the garments of victory and joy, and only waited for human ears to listen to his story. And these women were the first to hear it, and as they heard,

the silent chords in their hearts awoke to song, and they turned their backs upon the empty grave, and forgot their useless spices and themselves also, and with fear and great joy did run to tell the tidings. Blessed women, they were the first of ransomed sinners to be swept by the rapture of the resurrection triumph, the first of that countless host whose singing shall be sweeter and more joyous and more prolonged than any raised by sun, moon and stars, or even angels. The proofs of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are so many and infallible that nothing but blind unbelief would deny it; but the modernists deny it, they think, like their forebears, the first century Sadducees, that it is an incredible thing that God should raise the dead. The fact is it does not fit in with their evolution doctrines, which doctrines reveal their wish to be free from all responsibility to God. "The wish is father to the thought." The solemn fact of death, not as the debt of nature, but as the wages of sin, the judgment of God upon man because of sin (Genesis 3:17) and resurrection from the dead, which is God's intervention in a scene of death, put an impassable gulf between man and the beasts, and show clearly, in spite of all the efforts of these men to prove the opposite, that their pedigree cannot be traced to a common ancestry. These great facts prove that man was created entirely apart from the beasts, a being accountable to God, and that he has fallen from the high estate in which God set him, and that God only can deliver him from the death that has passed upon him by and through resurrection. But these men rather than bow to the truth of God as to their hopeless sinful state, and receive from Him the life, through Christ, which He as the God of resurrection gives, reject the truth and love the lie. As to resurrection, say they, the idea sprang up in the mind of Zoroaster, the Persian philosopher, and that the Jews brought it back from their exile in Babylon, and that the Lord and His disciples incorporated it into their teaching, and that He never rose from the dead. But the resurrection of the Lord was "according to the Scriptures," Scriptures that existed centuries before Zoroaster breathed. Take the words of David in Psalms 16:1-11, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol): neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." We might well ask, Of whom spake David this, of himself or some other man? Not of himself surely, for he was not God's Holy One. Simon Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost answers our question. "Men and brethren," said he to the assembled Jews, "let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell (hades), neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:29-32). That which we have most surely believed was predicted by the prophets in the Scriptures and proclaimed by the Apostles who were chosen of the Lord to be witnesses of His resurrection. How interesting and convincing are the witnesses cited by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. The women are not called, for their evidence in those days would not have greatly counted, but says Paul, "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that He was seen of Cephas." How like the Lord it was to appear first to Cephas; by that act He not only proved that He had risen up from the dead but He showed that He was unchanged in His unwearied grace towards the most failing of His beloved disciples. He was the same Jesus. And this fact had impressed itself upon them all, for we remember how they said when gathered together on the evening of the Resurrection day, "The Lord is risen in deed and hath appeared unto Simon." "The Lord is risen," that was the revelation

of His glory, "And hath appeared unto Simon," that was the revelation of His grace. His grace is as great as His glory. "Then of the twelve." Could they be deceived who knew Him so well? They evidently did not expect to see Him, for when He appeared in their midst they were troubled and affrighted and thought that they had seen a spirit, but His well-known voice dispelled their fear, and when He showed them His hands and feet and side they were glad, for they knew and recognised their Lord. And would they ever forget the peace that filled that upper room, when He had said, "Peace unto you"?

"After that He was seen of about five hundred brethren at once." This appearance is probably that recorded as having taken place in the appointed mountain of Galilee, where they bowed in worship before Him, though some doubted. But worshippers and doubters alike had become witnesses, and the greater part of them remained witnesses to the day when Paul wrote of them, at least twenty-five years after.

"After that He was seen of James," who was one of the Lord's brethren, who did not believe in Him in pre-Calvary days, but that sinful unbelief was atoned for by the Lord's death, and dispelled by His appearance in resurrection, so that James delighted to speak of himself as the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ; "then of all the Apostles." This may not have been that occasion when phlegmatic, unbelieving Thomas fell down at His feet and exclaimed, "My Lord and My God!" but it was an outstanding appearance to which all the apostles bore witness and of which all the Christians talked.

"Then last of all He was seen of me also," not on earth but in the glory of God, exalted to the Father's right hand, but the same Jesus of Nazareth whom men despised and slew, and whom Saul of Tarsus persecuted. But what a change that sight of Him made in the persecutor! for him from hence forward the world's prizes were but dross, and His risen living Lord became the sole object of life and love and service for him "Christ was his end, for Christ was his beginning Christ his beginning, for his end was Christ." And need we go beyond the witness that Paul added to that of those who were in Christ before Him? except to confirm and seal it all by the Lord's own words to John in the Isle of Patmos "When I saw Him," said John, "I fell at His feet as dead, and he laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, 'Fear not I am the first and the last I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen and have the keys of hell and death'" (Revelation 1:17-18).

Now consider the alternative that Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit sets before us. He says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain also. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. . . And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:1-58).

If Christ be not raised the gospel is a myth and salvation a dream.

If Christ be not raised, His mission to earth has failed. His words have been proved to be false, He has perished, and we mourn a defeated Christ.

If Christ be not raised, the Scriptures have not been fulfilled, the Bible itself has deceived us and there is no word that we can believe.

If Christ be not raised, God has lost His Son and men have no Saviour, God Himself is defeated and no power can ever hope to break the power of death.

If Christ be not raised, all faith is vain, there is no forgiveness, and we are yet in our sins.

All this and more is involved in Paul's dread alternative to the resurrection of Christ. How welcome then is the declaration, "But now is Christ raised from the dead and become the First-fruits of them that slept." The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the great witness to His greatness and glory, and to the Father's approval of His life and work on earth. He came forth from the Father to declare to men the great love wherewith He loved them; but they gave Him hatred for love; they despised and rejected Him, they could not endure His presence in the world, and though He was the Lord of glory the princes of this world crucified Him. He was numbered with the transgressors, the cross of a malefactor was the sentence passed upon Him and duly executed by the world. What was God's answer to that? Again and again the Apostles declared God's answer to man's crime. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," said Peter to the Jews, "and you desired a murderer to be granted to you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." We do not wonder that " God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), having exalted Him to His own right hand, the marvel of redeeming love is that thus exalted He should be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31) and not to Israel only but to every sinner that bows at His feet.

We rejoice and are glad that the Prince of life could not be holden by the power of death. We look within that empty tomb and behold with the wondering disciples the perfect order of it and learn thereby how complete is Satan's defeat, and how signal is God's victory over all the power of death; and we bow in adoration before Him as we believe "the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ . . . declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

06.10. The Exaltation of Christ

10. The Exaltation of Christ The Old Testament Scriptures hold a riddle that the Jew cannot solve. They looked for — and still look for — a glorious Messiah, the Son of David, but there are many arresting passages in these Scriptures that tell of One who should come in great humility and suffering, who should not be glorious in the eyes of men, but who should in fact be despised and rejected by them. Who could He be? They revelled in such exhilarating prophecies as, "My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high;" even the disciples of the Lord looked earnestly for the out shining of that glory, but what could be the meaning of "His visage was more marred than any man, and His form more than the sons of men"? It was easy enough to discern the voice of Israel's Deliverer and God in the words, "I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering. At My rebuke I dry up the sea" but Who is it that says, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheek to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:1-11)? Of course, we find the key to the riddle in the New Testament; we know and believe that it is Christ and Him crucified; but this to the Jew is a stumbling-block; he will not have a suffering Messiah and abides in ignorance and unbelief.

It is clear from all Scripture that since man became a sinful, self-centred creature, and death lay upon him as God's judgment, the way to the glory is through suffering; it is "he that humbleth himself that is exalted." I should hesitate to apply the saying, "No cross, no crown" to the Lord Jesus personally, for all the crowns were His according to His rights as the Creator Son and Heir of all things, yet having descended from the place of His eternal glory and become man for God's glory and our redemption, even He could not reach the joy that was set before Him apart from enduring the cross. He took the downward way of suffering to do the will of God and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross; it was the only way to the crown. The disciples of the Lord were as blind to the fact that the way of suffering was the only way to the glory as the rest of the Jews, for when He told them that He "must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes and be killed and raised again the third day. Peter took Him and rebuked Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee." He had no conception of God's way, though he understood it afterwards when he wrote of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. The exaltation of Christ cannot be separated from His humiliation. It is God's answer to all that He suffered in a world dominated by the devil, and as a sacrifice for sins. His own words to His disciples unfolded the story that we love to tell, and which indeed, had been the burden of all Scripture, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things," He said, "and to enter into His glory," and Peter took up the same theme and enlarged upon it in his Pentecostal witness, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." And Paul gives the full measure of that exaltation, as the consequence of the descent from Godhead glory to the shame of the cross. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow: of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things

under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:9-11). That Christ is in heaven, a real living man, raised up from the dead, is fundamental to our faith and must be maintained and proclaimed. The Scriptures are so definite about it, that it may seem needless to stress it, but the fact is that multitudes have no knowledge of it at all, they think of Him as a spirit, and not as a man having flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). A young man, a true but unstable Christian, said to me after we had listened to an address on the exaltation of the Lord, "I never knew that Christ was a real, living man in heaven before, I always thought that He was a spirit." I need not say that the knowledge he gained that day changed his life. I think it would be right to say that even as the disciples of the Lord during His life with them thought only of the glory, and in spite of His own words had no thought of the sufferings, for they were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken; so now many sincere Christians think only of the sufferings and do not realise the glory to which Christ has been exalted; they sing, "Simply to Thy cross I cling," and have a very feeble conception of Christ "crowned with glory and honour" at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But our faith is not complete without this, it is the crown of it, and a full, robust and joyful Christian life is impossible if it is not known. From whichever point we view the ways and counsels of God, whether for His own glory, the blessing of men, or the overthrow of all evil, we see that the exaltation of Christ is a necessity. Take these ways of God on their most simple and elementary ground, that of our blessing. The answer to the challenge, "Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" is "It is God that justifieth." But everything that He does must be according to eternal justice, and how can He justify the ungodly? The answer is "It is Christ that died" by His death a full expiation was made for all our offences. "Yea, rather, that is risen again" and His resurrection is God's seal upon the value of His death, and the proof that the price paid in it was sufficient; had it not been, death would have held Him as its prey and even the power of God could not have raised Him. "Who is even at the right hand of God," and His exaltation is the declaration of God's entire satisfaction and delight in His work which He accomplished for us. The believer's Substitute and Representative is at the right hand of God. Could He have been there if one sin had remained on Him? Impossible! Yet on the cross He was delivered for our offences; there He was made sin for us and the Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. Nothing else could prove how completely He has borne away "sin's heavy load" for us, like His exaltation to the Father's right hand. The devil himself could not prevent that exaltation and can say nothing against it, and consequently he cannot bring any charge against us for whom Christ suffered and died. But further, "Who also maketh intercession for us." If He died and rose again for our justification, He lives and intercedes for us that we might live as justified people. It is in Christ that we have redemption; in Him we are justified from all things; in Him we are sanctified, and in Him we have an everlasting, inalienable acceptance with God, but it is in Him who is exalted and crowned in glory, beyond the reach of question or challenge. "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Hebrews 10:1-39). The value of His death abides; His victory over death by resurrection abides; but He is in the glory and as glorified He is the measure and the pledge of our blessing. The vindication of the Lord and the subjugation of all evil are involved in this exaltation. Let us consider the words of David in Psalms 110:1-7. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." The Lord used this great saying in His conflict with the Pharisees as a challenge and a warning, giving them thereby an opportunity of discerning who He was and repenting their enmity towards Him.

The words declare His Deity, for they tell us that He was David's Lord, but they also proclaim His exaltation consequent upon His humiliation and rejection by men. Peter takes them up in this way in his Pentecostal appeal to the nation, and his appeal was most powerful; he set two ways open to his hearers, the one was that of surrender to Him whom God had set at His right hand, but refusing that the other was to be crushed beneath His victorious feet. And it must be one or other for every soul of man.

One most precious feature of our Lord's obedience to His Father's will was His complete committal of Himself to the Father. No thought of self-vindication entered His mind, "He is near that justifieth me" was always the spirit in which He moved onward to the cross. When one of His disciples drew a sword to defend Him in the garden, He said to him, "Put up again thy sword into his place. . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And when at last His enemies had done their worst and He hung rejected and put to shame upon the cross, and the chief priest with the scribes and elders mocked Him saying, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God," He sought no deliverance, and died apparently unheard by heaven. But He was heard. "Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns," and His exaltation to God's right hand is God's answer to that complete obedience and perfect trust. In His life of humiliation He proved Himself worthy to command all things for God; and the father has given all things into His hands. He has set Him "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and has given Him to be head over all things to the church." And woe be to those who refuse to own His supremacy, be they men or devils. God's will and purposes shall be carried out to the last letter of them and all are centred in Christ in the glory of God.

It is clear that God created the earth as we know it for man's habitation, for His delights were with the sons of men, and He crowned Adam as the head of it, giving him a glorious dominion which he was to hold in fief for God. How soon he handed over his dominion to the devil and lost his crown and became subject to death, and every member of his race is like the head of it. Struggle as they may to regain the lost crown, and no matter how great their ambitions and powers, they cannot do it, all their efforts are brought to naught by death, and the crown lies beyond death. Was then God's purpose that man should have this dominion to be frustrated? That could not be; but we must look away from the first man to the Second, from the first Adam to the Last Adam, even as God has done. And we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels: for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. He has gained the crown, but He could only do it through death. By the grace of God He tasted death for everything He came down into a ruined creation, groaning beneath the curse and the power of death to remove the mortgage that was on it; He became man to stand in the place of man who had ruined himself, and to take up all his liabilities and to taste death in all its bitterness that He might remove it; and having humbled Himself to the lowest point He has been raised to the highest and all things have been put in subjection under His feet. But not yet is this manifested. This is the "not yet" period, the period of faith. But faith has eyes that see things that are to come, and is assured that they must be, and has the present pledge of them in Jesus crowned with glory and honour.

06.11. Our Great High Priest

11. Our Great High Priest The closing words of Luke's Gospel are most notable. They tell of the Lord Jesus being carried up into heaven and how His disciples "worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." It is this "great joy" pouring itself out in worship and praise that arrests the attention. What was the cause of it? These men were distressed and troubled, when they knew that their Lord was going away, and He had to comfort them by telling them of His Father's house and of His coming again to take them there. But now that He had actually gone they showed no sign of being bereft, they were not sorrowing orphans, but men brimful and overflowing with confidence and joy. This must be accounted for. It is interesting and instructive to see that this Gospel by Luke opens with a dumb priest in the temple, and closes with these happy worshipping men in the same place. Clearly they were the true priests, offering up spiritual sacrifices to God, even though they were not sons of Aaron. Nothing but a great, and to them unexpected, event could have achieved this miracle.

It is not hard to discover why the official priest was dumb; an angel had brought good news from God to him, and he did not believe it. His dumb mouth was the outward sign of a dumb heart. A sad beginning to the Gospel, but what a joyous close. We catch the spirit of it, and share its gladness as we enquire the reason of it. The understanding of these men, beloved of the Lord, had been opened to understand the Scriptures. They saw with hearts that believed that the road that Christ had taken was the only road; "it behoved Him to suffer and rise from the dead the third day." He had fulfilled the infallible word and glorified God in doing it, and God had given His righteous answer to His suffering and death by exalting Him to His own right hand. They had seen Him go into heaven and they exulted in His triumph, but the way that He had gone must have added to their joy. "He led them out as far as Bethany" — that showed their willing subjection to His control. He was their Lord and Leader — "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." Those uplifted hands and that benediction declared Him to be their great High Priest who had entered into the heavenly sanctuary for them. We must see the meaning of the place into which He has gone and the manner of His going if we are to understand His present High Priestly service. Highest exaltation was His, His going up showed that, but in that exalted place He would not forget them, the manner of His going showed that. No wonder they were filled with joy!

We were not there when He was parted from them and "carried up into heaven," yet the fact is recorded that we might believe it, and vision has been given us by the Spirit's indwelling, and "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" and we are exhorted to consider Him, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. This we will now do. But first we must cite what our profession, or confession, is. We are addressed as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." This is our confession. We know that if He had not tasted death by the grace of God for us, and purged our sins by His own blood, and come triumphantly out of death, such a designation and confession could never have been ours. We owe it all to Him. He is our Sanctifier, "for He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," He has set us apart for God, even as He has "set Himself apart" (John

17:19) and we are one with Him, "for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren." If we are His brethren we are sons of God and the glory of God is our destiny. This is the revelation of God's grace to us, and being received by faith it sets us in motion towards the glory, and Christ is our Leader in that homeward march; He is the Captain of our salvation. But we need to be sustained and succoured in this way of faith, for we are beset with infirmities and the road is not always easy to travel; we need a great High Priest, to sympathise with us and to succour us and to save us to the uttermost as we come to God by Him; and this office has been bestowed upon Jesus, our Saviour.

"Lord, in all Thy power and glory
Still Thy thoughts and eyes are here,
Watching o'er Thy ransomed people
To Thy gracious heart so dear."

It is in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the Lord is shown to us in this attractive way, and it opens with the declaration of His Divine glory: He is the SON. None less than He could have made purgation for our sins, or could lead us to the glory of God. But He had to come down to us and take part in flesh and blood for this, and Hebrews 2:1-18 plainly teaches the truth as to His coming into manhood. There was nothing lacking in Him as to His eternal Deity, He was the SON. There was nothing lacking in His complete manhood, He was JESUS, and what He was He ever will be. This truth as to His Person is necessary for us; He only, who is God and man in one blessed Person, could be our Saviour, and He only could be our great High Priest. We have trusted Him as our Saviour; we have committed the eternal welfare of our souls to Him, we may with the same confidence rely upon Him to carry us right through to the glory of God by His intercession for us as our great High Priest.

We are dealing now, not with His finished work of atonement, which cost Him those unspeakable sufferings on the cross, but with the sufferings of His lifetime in the midst of sinners by which He qualified for His present service towards us in heaven that of being our great High Priest. His finished work on the cross was for sinners, His present work in heaven is for those sinners who have become saints through faith in Him, it is for all who have believed. We read, "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining unto God . . . for in that He Himself suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18) "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we, yet without sin (sin apart)" (Hebrews 4:15) And again, "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience, by the things that He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9). "But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchanging priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Here is a theme for our meditation, it is a theme that might well fill volumes printed in gold, but it were better to have it deeply written in our heart. In pursuing it we are permitted to speak of our great Lord as JESUS, for this precious personal Name occurs many times in this epistle. It is

Jesus, who is "the Author and Finisher of faith" (Hebrews 12:2), which means that He has trodden every step in the way of faith. There is not a trial, temptation, or difficulty in that way that He has not encountered and overcome. That way lay through a world, in which all that are godly shall have tribulation, but He overcame the world (John 16:33). He "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself" (Hebrews 12:3). "He hath suffered being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18), and this because He was obedient. Everyone who will be obedient to God shall suffer in a hostile world of which Satan is the god and prince, but His obedience was absolute, nothing moved Him from it. Nothing, neither allurements or terrors, diverted Him from finishing the road upon which He had set His feet for God's glory, and that He might succour us. That road started at the manger — for He said, "Thou didst make me to hope when I was upon My mother's breasts, I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother's belly" (Psalms 22:1-31), and it ended at the cross, when He cried, "Father, unto Thy hands I commend My Spirit." Of course there is nothing strange in a servant being obedient, it is his life and duty to obey the word of his master, but the wonder here is "though He were SON, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." The Son in the Godhead, whose prerogative it was to command and uphold all things by the word of His powers took the servant's place, but He did not cease to be the Son when He did that. He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9), but He was always the Lord of the angels, and they must always worship Him (Hebrews 1:6). Though He took the subordinate place for the will of God, there could not be any question of inferiority as to His Person. How emphatic is the word that the Son is God: "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). And in Hebrews 3:1-19, we learn that Christ is "Son over His own house," which He has builded, and that "He that built all things is God." I stress this that the wonder of His path of obedience and suffering may grow upon our souls and that we might have a deeper appreciation of the outcome of it.

"Being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto them that obey Him." He has fully qualified for this, there is not a test that He has not endured and triumphed in. Hence He is able to sympathise with those who are enduring trials and testings — for that is the meaning of temptations — and to succour them. He is able to save them to the uttermost . . . seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Here is the revelation to us of His unchanging, unwearied love. It has been said, that if it were necessary He would come again from heaven to die for us, so great is His love. That is not necessary, "for by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14), but it is necessary that He should live for us, and intercede for us and succour us; we should be overwhelmed by the difficulties of the way if He did not, and He does this as being moved by the same love that made Him die. The birth pangs do not exhaust the mother's love for her babe; she would be willing to lay down her life for it at any time.

"Yet she may forgetful prove;

He will never cease to love." To all who obey Him it can be said, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, for we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He is Jesus, that carries us in thought down to the depths of humiliation and death into which His love carried Him. He is the Son of God, that presents His glory, His magnificent greatness, the

splendour of His Person and inheritance. He is Jesus, that tells us of the tender sympathy of His heart for us. He is the Son of God, that tells us of the power of His arm; the tenderest love and the greatest power in the universe abide in Him. He is Jesus, that tells of His preciousness to us. He is the Son of God, that tells us of His preciousness to God. Since He is Jesus, He loves us so well that there is nothing that would be good for us that He will not ask for when He intercedes before God for us; since He is the Son of God, there is nothing that He asks for us that God will deny Him.

Having such a great High Priest we are exhorted to draw near to God with boldness. First for the help we need in all the ups and downs of life, and second, to be worshippers before Him. We must not confound these two drawings near; they are distinct, and separated one from the other by five chapters in our Epistle. First, having such a sympathetic High Priest, we are exhorted to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for timely help" (Hebrews 4:16). We are put into contact by our High Priest with the inexhaustible resources of Divine grace, and we have but to ask at the throne of grace, and that succour that we need in the hour of trial will be supplied. We could not have a better illustration of this than Paul, when the thorn in the flesh oppressed him so sorely. Should it be taken away? that was his desire; or would he give way under it? that was unthinkable. The Lord soothed his spirit with infinite sympathy and succoured him with all-sufficient grace. We see how Simon Peter missed this wonderful sustainment because of his self-confidence. He did not cry to the Lord in the hour of trial as Paul did, and he fell. Yet even he was preserved from despair by the intercession of the Lord. "Simon, Simon," said the Lord, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Paul and Peter were alike the objects of the tender solicitude of the Lord. He interceded for them, before the trial seized them. Paul was preserved from failure, and Peter was preserved in spite of failure. Grace to keep and grace to restore came to them through the Lord's priestly activities on their behalf. We might take another illustration from Peter's experience. He walked on the water to go to Jesus, and found that the circumstances were such as he could not overcome and he began to sink. But when he cried out in his fear and need the Lord stretched forth His hand and held him up, and he walked on the waves by His support. No picture could set forth more beautifully the gracious succour that is ministered now to those who are conscious that they have no help outside the Lord. He stretches forth the hand of a man to their aid, but in that hand is the power of God. But He is not only our great High Priest to succour us in our weaknesses, He is over the house of God, and He would have us draw near with boldness, not to the throne of grace only, but into the holiest, into the very presence of God; where, not our needs are in question but where God's glories shine forth. We have the title to enter there, and we may do so with hearts full of thanksgiving, without any fear, being fully assured that it is God's delight that we should be there, having our conscience clear of all sense of guilt through the one efficacious offering that Christ has made, and our whole beings consecrated to Him whose love has won our hearts. This is the great present end of the service of the Lord as our great High Priest, and we ought not to be indifferent as to it. It is sad that we would so often avail ourselves of the means without reaching the end, glad to have the relief that the grace gives, but not pressing on to have God as our exceeding joy and the object of our hearts adoration.

Those men of Luke 24:1-53 were in the joy of this in spirit, they do not seem in that glad hour to have had anything to pray for, it was all overflowing praise and worship with them. They had to

pray later, and they did pray with real purpose, and we shall need to pray every day, but there is this other side, so near to the heart of God. He would have us draw near for His own sake and not simply because we have needs. He would have us near to Himself because He loves us greatly and He desires that our love should flow out to Him in response.

Time and space fails us to pursue this great subject now but "of the things we have spoken this is the sum. We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," and this glorious person is Jesus the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us. May we be stirred up to know the Lord and His present gracious activities on our behalf in a fuller measure.

06.12. The Judge of Quick and Dead

12. The Judge of Quick and Dead

"The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the father" became THE SON OF MAN that He might fulfil the whole will of the Triune God. His title of Son of Man is a glorious title. It carries with it universal dominion, as we should expect, seeing He is who He is, and yet the first occurrence of it in the New Testament is in those memorable words of His. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). It was into such poverty that He who will rule all things for God came for God's glory and the salvation of men. Before taking the dominion and power, He trod the way of service and suffering. He gently rebuked the pride and ambitions of His disciples with the words, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Yet He knew what the result of His sojourn on earth would be, for even in the darkest hour of His life, when arraigned for blasphemy before the high priest of His people, and when "they did spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and smote Him with the palms of their hands" He said, "Nevertheless I say unto You, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:24). As the Son of Man He was lifted up, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. It was a necessity; without which His kingdom would have been a barren kingdom, with never a man in it to rejoice in His glory. He was lifted up as the representative of men to bear the judgment that lay upon them that He might be the Redeemer before He takes the throne as Judge. But as surely as He was lifted up upon the cross, so surely will He fill the throne, for, "The Father . . . hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (John 5:27).

He has been "ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." So Peter declared in the first gospel sermon ever preached to Gentile hearers, and I should connect the judgment of the living with His title Son of Man. He will judge the dead also at the end of Time at the great white throne, for "the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father" (John 5:22). but He will do that, in His Divine majesty. It is before God that the dead, small and great, shall stand (Revelation 20:1-15). HE IS GOD. As Son of Man He will deal with the living when He comes. Then He will wield the SICKLE, the SWORD and the SCEPTRE. He is seen with the sickle in Revelation 14:14. "And I looked," says John the Apostle, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His band a sharp sickle . . . and He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."

He came into the world to sow the good seed of the kingdom, for "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man" (Matthew 13:27). That sowing cost Him more than mortal tongue shall ever tell. He fulfilled the word "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed." Aye not only were "strong crying and tears" His portion, but blood also. "The seed is the Word of God," the full revelation of what God is, and He had to the to sow that seed; and He who sowed the seed must

reap the harvest; and the latter part of that ancient word will also be fulfilled — "Shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him" (Psalms 126:6). But tares have been sown in the wheat field; this was the work of an enemy, and that enemy was the devil (Matthew 13:29), and the Son of Man must discriminate between the wheat and the tares; so we read that "He shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity." As the wielder of the sickle He will execute a discriminating judgment. To use another forceful figure, that of the rugged Baptist, "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). That passage probably has Israel specially in view, but this discriminating judgment will be extended to the Gentile nations as Matthew 25:31 teaches. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." It is strange that so many theologians should have interpreted that passage as being the great final judgment of the dead, until which none could know whether they would stand on the right hand of the Lord or the left, saved or lost. It is clear enough that it is the judgment of living nations at the appearing and glory of the Son of Man, and that it will take place at the beginning of His reign of a thousand years over the earth, while the final judgment of the dead will take place when those thousand years are finished (Revelation 20:1-15). The Son of Man will bring in the glory and the blessing, the angels of God shall ascend and descend upon Him (John 1:51) He will bring down heaven to earth for "He shalt come down like rain upon the mown grass" (Psalms 72:6). But note well the figure. It is upon the mown grass that He comes down. The sickle will have done its work first. The sharp sickle in the hand of the golden crowned Son of Man will be thrust into the earth when God's work and the devil's shall be fully ripe.

We are not surprised that as their Master went up to Jerusalem for the last time His disciples followed Him amazed and afraid. Their forebodings must have been greatly increased when He said to them, "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him and shall spit upon Him and shall kill Him" (Mark 10:33). Could it be the same Son of Man whom John saw in Patmos, shining in his divine Majesty? Yes, it was the same. There is none other who could go down to such depths and be exalted to such heights; and He is the Ancient of days. Even John's eyes could not look upon such glory as was there revealed in Him, nor could he stand upon his feet before Him. He says, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Nor would he have known Him as his beloved Lord if He had not laid His right hand upon him with a well-remembered tenderness, and in tones of compassion said, "Fear not, I am the first and the last I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (hades) and of death" (Revelation 1:12-18). The keys of death and hades in His hand declared that He, the Son of Man, is the undisputed Master of the unseen world, even though His authority is challenged by living men. But He is coming to judge the living for "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword with which He would smite the nations" (Revelation 19:15). THE SWORD must precede the sceptre because of what men are. How strange is that popular delusion that the world is to be gradually converted by the gospel, or that the kingdom of God will be evolved by men's own efforts out of the world as it is. Hear what the Scripture says. "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also

that pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so. Amen" (Revelation 1:7). A converted world would welcome Him with acclamation; a godless world will wail with terror at the sight of Him. The sword first and then the sceptre. That sword indicates resistless justice: the vengeance of God upon unrepentant, wicked men. It will compel every stubborn knee to bend and every rebellious lip to confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and righteousness: and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things" (Psalms 45:1-17).

It seems almost an incredible thing that men should assemble together to make war on Him, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, yet they will, and such is the delusion with which the devil will delude them that they will hope to achieve their purpose and keep Him for ever out of this world. So we read, "I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war on Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army (Revelation 19:1-21). They will stretch forth their hand against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty; and in their blind hatred they will run upon Him, "even upon the thick bosses of His buckler" (Job 14:1-22). But the battle will be swift and decisive, for the sword of the Son of Man shall prevail, and the blasphemous leaders of that vast host of men shall be seized by divine power and cast alive into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, "And the remainder shall be slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth, and all the fowls of the air were filled with flesh." THE SCEPTRE of the Son of Man will be an iron sceptre and for it He has been in great conflict. It has been the devil's purpose from the beginning to oppose His wielding it. He must have understood and taken to heart God's words to him in the Garden concerning the woman's Seed. "It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel," and he has spared no force or wile that he hoped would prevent this. He was not ignorant of the times, for the time of the Advent of the woman's Seed had been plainly told in Old Testament Scripture and when that time came, he "stood up before the woman (Israel) which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 12:1-17). Failing in that first onslaught, he changed his tactics, and masked his guns and advanced with a flag of truce and terms of peace. We read, "The devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." But the Lord knew him for the adversary that he was, and answered, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:1-25)

He refused the short and easy way to the throne and sceptre that Satan offered Him at such a price, and took instead the way of obedience to the will of God, and God's will was the death of the cross. He showed Himself worthy to rule by complete subjection. "Though He were Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and the sceptre of His kingdom will be for ever a sceptre of righteousness. But He would take that sceptre neither from the devil nor men, but from the hand of God only. We learn this from Daniel's night visions. Said he, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of the heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and

languages should serve Him: His dominion is an ever lasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14). A corresponding scene to that is found in Revelation 5:1-14. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and the four beasts (living creatures) and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne." In John's vision He receives the sickle and the sword from the hand of God, and in Daniel's vision He receives the sceptre. The LORD had said unto Him, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalms 2:1-12). He would have nothing and take nothing except from the hand of God; in this He is in striking contrast to the first man, Adam, who grasped at something that God in His wisdom had withheld from him, and fell into disaster and death.

God intends that the proclamation of His coming kingdom of righteousness should go out in testimony to the Gentiles. It was announced by Paul to the Athenians on Mars hill, when He said, "God now commandeth all men every where to repent; because He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). He is the King that shall reign in righteousness, and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever (Isaiah 32:1-20).

Marvel not that the sickle and sword and sceptre should be put into the hands of the Son of Man. He only of all men who have appeared on earth could wield them in undiminished righteousness and power. Every other man to whom power and authority had been given had failed; Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar all broke down when tested and have had to make way for the Son of Man. He has prevailed and will never fail, for in His absolute dependence upon God He has been upheld, and the word has been fulfilled and will yet be fulfilled, "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, and upon THE SON OF MAN whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" (Psalms 80:17). Again I quote His own words. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have been good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." "But the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." Then will come the final judgment, which John describes in awe-inspiring words. "And I saw a great white throne, AND HIM THAT SAT ON IT, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:1-15).

He will lay aside the sickle when its work is done; He will lay aside the sword when its work is done, and when as Son of Man He has glorified God in His universal kingdom He will hand back to

God the sceptre, for we read, "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy, that shall be destroyed is death. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

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