

WRITINGS OF LAURENCE LAURENSEN

by Laurence Laurensen

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Laurence Laurensen, compiled for study and devotional reading.

41 Chapters

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Chapter 1

01.0.1 - Messiah the Prince, An Outline of Matthew's Gospel

Messiah the Prince An Outline of Matthew's Gospel by Laurence Laursen Editor of "Loving Words."

01.0.3 - Foreword

Foreword The four Gospels present to us an inexhaustible theme in Christ and all that was revealed in Him during the brief years of His earthly sojourn. We may go even further and affirm that each several Gospel is inexhaustible in the fulness and depth of that aspect of the Christ of God which it places before us. Hence the many and various expositions of the Gospels which have seen the light of day and proved of profit to their readers. In this book a new unfolding of Matthew is placed in the reader's hands. The author does not address himself to the learned, but rather to the ordinary believer who may not have access readily to the larger and more exhaustive expositions already published, and who might not be able very easily to digest their contents if he had ready access to them. To such readers — and they are very numerous to-day — this book will, we trust, prove full of instruction, suggestion, and spiritual help. May it be prospered in its mission to this end. F. B. Hole.

01.01 - Section 01. Mat_1:1-25; Mat_2:1-23.

Section 01. Matthew 1:1-25; Matthew 2:1-23. The Genealogy and Birth of the King In seeking to grasp the contents of any book it is necessary to be so conversant with its subject matter as to be able to go over it in outline in our own minds.

If this be true of the writings of men, how much more so of the Word of God? This is not the difficult matter it may appear at first sight, and there are several ways it may be arrived at. In studying Matthew's Gospel, for example, if we take one leading thought or incident from each chapter, or section of the book, other related facts will naturally group themselves round these to complete the picture. And it will be found that the various events are so linked together in a divine order that the heart is led on from Matthew 1:1-25 to Matthew 28:1-20 in ever-increasing enjoyment of all the varied truths presented to us in this Gospel, so full of instruction pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is worth noting at the outset, that in the Scriptures themselves we are more often urged to search and meditate thereupon, than merely to read. And the reason is obvious. They have to do with the heart. In twenty-two different ways, in the twenty-two sections of Psalms 119:1-176, the Psalmist expresses the attitude of his heart toward the law of God. He "Believes it," "Keeps it," "Rejoices in it," "Declares it," "Loves it," "Hides it in his heart." If the reader will make a complete list, his profiting will be great. In some such way let us endeavour to approach the study of the Gospel before us.

Beginning, then, with Section 1, Matthew 1:1-25; Matthew 2:1-23, we get as leading thought, in Matthew 1:1-25, The Genealogy of the King; in Matthew 2:1-23, The Reception He met with.

We are arrested at the very outset by the differences between the Gospel of Matthew and the other Synoptic Gospels. There is a fulness and a wealth of detail in the introduction in this Gospel which is wholly absent in Mark: while in Luke quite another series of events is placed before us, equally minute in detail, but all given with divine wisdom and in keeping with the end in view.

If we arrange the early incidents in the first three Gospels in parallel columns we shall see these differences at a glance: —

Matthew Mark Luke 1 * * Visit of Angel to Zacharias.

2 * * Visit of Angel to Mary.

3 Visit of Angel to Joseph. * * 4 * * Birth of John.

5 Birth of Jesus. * Birth of Jesus.

6 * * Angel's Visit to Shepherds.

7 * * Shepherds' Visit to Bethlehem.

8 Appearing of the Star. * Presentation in the Temple.

9 * * Departure to Nazareth.

10 Visit of the Wise Men. * Annual Visit of Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem.

11 Presentation of Gifts. * (Abiding at Bethlehem.) 12 Joseph warned by the Angel. * * 13 Flight into Egypt. * * 14 Return to Galilee. * Dwelling in Galilee.

15 * * Visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years of age.

16 Preaching of John. Preaching of John. Preaching of John.

Two things mark the language of Inspiration, what it includes, and what it excludes. Surely it necessarily excludes every shadow of error. Nothing but what is absolutely true could find a place if the Spirit of God inspire the record, and, in spite of all that men may say to the contrary, nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the Four Gospels, where, amid all the differences, there are no contradictions. Then, as to the former, the facts given in any Scripture will be in relation to the subject of the writer. Thus Luke writes of the Lord Jesus specially as the "Son of Man," and so gives, as will be seen above, in large detail, everything needed to be known of His parentage, human birth, and childhood — perfect from every standpoint.

Mark, writing of Him as the devoted "Servant of God" and of men, omits everything of this, and introduces, at the very outset, His Messenger, John the Baptist, preparing His way before Him. Then He Himself is at once seen entering upon His public ministry. But in our Gospel, He is presented as "The King," and thus everything narrated is in connection with His kingly character.

Turning forward again for a moment, we see Him in John's Gospel as the "Son of God." Luke tells us that He became the "Son of Man," and Mark says that He took the lowly place of the "Servant" of all. But Matthew declares that, nevertheless, He was "God's Anointed King," who will yet sit upon the throne of His father, David, and sway a mightier sceptre than either David or his princely son, Solomon, ever dreamed of.

Ezekiel presents this wonderful "fourfold" in striking and symbolic imagery in Ezekiel 1:1-28 and Ezekiel 10:1-22, and again we see it reproduced in the vision of the Seer of Patmos (Revelation 4:1-11), where the order of the manifested characteristics is that of the Four Gospels.

Matthew represents Him as the "Lion" of the tribe of Judah.

Mark sets forth the patient service symbolised by the "Calf" or "Ox."

Luke describes the perfect "Man" — yea, the Pattern Man, able to sympathise, to succour, and to save.

John tells of Him as the Heavenly Stranger upon the earth — the "flying Eagle" being an apt picture, for He was "Come from God and went to God" (John 13:3). "He was with God, and was God" (John 1:1). But a king must be able to trace his descent in the royal line, and this is placed before us at the very outset. He is the Son of "David the King," and thus the Heir to David's throne. He is the "Son of Abraham," and thus Heir to, as well as Fulfiller of, all the Promises. Matthew carries down the line of kingly succession from Solomon. Luke traces that of Nathan to Mary, and,

however widely they may have diverged during the thousand years that lay between, both meet again and are completed in "JESUS who is called CHRIST."

There are many genealogies in the Old Testament, but only one in the New. The genealogies of the Old Testament lead to Him in whom everything centres, and from whom everything begins, for He is the Head of the new creation, the First-born from among the dead. But we find Him here born into this world, a Man among men; nevertheless, He was Emmanuel. The sign promised 700 years before by the prophet (Isaiah 7:14) was fulfilled, and the character of the One so born declared. He was "God with us," and God come down in grace. And we naturally ask, What reception did He meet with? and what were the condition of things in Israel's land when He thus presented Himself?

Over 500 years had passed away since Ezra, by the decree of Cyrus the Persian, had led a little remnant of the people back from Babylon to rebuild the shattered fortunes of the nation, after the terrible overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar, which began about 606 B.C. It was but a small proportion of the many thousands who had been carried away, but their hearts were towards the land of Israel, and the Lord had blessed and multiplied them greatly. The intervening years had been times of varying fortunes for the little hierarchical state. The Persian monarchy, which had been the means of their restoration, had been overthrown by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C., and Palestine then came under the power of Greece. Daniel had described, in few words, the character of the "mighty king" and the break up of his kingdom, "divided towards the four winds of heaven" (Daniel 11:3). This was an event of much political importance to Judea, for it found itself — as it will be in a later day — the bone of contention between the king of the South, Egypt, and the king of the North, Syria. The first hundred years of this period the land was under the power of Egypt, and though ill-governed at the best, it had not reached the depth of suffering measured out to it during the Syrian oppression. The terrible cruelty and madness of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) has seldom been equalled in the world's history. The ruling passion of his wicked life was hatred to the Jew and the religion of Jehovah. On one occasion he captured the city of Jerusalem, slaughtered 40,000 of the inhabitants, sacrificed a sow upon the brazen altar, and erected a statue to Jupiter in the Temple courts. This brought matters to an issue. Under Judas Maccabeus and his brethren the War of Independence began, which resulted in Judea once more becoming a free state in 161 B.C.

Rescued thus from Syrian oppression, it was wisely ruled by the Maccabean family for over one hundred years, but it then fell under the power of the Romans, about 60 B.C.

Herod, an Idumean, first appointed by the Romans as tetrarch, became king in 31 B.C., and aimed at creating an independent monarchy in his own family. The sceptre had departed from Judah.

Such was the political condition of the Lord's land when the Messiah was born. A usurper, supported by Gentile power, was reigning in the land, and the people loved to have it so. There is a wonderful analogy between this and what prophetic Scriptures reveal as to His Second Coming. Then the Antichrist will be on the throne, and he and his supporters will think to treat the King come in power as before had been treated the King come in grace, only to find that He will "break them with a rod of iron," and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalms 2:9). But when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and when the tidings reached the guilty tyrant who sat upon the Jewish throne, he "was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." The men of the city had already

made their choice. They were on the side of Herod — not on the Lord's side. The Scribes, intelligent in the Scriptures, as far as the letter went, knew, or should have known, many things about the Coming King. The prophets had clearly pointed out: —

1 When He would come (Genesis 49:10).

2 How He would come (Isaiah 7:14).

3 Where He would be born (Micah 5:2). But they had no heart for Him, and as to the mass of the nation, there was neither love nor loyalty to God's King. Yet we learn from Luke's Gospel (Luke 2:38) that there were still the hidden ones, even in Jerusalem, who looked for redemption in Israel; as there will be in the day of His power, to whom He will appear as "the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2). But if there was no heart for Him in Jerusalem, and no room for Him in Bethlehem, a testimony was to be raised up from among the Gentiles; and "wise men" — wise, surely, in every sense of the word — divinely led, seek Him, recognise His divinity, worship Him, and present to Him their threefold gift, "gold, frankincense, and myrrh." When the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon she brought "gold and spices." In a coming day, when the kings of the Gentiles come to worship the glory of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will bring "gold and incense" (Isaiah 60:1-22). In neither the historic nor the prophetic Scripture is there any mention of that which is here connected with these two things, namely, "myrrh." Why is this? Is there not a threefold meaning in their gifts? In the Babe of Bethlehem they saw the One who was "born King of the Jews," and to Him, as such, they presented the royal offering of gold. But there was the recognition in the frankincense that He was more than man — that He was the promised Saviour; and the myrrh spoke of that of which the wise men could have but dim vision, and that was, that before He sat upon the throne of His glory He "must suffer many things . . . and be killed and raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21). And even while but a child, to escape the wrath of the false king, the true King has to flee unto Egypt, and be there till the death of Herod, that the prophecy might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son" (Hosea 11:1). Thus the Lord began where His people began, but how different their pathway from His? When the call came to Joseph to return, he is instructed to go into the "land of Israel." Twice in Matthew 2:1-23 we have this title; and yet at the moment the land was only a despised province of the Roman Empire. But few of the men of Israel dwelt in it. The Gentiles ruled it. A mixed race from the East dwelt in one of its chiefest cities, Samaria; and Galilee, its largest province, was densely peopled with a purely heathen population, a few poor Jews residing amongst them.

Yet in spite of appearances God recognises the land by its true title. It is God's land for His people, and He will yet vindicate their rights and make them good. But when they returned they found another usurper filling the throne, and Joseph, with the holy Child Jesus, turned aside to dwell at Nazareth. At the very beginning of His pathway He had been the rejected One; now He becomes the despised One. Even the upright Nathanael shared the popular prejudice — if it was only prejudice — that Nazareth of Galilee could produce no good thing. It was the most despised town of the most despised province of a despised land.

Thus at the very outset of His pathway of lowly grace the Lord knew what it was to be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3),

01.02 - Section 02. Mat_3:1-17; Mat_4:1-25.

Section 02. Matthew 3:1-17; Matthew 4:1-25. The Forerunner Introducing the King; and the Kingdom Presented The second section of our Gospel begins with the Message of the Baptist. A convenient synopsis, round which other thoughts can be gathered, will be: —

1 The warning of John.

2 The work of Christ.

3 The witness of the Father. A full generation has passed away since the close of Matthew 2:1-23. King Archelaus, after a wicked reign of ten or eleven years, had been banished by the Romans. Judea had ceased to retain even the semblance of a monarchy, and is now under Roman procurators, of whom Pilate is the fifth, in a descending scale of wickedness.

Doubtless the Visit of the Wise Men, the Slaughter of the Innocents, the Glory Song, and the Virgin Birth had been long forgotten. The glint of the glory had died from the plains of Bethlehem: the angels had long since gone away again into heaven, and so far there seemed little promise of that "peace on earth" of which they had so sweetly spoken. But Heaven again breaks the silence. "In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'"

Apart from the imperial glory of the world, as seen at Rome, apart from the religious system of men, as seen at Jerusalem — John was found in the wilderness; that arid tract of desert land on the west of the Dead Sea, extending northwards to the Jordan. His food and his raiment marked him out as one apart from common men.

Luke has given us his previous history.

John has given us his testimony to the Messiah. Matthew here gives us his message. The warning words of John reach even the lifeless professors at Jerusalem. Pharisees, and even Sadducees, come to his baptism. The message he brought was the nearness of the long-expected. Kingdom, and the importance of a moral preparation for entrance thereinto.

Every instructed Jew knew what the prophet Daniel had said as to the Kingdom to be set up by the God of Heaven, but they had little knowledge of the condition of heart which entrance into that Kingdom demanded. Even Nicodemus (John 3:1-36) failed to see more in it than a mere paradise regained for man, as man, upon the earth. The new birth, the essential qualification for even the Jew to enter into and enjoy the promises of God for His earthly people (Ezekiel 36:26) had evidently been totally lost sight of, since even one of their best-instructed rulers was ignorant of it. And so the Lord has to say to him, "Art thou a Master of Israel and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10). Hence the importance of John's warning word, "Repent" — a total change of heart and mind was imperative if men would enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

We shall find this term — Kingdom of Heaven — about thirty-three times in this Gospel, and nowhere else in the New Testament. Five times we get "Kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33; Matthew 12:28; Matthew 19:24; Matthew 21:31; Matthew 21:43), where "Kingdom of Heaven" would not convey the intended meaning. Other Scriptures speak of "the Kingdom of the Father" (Matthew 13:43); "the Kingdom of the Son of Man" (Daniel 7:1-28); "the Kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13); "the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

All, of course, refer to the rule of God; but why these varied designations? As we have already noticed, Matthew alone uses the term, "Kingdom of Heaven." Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was writing as a Jew to Jews. Any hope of an earthly kingdom was fast passing, if it had not already passed, away. The little gleam of royalty, manifested for a moment, under the king of nonnative stock — Herod — had faded, and a deeper bondage still, all thinking men saw before them.

Under these conditions, the coming Kingdom is announced as the Kingdom of Heaven, for the kingdom on earth is in hopeless ruin. And it is striking to notice that in no other book of the Bible do we read so often about Heaven as in Matthew. We are forcibly reminded that, in spite of the failure of His people and the enmity of His foes, yet the God of Heaven has taken up the question of the earth, and that He will, even here, work out, in His own time and way, His gracious purposes of blessing for His redeemed people, and glory for His beloved Son. The Rule of God, then, under this title, was familiar to the Jew. It was spoken of in the Law. Had that law been obeyed from the heart, the promise was that their days would be multiplied and be "as the days of Heaven upon the Earth" (Deuteronomy 11:21). The Psalms bore witness to it. The Seed of David would endure for ever, and "his throne as the days of Heaven" (Psalms 89:29). The prophets, in more definite language still, describe Him, who became the Son of Man, receiving that Kingdom and glory which should never pass away (Daniel 2:7). This Kingdom John announced as being "at hand." The King was here; but, the King being rejected, it assumed the "mystery" form (John 13:11) which it still bears in the absence of the King. By comparing Matthew 11:11 with Matthew 16:19, we learn that the Kingdom of Heaven had not then commenced, and, indeed, it did not do so until the Lord had taken His seat on high. Then Peter, having received "the keys" (Matthew 16:19), unlocked the door to both Jew and Gentile, and although the favoured nation refused their King, and with Him, the "days of Heaven upon the earth," yet it is now given to the believer to know, in a deeper and fuller way than Israel ever will, the Rejected One; and every day may, to the Christian, be as the days of Heaven upon the earth. May our hearts enter into it more and more, and be more engaged with Himself, while we wait for His Coming.

"The Kingdom of God" occurs five times in our Gospel. It clearly expresses a different idea from the above. It has been described as "the exhibition of the ruling power of God under any circumstances." It was thus manifested when the Lord was here. So He could say (Luke 17:21), when unbelievably asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God was coming, "the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you." It was there represented in His Own Person. At the day of Pentecost, and afterwards, those born from above, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit's power, exemplified in themselves the same blessed character of that heavenly rule, as seen by its fruits of "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). This is the divine aspect. But this term is also applied to the human side, or the Kingdom as seen in the hands of men, as Luke 13:19-21 shows: "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his

garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it;" and again he said, "Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Here we get its external appearance and internal condition: an overgrown abortion, sheltering much that is evil. An adulterated mass permeating much that is good. Such is Christendom to-day. Evil men allowed, and evil doctrines accepted, have produced the condition so vividly pictured in the above Scripture. The Kingdom of the Father and the Kingdom of the Son of Man will be a development of the Kingdom of Heaven, and will be seen when the present mystery form is at an end. The Kingdom of the Son of Man will be the rule of God, seen in the hands of His Son, in the coming day, when the Kingdom is set up in power in the earth. Then the redeemed people will say, "Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth" (Psalms 8:1). He will assume the Lordship lost by Adam, and it will be exercised by Him in righteousness, both in blessing to the godly and in judgment upon the transgressors. The Father's Kingdom, on the other hand, applies to the heavenly side. It refers to things above, as the other refers to things below. The Kingdom of the Son of His love is our present place in grace: that circle of which Christ is the centre, as He is the centre of the Father's affections, and the One around whom the Father delights to gather the objects of His love — even us who were once in the Kingdom and under the power of darkness.

If the last is our present place in grace, the Everlasting Kingdom is our future place in glory. The Apostle there (2 Peter 1:11) is giving instruction as to the future glory of the Kingdom manifested before the eyes of men. They — the Apostles — had seen His glory in the holy mount. Peter prays that believers may have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom in which that glory will be displayed. So the Kingdom was announced as being "at hand," but there was something else. The "axe" was at the root of the tree of Jewish profession. Very soon the Master of the vineyard would have to say, "These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke 13:7). Barren for many a long year, the final test was now presented. Messiah rejected would mean the nation cut off. Nevertheless, there was blessing for all who truly repented, for He baptized with the Holy Ghost — grace and salvation: as well as with fire — judgment and condemnation.

It is of the utmost importance to be clear as to the meaning of these two statements. They define, what we might call, the two extremes of the Lord's ministry, and everything connected with the present day of grace lies between. The presence of the Holy Spirit is that which marks the present age. He is with and in the believer. He has been pleased to take up His dwelling, and make our bodies His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), and the sanctifying influence of His presence should be seen in our daily lives (Galatians 5:25). He dwells in the Church; and His presence here is also a proof of the world's guilt, for He is here because Christ is absent (John 16:10), and Christ is absent because men slew and hanged Him on a tree (Acts 10:39). But the "Age of the Spirit" will pass: the day of grace will come to a close, and when the Lord comes the second time, His dealings with the wicked and the oppressor will be with "fire" — the stern and unsparing, righteous judgment of God. So it will be then. "They shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:41-42). It is the certain result of rejecting the Gospel, and it would be well if every Gospel preacher had this solemn truth deep in his heart as he proclaims the grace of God. For in proportion as grace is known, so surely will judgment be executed, if the offered grace be rejected.

There can be nothing else. The threshing floor is purged, the wheat and the chaff each assigned to its proper place.

But, further, there is the Witness of the Father, and this is very beautiful. The Lord enters upon His public ministry, and His first action is to come from Galilee to Jordan, to be baptized of John. No wonder John "urgently forbade" Him. Just a short time before (John 1:27) John had declared himself unworthy to do the meanest office for that Wonderful Person whom he was announcing, and lo! here was that same Person taking His place among those who had gone down figuratively into the waters of death, confessing their sins. The Spirit's first work in the heart of the sinner is Repentance — self-judgment and confession of what we are. This brought the remnant to John's baptism, and thereby separated them from the guilty mass of the nation. It was no question of confessing sin that brought Him there. God forbid. Something else He instructs us in. "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Righteousness brought Him, where sin brought the people. He, the only righteous One upon the earth, associates with Himself those who sought after a moral preparedness for Messiah's Kingdom. "And, lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him: and, lo! a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Beautiful testimony from Heaven of the only One upon the earth who was the Object of Heaven's delight. In Genesis 6:1-22 God looked down and dealt in judgment. Here God was come down in grace. In a coming day He would lay down His life for the sheep. But now, after the Anointing and Sealing of the Holy Spirit, the first step on His pathway to the Cross was to meet and overcome the one whose great object was to turn Him aside from that pathway.

Scripture is silent as to what took place during the "forty days" — period of perfect testing. It was clearly something that we could not enter into; therefore it is not revealed. But the three forms of temptation at the close of that period, and the way in which our Lord overcame the tempter, are written for our instruction. For we, too, are called upon to "overcome" even as He overcame (Revelation 21:1-27), and the promise to the overcomer is that he will sit with the Faithful and True Witness upon His throne. The two weapons the Lord used — the Shield of Faith and the Sword of the Spirit — we may use also. Indeed, we are instructed to lay hold of them in order that we may "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16). The first temptation is a question of circumstances. Can we trust God for daily need? In Matthew 6:1-34 the disciples are led on to realise that they can rest in a Father's love and knowledge of their daily needs. Here the Lord exemplifies this principle of simple dependence. He would wait on His Father's guidance, and — using the "Sword of the Spirit" — He chose the right word to meet the enemy. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

If the first temptation was a testing of self, the second would lead to a testing of God. Cast Thyself down and see if God will be true to His word or not. This was to instil doubt into the mind, instead of unwavering trust in God. Just what Satan succeeded in doing in Eden. The whole point of the argument in Romans 8:1-39 is that God is for us. To test or question it would be to show our own faithlessness. Israel did so in the wilderness, and said, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7). But the Lord again replies in the very words of Scripture, and uses a plain word to confute what Satan had misquoted and misapplied. In the third temptation it was a question whether the

things of this world are to be received from Satan or from God. Doubtless Satan had some dim knowledge that the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them would not always be his to give; that, as the first man had lost them by yielding to temptation, so the second Man might be tempted to acquire them by the same easy path. But in this case the kingdoms of the world are presented to the eye of One who has had the testimony of the Kingdom of Heaven, has seen the opened Heaven, and, as a Man upon the earth, listened to the Father's voice of approval and delight. In proportion as the same heavenly vision fills our souls, so will the things of the world lose their attraction for us also, for our hearts will be where our treasure is, with Christ at God's right hand.

We have next to consider what the Lord met the tempter with. David of old could say, "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Psalms 17:4), and here the Lord shows how that same word can be used to foil every device of the enemy. David had five smooth stones in his scrip. Only one was needed to slay the giant — type of him who was here in the presence of David's greater Son. The Lord might have drawn His arguments from the five books of Moses. He uses only one — Deuteronomy — and from it selects the weapon that both exposes and defeats the foe. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Deuteronomy 6:13; Deuteronomy 10:20). And here let us also notice that which is of the utmost importance. The Lord quotes the very Scripture that met the case in hand. So there is guidance and instruction in Scripture for the believer, for every circumstance, or difficulty, that may arise in his pathway, but he must know where to find it. We must make it our business to be so well acquainted with the Holy Word of God as to be able to bring out at the moment the needed truth for the time of need.

"Then the devil leaveth him." Satan was defeated. Thank God, he is a defeated foe. He may roar, but he cannot rend; he may deceive, but he cannot destroy. In closing this section let us notice seven beautiful things, manifesting the grace and power and glory of our blessed Lord: —

- 1 The voice of the Father points Him out as the Object of Heaven's delight.
- 2 The descending Spirit abides upon Him as the Son of God, whom "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto."
- 3 Angels delight to minister unto Him, as once before they had heralded His birth.
- 4 Satan flees defeated from the presence of a Man in the wilderness. Four thousand years before he had triumphed, with the same temptations, over a man in a garden.
- 5 The Lord becomes the light to them that sit in darkness — Galilee of the Gentiles — that part of the outskirts of the nation which was most despised by the religious leaders. There, the Lord, rejected at Jerusalem, goes in grace and gathers to Himself a people who owned His claims and obeyed His Word.
- 6 He begins His wonderful mission, and its divine character is marked at the very outset by His victory over disease, death, and the devil. It is the powers of the world to come in the hands of the King. Lunacy destroyed the mind; palsy destroyed the body; demon-possession destroyed both; but Jesus healed them all.
- 7 Then He is seen attracting to Himself the hearts of men. Nets, boats, relations, and calling — all are left to follow the Lord Jesus. The most powerful attraction set before the soul is not "I ought," or "I must"; but the fact that One has gone through this world before us: attracted our hearts out of it

to Himself, where He now is on the throne: given us His place before the Father (John 17:14), and now He expects us to fill His place before the world.

We are not of the world. Let us show it more and more in Christ-likeness day by day.

"His Cross behind: His Home before.

Himself to-day, and evermore."

01.03 - Section 03. Mat_5:1-48; Mat_6:1-34; Mat_7:1-29.

Section 03. Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29. The Laws of the Kingdom An Outline of the Interpretation and Application of Matthew 5:1-12

Text.

Matthew 5:3.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Poor = humble. Derivation from beggarly — in the sense of having nothing. The Believer has nothing in this world.

Parallels.

Isaiah 57:15. "The High and holy One . . . I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a poor and contrite spirit."

Isaiah 66:1-24. "To this man will I look . . . that is of a poor and contrite spirit."

Promises.

"Theirs is the Kingdom."

Inheritance WHEN the wicked — the proud have been cut off.

Malachi 3:15. "NOW we call the proud happy."

Malachi 4:2. "BUT unto you that fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."

Warnings.

Malachi 4:1. "BUT the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the PROUD . . . shall be as stubble."

Isaiah 2:1-22 "The DAY of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is PROUD." The Great Example — Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:9. "HE who was RICH, for your sakes became POOR, that ye through His poverty might be RICH."

Php 2:1-30. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a SERVANT." In Matthew 4:1-25 we saw the King triumphing over all the powers of Satan. The devil is defeated, and his works — disease and death — flee before the Divine Healer. The fame of the Lord Jesus being thus spread abroad, He now (Matthew 5:1-48, Matthew 6:1-34, Matthew 7:1-29) announces the Laws of His Kingdom and begins to unfold the great moral principles upon which it is founded.

We have to keep in mind that the Kingdom of Heaven is not Heaven, nor, properly speaking, in Heaven. It is the rule of Heaven on this earth (Deuteronomy 7:13-14). As we have seen, both John and the Lord Jesus announced that happy time as at hand, but, alas! the nation of Israel rejected both the King and the Kingdom. Hence the Kingdom in power was deferred, and we have now the Kingdom in mystery. We shall find the teaching as to this fully developed in Matthew 13:1-58. But here, at the very outset, the Lord begins by describing the characteristics of those who belong to the Kingdom. It is the exact opposite of what men upon the earth manifest. Indeed, it is the opposite of what they either look for or expect. To be meek, merciful, or pure in heart necessitates a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and this is assumed to have already taken place in His hearers, for He is teaching disciples. The pronouns "they" and "ye" in Matthew 5:1-12 may indicate the time to which the promises apply. Taking the list of "Blesseds" in their order, the promises in Matthew 5:1-10 will be literally fulfilled to those who find their lot in the latter day when "transgressors are come to the full" (Daniel 8:1-27). In that day the men of pride will be exalted, and the poor in spirit — the godly remnant of the nation, who wait for Jehovah — will be counted as the offscourings of all things. But the Lord will hearken and hear, and in His Book of Remembrance their names shall be written, and they shall be His when He makes up His jewels. Then, "the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble. . . . But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:1-6). And the meek — they shall inherit the land (of Israel) when the wicked have been destroyed out of it. The Reign of Righteousness will satisfy those that hunger and thirst after righteousness; and the pure in heart — they shall see God. The rewards and promises in this section are connected with the coming Kingdom, but, of course, while this is true historically, nevertheless, in its application, every believer, in every dispensation, should manifest every trait of the beautiful life of blessing outlined by the Lord, and by so doing, prove to all that they are indeed the children of the Kingdom. In Matthew 5:11-12 we read, "Blessed are ye and great is your reward in Heaven." Here the Lord addresses His disciples there present. This would be true of them, and of every true disciple through all time. Later on, in His teaching, He gives them the principles that would mark them out as heavenly men upon the earth, and also make manifest the secret of the world's hatred. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." . . . "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me" (John 15:19-21). So we have the double result of being true to Christ in the day of His rejection, and that is, persecution here and great reward in Heaven. It is the heavenly side of the Kingdom. But it is well to note that He who spoke these words was the only One who ever became the perfect Exemplar, in all things, and has left us His example that we should follow in His steps. This will be better seen if we arrange any one of the "Blesseds" in tabular form, as on page 25. It is a most helpful and profitable study. Every longing after the rule of God in righteousness will be found fully expressed in both Prophets and Psalms. It was that to which the godly of that dispensation looked forward, just as the coming of Christ is the hope of the Church to-day. Coupled with the promises there are also, as ever, the warnings of Jehovah against those who oppose His power and despise His grace. But believers are also the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." There is a twofold meaning in this. Salt is used in Scripture as a figure of God's rights, or the righteous principles of God's dealings with the earth. It is this we see expressed in the judgment on Lot's

wife and the Vale of Sodom which became the valley of salt. Disciples "salt" the earth by maintaining these righteous principles and standing for the rights of God in a world that refuses to recognise either God or His rights. The other figure used is "light." They were "the light of the world." As the first conveys the thought of righteousness, the second speaks of grace. Light shines for others and before others. It may be a guiding light or a warning light, but it is there for the good of others, and so should believers be in this world. But coupled with the figure there is also the warning. The salt may lose its savour, and the light may get hidden. In both cases they become useless for the purpose for which they were intended. It was a warning to those whom He addressed, and to disciples of every age, and we do well to remember that we can only be "kept by the power of God unto salvation."

Then we come to something that probes the inner man. The Lord brings the light of Heaven to bear upon the motives of the heart, for "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Violence and corruption marked the ways of man from the fall (Genesis 6:1-22); but every trace of either in the child of the Kingdom must be dealt with in unsparing self-judgment.

Under the old economy we find that the law laid down the principle, in righteousness, "An eye for an eye" (Exodus 21:24), thereby restraining the wrath of man. Otherwise he would have demanded two eyes for one, in vengeance. But here an entirely new principle is introduced. "I say unto you that ye resist not evil." It is the very opposite of nature, which loves to avenge itself. It is different from righteousness, which measures out even-handed justice. It is the beautiful spirit of grace, manifested in all perfection in Him who "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." Even so the disciple should be more than righteous: he should be gracious, and while walking through this world, it is better to lose his "cloke" than give up those lovely principles of grace that mark him out as one who belongs to Christ. But again the Lord introduces something higher still — indeed the highest standard possible. The standard for the new dispensation is nothing short of that of the character of the Father Himself. His ways are to be our ways. To review our chapter shortly: It begins by showing what kind of people enter the Kingdom.

What the actions and character should be of those who take part with a rejected Saviour now.

Then the law is brought to bear upon the motives of men, showing that corruption and violence are the two principles of evil that govern the natural heart. That salvation from the consequences of sin must be had at all costs. If eye, hand, or foot hinder, it must be "cut off." That the righteousness needed must be more (i.e., of a different kind) than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and that when this salvation is known, it so moulds the heart that the believer is passive under all kinds of reproach and injustice. That tribulation and injustice only open the way for the activities of love seen in returning good for evil — the marks of the new dispensation, and of the children of the Kingdom.

Matthew 6:1-34 opens with the great principles of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting — right relationships with our fellow-men, with God, and with self. These are the righteousnesses of saints — the positive outcome of a life which has all the springs of its moral being in God Himself.

God is revealed to us as the giving God. He gave His Son (John 3:16). Christ gave Himself (Ephesians 5:25). God loveth a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). We do well to remember the

words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35); and believers are instructed to "labour that they may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28). The importance of this cannot be over-estimated. We are in a world of need, both material and spiritual, and the heart that knows the grace of Christ will be a heart that has learned the secret and the joy of giving. "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand" (Isaiah 32:8). There is ever the danger that through unfaithfulness in "that which is another man's" (Luke 16:1-31) we may lose "that which is our own." In other words, we lose the enjoyment of those heavenly blessings which are properly ours in proportion as we are unfaithful stewards of the bounty God has entrusted us with here.

Next we come to "the prayer that teaches to pray" — when and how it was to be used. Unlike the vain repetitions of the heathen, or the ostentatious display of the hypocrite at the street corner, the disciple is to seek the secret place and deal with his Father there.

Doubtless the form of words here given was intended to guide disciples before the Holy Spirit was given, but every word of the Lord was necessarily perfect; and these various petitions express the need of disciples in a way that only the Lord Himself could teach. No doubt fuller development was given when further truth was made known, and the time was coming when, instructed by the Holy Spirit, they would ask "in the name of Jesus" and receive that their joy might be full (John 14:13). This knowledge of their new standing in Him they could not have before the cross, and therefore could not pray "in His name." But in the meantime they were brought into all the conscious and enjoyed knowledge of relationship with a Father who loved, cared for, and watched over them day by day.

After the acknowledgment of the relationship into which they were brought, and which is expressed in the words, "Our Father," there are six petitions setting forth in order: —

Reverence. Rule. Obedience.

Dependence. Restoration. Preservation.

It will be noticed that the first three are Godward, and the second three are manward. Also that the last three deal with the present, the past, and the future. No greater compass of truth could possibly be brought within the bounds of so few words. Then our Lord goes back to the fifth petition to enforce the principle of Christian forgiveness. We shall meet with an even fuller development of it later, but here it is laid down as the basis on which God deals with His children in government. We may be smitten (Matthew 5:39), wronged (Matthew 5:40), sinned against (Matthew 5:41), despised (Matthew 5:44), hated or persecuted (Matthew 5:44). How are we to meet it? By asserting our rights and demanding apology and reparation? The world would do so, and it would be considered right in the eyes of the world. But, "No," says the Lord, "forgive men their trespasses." And more, it is not that the Christian walks through this world a merely passive or impassive sufferer. The very suffering he may be brought into only brings out the spirit of Christ, who was Himself, the perfect exponent in His own history of His divine teaching, and who is our perfect Example. So the Apostle could say, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves" — the first thing nature thinks of. But here is the divine way, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Fasting involves the setting aside of self. And not only self looked upon as connected with the evil within; but it is the setting aside of the claims of nature itself in order to have to do with God. It is a recognition that there are spiritual things on hand of deeper importance than even rightful claims of the body. And then there is a wider sense in which the believer goes through this world abstaining from everything in it. He is "anointed" and "washed." His heart is right and his life is right. He does not appear "of a sad countenance," for the joy of Heaven fills his heart while upon the earth, and the Father who seeth in secret rewards him. The more we value the things of earth, the more care and anxiety we create for ourselves in acquiring and retaining them. And if these things become our "treasure" — that on which the heart is set — alas! for us, for our hearts will be earthward instead of heavenward. We may procure locks and bars sufficient to defy the modern burglar, but the thief, Time, will ultimately steal ALL. He will steal them from us, and us from them.

If, on the other hand, Christ in glory has become the hope and object of the heart, then both the treasure and the heart will be above, and we shall be known as heavenly men upon the earth. By and by we shall reach our native land, enter the eternal home, and dwell in the Father's House, to go no more out. Even here we have a foretaste of it all — forgiveness, sonship, and everlasting life. Thus, in whatever circumstances we may be, our hearts can be in perfect rest. God has chosen us out of the world. He is carrying us through the world, and His object is to conform us to the image of His Son. Meantime we rest in the sense of His knowledge and of His love, that knows and provides for our every need.

If Matthew 6:1-34 gives us, principally, right relationships with God our Father, Matthew 7:1-29 begins with what should be the relationships of believers among themselves. Having been brought into the Kingdom and into relationship with the Father, we are to manifest righteousness by consistency of walk (verses 1-6). We must judge ourselves, but we may not judge each other. The judgment of others here spoken of, is that censorious criticism which "sets at nought" our brother (Romans 14:10), and is really closely allied to evil speaking. We have an outstanding instance in the Old Testament how God regards it, in the case of Aaron and Miriam who "spake against Moses." And Jehovah rebuked them in words pregnant with meaning "Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant" The very fact that any one slips into this only shows that they "have a beam" in their own eye.

Confidence in the Father is next seen — expressed in genuine asking, earnest seeking, and urgent knocking. This is coupled with the certain answer of grace, and illustrated by the response of even the natural man to the requests of his children. When the subject of supplication is introduced there is an increasing urgency in the instructions, marking out the one who is in earnest, and there is a need-be for it; for there is no aspect of the spiritual life which Satan is more opposed to than the hidden life of prayer. We have all the power of Satan out to hinder and prevent our dependence upon and communion with God, and we do well to remember it. The Lord recognises it. Do we? It would seem as if promise (John 15:7), and precept (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and illustration (2 Kings 4:33), and example (Daniel 6:10), and exhortation (Ephesians 6:18), and warning (Matthew 26:41), were all enlisted to enforce and press home the important truth that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." We are in an enemy's country and must keep the communications open with headquarters. We are in an element which is fatal to spiritual life, and must therefore draw all our supplies from above. "I will therefore," said the inspired apostle, "that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath or doubting" (1 Timothy

2:8). But Christianity is marked not only by what men are to believe. The true outward test of it will be what they do; and the practical results flowing from a true knowledge of the Father will reflect His character among men; and thus we shall carry out the golden rule, and do as we would be done by. The entrance to the Kingdom is next spoken of under the figure of a "strait gate." There must be purpose of heart to separate from the crowd, and take an individual path at all costs. David had it (Psalms 17:3), Daniel had it (Daniel 1:1-21), and Barnabas exhorted the young believers of Antioch to seek after it if they would make progress in the new life. There is no middle path here, and no middle place hereafter. The issues are simple, if inexpressibly solemn. A good start — the strait gate entered, the narrow way trodden the end, everlasting life. Conversion and Regeneration are the doors of entrance. Holiness marks out the pathway that leads from the strait gate to the gate of pearl. And few there be that find it. But for grace no one would. On the other hand, wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction. Everything agreeable to the flesh and pleasing to the eye may be carried through the wide gate and taken along the broad way, but the pleasures of Sin are but for a season, and the end is — Hell. But the devil has many devices, and a very favourite one of hoary antiquity is the "false prophet." The first false prophet we read about in Scripture was Satan himself, and his first effort — in which he was very successful — was to challenge the truth of God's Word. This is still his strong point, and there are many men in Christendom to-day doing his work. "Wolves in sheeps' clothing." Unconverted men, with a profession of Christianity and a show of learning, using their abilities to endeavour to throw doubts upon the inspiration, authenticity, and authority of God's Holy Word. Short and simple is the test given to detect them. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The world may admire and applaud. The disciple turns away. From such he gets neither joy for his heart nor food for his soul. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" What the thorns and thistles are in the natural world, these are in the spiritual. And the Lord, in closing, sums up the whole field of profession, by showing that the truly wise man hears, obeys, brings forth good fruit, and continues; while the mere professor, building his house on the sand, sees his house and his hopes swept away together. Many hear the sayings and do them not — a proof of their indifference and insincerity. But here, doing the sayings of Jesus is likened to building on a rock, and proves that the inward springs that govern the moral nature have been reached by the truth.

01.04 - Section 04. Mat_8:1-34; Mat_9:1-38.

Section 04. Matthew 8:1-34; Matthew 9:1-38. The Dignity of the King and the Characteristics of His Mission The Gospel takes up a lost sinner in order to make him like Christ. It gives him: — A place in His favour. A prospect of His glory, and A power to bring him there.

It finds him guilty and brings him pardon.

It finds him lost and brings him salvation.

It finds him helpless and brings him power.

We shall find this illustrated in the very beautiful section of our Gospel we are now entering upon, for it shows us all the activities of the power and grace of Christ meeting and defeating all the malignant power of Satan — meeting and supplying all the deep, deep need of sinners. It is really the gospel of the Kingdom introduced with a manifestation of the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 2:5). We must not confound it with the present gospel of the grace of God. The gospel of grace might come to a poor sufferer on a sick-bed with saving power for the soul, but the body is not necessarily benefited thereby. On the other hand, we find every individual brought in contact with the Lord on earth, blessed both in soul and body. It was a proof that He was there, acting in the power of the coming Kingdom, out of which, in a coming day, when it is set up upon the earth, every trace of Satan's power, and all the effects of sin, will be cast for ever.

To-day it is the Kingdom and patience of Christ we are to manifest, till He comes again. We can imagine Peter had before him these various scenes detailed in Matthew 8:1-34; Matthew 9:1-38, when, in Cornelius' house, he declared how "God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil: for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). He was indeed the "Man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him" (Acts 2:22). The Spirit of God, then, in these two chapters particularly, sets the Lord before us as the One who had come to destroy the works of the devil. In Matthew 5:1-48 He went up into a mountain, and we are instructed as to what men ought to be. In Matthew 8:1-34 He came down from the mountain, and we find out what men are. But in the midst of it all we see the Lord moving in the calm dignity of grace and power, dispensing healing and blessing to all who were brought to Him. And it is interesting to notice here that out of all the cases of individual blessing recorded in our Lord's ministry, nearly all were brought to Him by others. Only of some six or seven is it said, "they came." Surely here is another incentive to those who know the Lord to seek to bring others to Him. "Andrew first findeth his own brother Peter." "Philip findeth Nathanael" (John 1:41-45). The various miracles in this section are evidently grouped together for a special reason. By referring to Mark we find that Peter's wife's mother was healed long before the leper. May the reason for this not be that these striking miracles are placed before us here in a moral order, and designed to show the power and grace of the King in the face of the strongest opposition Satan could bring against Him; designed also to show us the results of sin, which works havoc both in soul and body. In Matthew 8:1-34, then, we have: —

- 1 Grace forging sins.
- 2 Grace calling sinners.
- 3 Grace bringing joy.
- 4 Grace raising the dead.
- 5 Grace restoring the diseased.
- 6 Grace opening blind eyes.
- 7 Grace unloosing the tongue of the dumb.

Seven notable proofs of Jehovah's presence among His people in power and blessing. The first miracle in Matthew 8:1-34 is that of the leper. "There came a leper." He came, confessed the power of the Lord, and was cleansed. Then he was instructed to go to the priest. The priest had before pronounced the man unclean. Now he is called upon to pronounce him clean, and in doing so to proclaim the fact that there was One in their midst who was more than man. The King of Israel (2 Kings 5:1-27) had to say, when appealed to in Naaman's case, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive?" Leprosy was known as a disease beyond the power of man. Only God could heal the leper. Here, then, was a leper healed, and the priest was bound to announce it, and offer the prescribed offering for the occasion (Leviticus 14:1-57). It was a positive proof of Messiah's power. But in the second miracle it was a Gentile who got the blessing, and there was no question at all in the mind of the centurion of either the grace or power of Christ. His faith counted upon both, and thereby the Gentile, outside the scope of promise, honoured the Lord, and was rewarded. In commenting upon this faith, the Lord points out, in marked contrast, the unbelief of Israel, and foreshadows the rejection of the nation till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Next we find the Lord in Peter's house; and, taking the fever patient by the hand, he lifted her up (Mark 1:1-45). Surely she might well remember that hand-clasp. And the hand of weakness grasped by the hand of power, might well become a ministering hand henceforth.

Referring again to Mark, we learn that this miracle was wrought upon the Sabbath day, and then "when the evening was come" — that is, when the Sabbath day was past — "they brought unto him many that were possessed with demons, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick." Man's day was setting in darkness and sorrow. Earth's sinking sun saw only suffering humanity, but the Lord brings grace for the guilty, salvation for the lost, and deliverance for the captives of sin and Satan.

"Oh I with what various ills they met, Oh with what joy they went away." The Lord then sets out to cross the Sea of Galilee to the land of Gadara, originally inhabited by the tribe of Gad. And this long and, as it proved, dangerous journey is undertaken with the object of bringing deliverance to two men possessed with demons; but the occasion of the crossing became also the occasion of testing two would-be disciples. The Lord's answer to the first is very striking. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have their nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." There was room and a home on earth for that which men think of little value. There was a place for that which men count even injurious, but the King of Glory was a homeless Stranger. Peter's fisher coat might afford Him a rough pillow while crossing the lake; but the Son of Man had not where to

lay His head. And here for the first time we get this new title He applies to Himself. It spoke volumes to Israel, could Israel have understood, for He did not become the "Son of Man" until He had first become the "rejected Messiah."

If the first follower was hindered by worldly position, the second was hindered by worldly ties, and neither can be allowed before the claims of Christ. The beginning of all discipleship is unquestioning obedience produced in the heart by love in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord might have prevented the storm; He allowed it, and that for two reasons. The disciples had to learn what manner of MAN this was who was with them, and the second was that HE was the One to whom to turn in every difficulty. Doubtless their seamanship had often been tested in days gone by on that same lake, but here was evidently something out of the common. They saw nothing before them but disaster, and although the Lord was with them, and though they had witnessed His power so often before, yet they "were afraid." They had not yet learned to trust Him wholly. The Lord first reproves them for their fears, and then delivers them from their dangers. One has said, "He did not chide them for disturbing Him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears."

What comes out in the closing half of our chapter is the power of Satan, seen in three ways: (a) Over the elements, in his attempt to raise a storm that would destroy the Christ of God Himself; (b) over two men so under his power as to be worse than the wild beasts of the earth; (c) lastly, over a people so blinded by sin that when One was present in grace and power to bless, they "besought him to depart out of their coasts." And the Lord does so.

Matthew 9:1-38 shows some of the characteristics of the wonderful mission that brought the Son of God to earth. It was not only a question of delivering from the effects of Satan's power, but removing the cause which gave him that power over men. And so when the Lord saw the faith of the friends of the palsied man, doubtless reflected in the heart of the man himself, He responds in the first place, not by healing the man's bodily disease, but by touching what was deeper, the disease of the soul — He forgave his sins. Which brings out this, that here in His own city — Capernaum — where many of His mighty works had been done, the Scribes saw in Him only a man, and dared to say that He was a blasphemer. At Matthew 8:34, His works were rejected: here His divine person and heavenly origin is despised, and later in our chapter the leaders of the people commit the unpardonable sin by ascribing His acts of power to Beelzebub. Such is man by nature, even at his best. Everything was leading up to His rejection by the nation, and the nation's rejection by Him. But not only is He the Forgiver of Sins. Grace brings sinners into His own presence — yea, even to the table with Him; just what the same grace is doing to-day to all who own their guilt and accept His mercy. The call of Matthew is an occasion where we see the activity of grace in the heart of one who has become a recipient of it. From Mark's Gospel we learn that Matthew was so enraptured with the grace that had deigned to call a poor publican like himself, that he made a great feast in his own house; and a great company of publicans and sinners were gathered together to meet with Jesus. And there was great joy in that house, for the blessed ones were in the presence of the Blessor, and in the realisation of what the Psalmist experienced when he said, "In thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11). The Pharisees raise the question of fasting, but the One who alone was the source of all true joy was in their midst: how unseemly, then, to be occupied with that which was an expression of sorrow. The Lord next develops the principle of this new thing in the two short

parables which follow. The "new cloth" and the "new wine" are the principles of sovereign grace, as opposed to the old covenant of legal righteousness.

Israel of old was under a covenant of works, but, when Christ came, the end of that economy came with Him. Henceforth God was dealing with men in pure unmixed grace. The publican and the sinner were nearer the Kingdom of God than the ceremonially perfect Pharisee, who boasted in his own righteousness and despised others — nearer because they owned their badness, instead of boasting in their fancied goodness. Neither would it do to mingle these two things. Law and grace cannot be blended. The Galatians tried to mix them, and were soundly rebuked by the inspired Apostle. Christendom is doing it to-day, and the result is that the terror is taken from the law by the effort to pare it down to meet men's failures, and all the sweetness is taken from the grace of God by a system of works which tries to earn His favour.

Rightly understood the holy law of God must ever be a source of terror to unholy man, for under it there is no hope for him at all. It demands righteousness from man, without giving him power to produce it. It exposes and condemns his sins, without providing any way to remove them.

Grace, on the other hand, is the sweetest sound that ever reached the sinner's ears, for it deals not at all with what he is, but with what God is: God, who gave up His Son unto death, and that for the ungodly, Christ who redeemed him from the curse of law by being made a curse, and now the Holy Spirit of God come down to make good in his heart these precious truths and lead him into the enjoyment of all the boundless privileges grace has heaped upon him. There can neither be deliverance nor worship until grace is known and enjoyed.

Next in order we have the case of one who was dead, of one with an incurable disease, of two who were blind, and of one who was dumb. Could any addition be made to this sum of human misery? Could the works of the devil be more manifestly displayed? And all this in the midst of the Lord's own nation of Israel. And, figuratively, it is a picture of Israel; and the mighty works the Lord did in their midst, for individuals, form a type of what He will yet do for the nation, when He sets His hand, in a coming day, to recover and restore His ancient people. But what we have specially to notice at the close of our chapter is this, that the Pharisees and rulers of the people, after all that they had seen of His works of power, and after all that they had heard of His words of grace, gave it as their considered opinion, "He casteth out devils through the prince of devils" (verse 34). The King was definitely rejected. The blind men (verse 37) acknowledge Him as "Son of David," and by David's greater Son they are healed: but it was done "in the house" apart from the multitude; and when healed they were charged no longer to proclaim Him as such. His relationship was now no longer that of "Son of David" to the nation, but the wider one of "Son of Man" to the multitudes who were "scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." From this standpoint the Lord begins another circuit of Galilee, and in patient grace we find Him going about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. We have before noticed that the expression "Kingdom of Heaven" is found only in Matthew; and only in Matthew do we get "Gospel of the Kingdom," and that thrice repeated (Matthew 4:1-25; Matthew 9:1-38; Matthew 24:1-51). Here was the cure for all the ills that afflicted Jehovah's land; but, alas! Israel refused the Gospel of the Kingdom then, as sinners to-day refuse the Gospel of Grace. And there never was grace like the grace of Christ. He was moved to compassion by the sight of the fainting multitudes, and He would

have His disciples to share the same compassion for the lost as moved His own heart. With this motive they would pray with a sense of the urgency of the need, and this need is as great to-day. The three short commands, "Pray ye," "Look ye," "Go ye," are intimately connected. Can we truly obey one without obeying all?

01.05 - Section 05. Mat_10:1-42; Mat_11:1-30; Mat_12:1-50.

Section 05. Matthew 10:1-42; Matthew 11:1-30; Matthew 12:1-50. The King's Messengers, the King's Message, and the King Himself Rejected

It is very important to be clear as to the teaching of this section of our Gospel in order rightly to understand the whole. It records the events that lead up to, and introduce the change of dispensations following the rejection of the Messiah. In the first place the King's messengers go out with the King's message. The nation rejects the messengers and refuse the message. John, the forerunner, is imprisoned. The people that rejected both John and the Lord are likened to children who would respond to the voice neither of mirth nor of mourning. The pride and worldliness of Tyre and Sidon would meet with a less severe judgment than the cities of Galilee which had seen His mighty works. But though rejected by the people and their leaders, yet the weary and heavy-laden would come to Him and find rest; and as the Sabbath was intended to be a sign of a kept law, He exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who professed to keep the Sabbath and yet rejected the Lord of the Sabbath. Their only reply to His words of grace and acts of power was to hold a council against Him, how they might destroy Him. Henceforth it was all over with the nation. The new thing was announced according to prophecy. Judgment would go forth to the Gentiles who were outside the scope of Jewish promise, in the darkness of heathendom and the prison-house of the devil. The result would be the "new song to the Lord" and His praise to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 42:1-10). The Pharisees desire a sign, and get two, which showed them, could they only have seen it, that they would be condemned by the faith of those who had both less light and fewer privileges. Jonah did no signs, and Solomon's wisdom was not to be compared with that of Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. But looking a little closer into details we find that Matthew 10:1-42 opens with the mission of the twelve. At the close of Matthew 9:1-38 they were instructed to pray for labourers to be sent forth, and here we find them being sent forth themselves. The disciples now become apostles — sent ones. Hitherto they had been following with the Lord, as disciples; now they go forth for the Lord, as servants, and the chapter is full of the deepest practical instruction for every servant, now, as well as then. In the first place we get a list of the names of the twelve, and here only Matthew is called "the publican"; it is as if the writer desired to express his appreciation of the grace that could take up a poor publican and number him among that select company — the Apostles of the Lamb. The Lord then instructs them as to: —

1 The sphere of their mission.

2 The persons to whom the message was sent, 3 The character of the message, and 4 Its evidences.

It was a purely Jewish mission of Jewish apostles to the Jewish people, and, this being so, neither Samaritan nor Gentile has any part in it. This should make it clear to all that this mission of the twelve had nothing in common with the present Gospel of the grace of God which goes out to all, world wide, without exception or distinction, consequent upon the death and resurrection of the

Lord Jesus Christ. But here the apostles are instructed to go only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." They were as sheep having no shepherd, or even in a worse position still, according to Zechariah 11:5, as a flock of slaughter. The nation had reached the period when "their possessors (the Romans) slay them and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them (the Herodians) say, 'Blessed be the Lord for I am rich': and their own shepherds (the Pharisees) pity them not." Such was Israel's miserable plight when the Lord Jesus appeared, God came down in grace to deliver, proclaiming as "at hand" that Kingdom which had been so long promised through the prophets. But in spite of all He said, or did, or was, the King — the true Shepherd of Israel — was rejected, and what the prophet Zechariah had foretold now took place. "I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people" (Zechariah 11:10). The whole chapter is of great interest in connection with this portion of our Gospel. The character of the message and its evidences bear further testimony that it was the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. That the Kingdom was near was evidenced by the powers of the coming age having been conferred upon, and now to be manifested by, the King's messengers. Four things they were instructed to do: —

Heal the sick.

Cleanse the lepers.

Raise the dead.

Cast out devils (demons). In short, disease, death, and the devil would yield to the power of Jehovah exercised by His servants, as they will again do in a coming day, when Jehovah is Judge, Lawgiver, and King, and "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isaiah 33:24). But to apply such a scripture to the present dispensation only betrays ignorance of the ways of God. The man who bases on this for so-called faith healing is equally bound to raise the dead; and his failure should convince him of his folly. But their mission would be in no wise accepted by the nation. Indeed, the Lord warned them that they would find themselves as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore their dependence was to be upon God Himself. Their Lord had been persecuted and rejected; so would they be. The Person of Christ, the people of Christ, and the Word of Christ, are three things that the world hates. Satan and the works of Satan it can tolerate; for, alas! the evil heart of man understands them; but, when One came from God with power to deliver, the only answer the world had was "crucify Him." The Master was called Beelzebub, so would the servant be.

It is important to note that this mission is looked upon as continuous, right on "till the Son of Man be come" (Matthew 10:24). No doubt it was interrupted at the Cross, and from then until the Church period is over, it will continue to be so. But when the Church is rapt to the glory, Messiah's messengers will again go forth with the Kingdom Gospel, and Messiah Himself will appear to establish His Kingdom in power, as we shall see more fully in Matthew 25:1-46. But in the meantime, and until that day of power, the disciples would be in the place of testimony for a rejected Lord, and therefore hated by the world, and it is beautiful to notice how He fortifies their hearts against the world's opposition. In the first place: —

They were the objects of the Father's care. If that care extended even to the unimportant sparrow, how much more to the confessors of Christ? And so intimately are they known to Him that even the very hairs of their heads were numbered — nothing could really harm them. Again: Their

faithful testimony here would ensure honourable mention in the day of glory. It is one of the ways of God with His children here, that we are often delivered from occupation with present things, by having the light of the future turned upon them. So Paul reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed (Romans 8:18). For if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:1-26). The Cross-bearer here is going to be Crown-wearer by and by. But there is further encouragement for them of a different character at the close of the chapter. only one Servant was ever able to go on in a path of unceasing rejection, and that was the Master Himself. He had to say: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God" (Isaiah 49:4). His path, uncheered by earthly smiles, led only to the Cross. But for these servants, if some rejected them, there would be those who would receive their testimony, and the receivers would be blessed of the Father and inherit the Kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:1-46).

We can see clearly, as we study these chapters, how Israel was now on her last trial. In her past history she had turned to idolatry, from the living and true God. Elijah's accusation was a true one when he said: "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword." Bitter captivity, as they had been forewarned, had followed fast upon their sin; but grace had again intervened, and a remnant of the nation was once more in Israel's land. Now, it was no more a question of broken laws, neglected altars, or persecuted prophets; but a question as to Messiah Himself. Jehovah — Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us — become, in grace, the Servant, although the very King of Glory. He was in their midst; and, if He was rejected, there only lay before them the last Roman captivity, as foreshadowed by Daniel's devouring "beast" (Daniel 7:1-28), Jerusalem's desolation, as foretold by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the Kingdom of God taken from them, and, finally (Messiah having been rejected), the Antichrist would be accepted, and so bring upon the nation the great tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, before the Lord returned in power and glory. The study of this chapter is of the utmost importance, in order rightly to understand the ways of God with men.

Matthew 11:1-30 lays bare the springs of evil in the heart of man, that could reject both the grace and power of Messiah, as shown in Matthew 10:1-42 by His messengers, and His own gracious ministry (Matthew 11:1). The wicked king, the "idol shepherd" — Herod — had imprisoned the faithful and fearless Forerunner. In the gloomy dungeon of Macherus, John, brooding alone in his bondage, would seem to have questioned whether, after all, his own mission had not been a failure. Where was the Kingdom he had announced, and what proof was there that the King was really present? Hence the questionings of his spirit found utterance in the inquiry, "Art Thou He?" The Lord replied to His dying witness by acts of power and words of comfort. When the disciples of John had departed, the Lord praises the devoted constancy of His servant. John was no weakling — no "reed shaken with the wind." King's courts were not familiar places to him, and the smiles and frowns of kings were matters of equal indifference. He was "more than a prophet," for he was honoured by being the immediate messenger of Jehovah. Himself. But the Lord marks the change of dispensation by announcing that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, as sons of God, had a nearer relationship than even John — "no greater" servant of woman born. Prophetic testimony had been since Abel downwards: that was now ended, and Messiah Himself was present, of whom all the prophets had spoken: and this fact made the sin of the age — the rejection of Jesus

— the greatest it was possible for man to commit. Tyre's worldliness and Sodom's immorality were eclipsed by the unbelief of the cities of Galilee.

Turning from them, the Lord in Matthew 11:25-30 reveals the divine purposes and counsels whereby "the babe" (the true disciple) is instructed into the deep things of God. Here our Gospel touches on the main subject developed in the Gospel of John — the revelation of the Father and the Son. The Lord returns, as it were, back to the eternal purposes of God. If the throne of David was denied Him by the nation, all things were given Him by the Father, and He alone could reveal the Father to His own. The ineffable Godhead glory of the Father could only be revealed by the Son. But that He could reveal it, proved His own Personal Deity, for who but God could reveal God? Further, a knowledge of the mystery of the divine Son of God incarnate — His Being and Person — very God, and yet a true Man upon the earth, could be known only by the Father alone. This One then calls to Himself the weary of every class, and clime, and nation, in order to give them rest. Here only was rest to be found, for He alone could lay the foundation upon which every purpose of God in grace to the world was to be established. Not only was rest of conscience to be given there was also rest of heart to be found but the last is only promised upon the ground of discipleship. To learn of Him: to be yoked with Him: to be meek and lowly like Him — is there a power in earth or hell that can disturb or distract the soul that has entered, in a practical way, into these sublime and heavenly truths? In Matthew 12:1-50 we find Messiah's messengers an hungered, even in Messiah's land, so thoroughly had their Master been rejected. Walking by the side of the corn-fields, the disciples pluck the ears of corn and eat them, which was allowed by the law (Deuteronomy 23:25). The Lord then uses the opposition the Pharisees made to this, to show them, both in teaching and practice, that every link with God, for that generation, was now completely severed. What were mere forms of godliness, when the Son of God Himself was despised? In the nation's history, in days gone by, there had been a time analogous to the present. David, the true king, was rejected and fleeing for his life. The people's king, Saul, was on the throne, and God's king was an exile. On the Sabbath day (compare Leviticus 24:1-23 with 1 Samuel 21:1-15) David and his followers did eat of the shewbread, which pertained only to the priests, and were blameless. But what the Pharisees did prove by their opposition was their own inconsistency and guilty rejection of divine power, made manifest before all. And this would ultimately be the cause of their own rejection by God Himself, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Following upon the next miracle of healing the man with the withered hand — apt picture of Israel who should have been strong for God, and was not — the Holy Spirit directs attention to the true Servant, and His beautiful characteristics as described in Isaiah's glowing page.

1 He was the Chosen One.

2 The Beloved.

3 Filled with the Spirit.

4 The One who would show judgment to the nations.

5 Patient and Tender.

6 Finally Victorious, and 7 The One in whom the Gentiles would trust (Isaiah 42:1-25).

Henceforth it is no longer a question of blessing to Israel only; the gracious service, in the hands of the Perfect Servant, the "Son of Man," now assumes a wider aspect, and there is final blessing for the whole earth. In Isaiah 5:1-30 the prophet describes what God had done for the nation, and what the nation had failed to be for God. The six "woes," in the same chapter, describe the sad result "because they had cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 5:24). But the True Servant "shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 62:4).

One other miracle the Lord works about this time, as if to show conclusively His divine authority: There was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and He healed him insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. We have had blind eyes opened and deaf ears unstopped, but here both together, in one subject, are brought before us as a picture of where the nation now was, led on by their blind guides, refusing either to see or confess their own Messiah in their midst. The people might say, "Is not this the Son of David?" but the foes of Christ charge Him with being the minister of satanic power, and thus commit the sin of sins by blaspheming the Holy Spirit of God.

Even after the Cross, the first martyr, Stephen, had to charge home upon their conscience the same terrible guilt, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51). The Lord goes on to show: — That Satan did not war against himself. That the Kingdom of God was among them. That the "strong man," Satan, had been bound, and That "his goods," the souls of men, could now be set free.

However, that generation was judged. It was a corrupt tree and could not bring forth good fruit. Being evil, their words were idle and evil, and for every idle word they would come into judgment. Their fathers in the wilderness had spoken against Jehovah in their midst in power, and His anger was kindled. Here Jehovah was in their midst in grace, and as their fathers had done, so did they.

It is remarkable, how that after all the mighty works the Lord had done among them, the Pharisees should still demand a sign, and it is also well to notice that out of the forty-six recorded miracles of our Lord, no less than thirty-three were wrought in Galilee. No further sign would convince them, but the Lord gives them two that would condemn them. Jonah, up from the depth of the sea, type of Christ risen from among the dead, and preached in grace to the Gentiles, was the first. But if Messiah was cut off, what hope for that generation? And the fact that the men of Nineveh received and bowed to the voice of the prophet, while the men of Israel refused the voice of One greater than Jonah, would add tenfold to their condemnation. The second sign was the attractive power of the wisdom of Solomon for the heart of the Queen of Sheba. The fame of this wisdom (1 Kings 8:1-66) produced something in her heart beyond the mere repentance of the Ninevites. It had the effect of bringing her into the presence of the king; and the result was that every desire of her heart was satisfied. How much greater was the One in whose presence they were? The One who had given to Solomon his wisdom, and his riches, and his glory, was in their midst, but they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. And then the Lord passes to the end, and with sad and solemn words, in parabolic language, describes the present and future history of the nation. Of all the various forms of evil with which Satan has sought to lead men from God, no form seems to have been so successful as idolatry. We do not know that it was in the world before the flood. Then the devil wrought through the unbridled passions of men, left to the freedom of their own

lusts. When the sword of justice was put into the hands of Noah and his sons, restraint was put upon physical violence, but moral evil thereupon blossomed unchecked. Because men did not like to retain the knowledge of the true God, and because they must have a god of some kind, at the instigation of Satan, they made gods for themselves, and attributed to these idols all the evil passions that filled their own hearts. Soon idolatry had filled the whole known world; and God, in electing grace, had to call Abram entirely out of his father's house, in order to become the "father of the faithful." Yet how successfully the "unclean spirit" carried on his operations, even amidst the chosen seed, may be seen when we find idolatry tacitly allowed even in Jacob's household, in the wilderness openly indulged in, and publicly provided for under the reign of Israel's wisest king, until God, through His prophet, had to warn, in the days of Manasseh, what the result would be. And very soon afterwards Jerusalem was "wiped as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down" (2 Kings 21:13). From that day till the present moment idolatry has been unknown among the Jews. The "unclean spirit" went out, and the house was left empty, swept, and garnished. It was not that evil under other forms was not among them, but idolatry was not there. Nevertheless, the Lord says that in a coming day, a sevenfold spirit of evil — idolatry and worse — will take possession of the guilty generation. Man himself will usurp the place of God, and demand and receive that adoration and worship which is only due to God alone. Both "the beast" and his "image" will be worshipped, and that by men and by a nation of the highest intelligence upon the face of the earth. There is no form of evil that men, in spite of all their boasted civilisation, will not indulge in, if left to the control of Satan and the desire of their own wicked hearts. But when man has reached his lowest, God comes in, and He will take a hand in the affairs of Israel, and of the earth, in judgment, and "destroy the men who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18).

Matthew 12:1-50 should be studied in connection with that beautiful section of Isaiah 49:1-26, Isaiah 50:1-11, Isaiah 51:1-23, Isaiah 52:1-15, Isaiah 53:1-12. In Isaiah 48:1-22 Israel, who should have been the servant of Jehovah, is charged with obstinacy and treacherous dealing, and formally set aside. In Isaiah 49:1-26 the True Servant is announced, and after His mission to Israel, He has to say, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. . . . 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 ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:4-6). There would then be blessing, not for Israel only, but for all nations. This was now beginning to be fulfilled, but the Cross had to come in before there could be blessing for any.

Isaiah 50:1-11 deals with the Blessed One upon the earth: His life of obedience to God and suffering at the hands of men. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:5-6). In Isaiah 51:1-23 the day of redemption has come, and there is a threefold call to the remnant to "hearken," and the promise that the days of mourning are ended and those of joy and gladness begun. The cup of trembling is taken out of her hands, and Jerusalem is exhorted (Isaiah 52:1-15) to awake and put on her beautiful garments. Then Jehovah turns (Isaiah 53:1-12) to contemplate His perfect Servant, upon the earth, in all His wonderful pathway of dependence and devotedness to the will of God: of rejection and suffering at the hands of men. But there was still a deeper depth. Expiation,

atonement, and propitiation could only be through blood-shedding and death, and He became obedient unto death, "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him" (Php 2:1-30). His work is above every work: His name above every name. As one result of that work, Israel's blessing is secured upon the ground of sovereign grace, and, in the bright millennial day (Isaiah 54:1-17), she is invited to break forth into singing. She is no longer Lo-Ami (not my people), but her Maker is her husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name.

It seems hardly necessary to add that the prophet, after describing "the sufferings of Christ," goes on to describe "the glory that should follow." He necessarily passes over the Church, which was a mystery then hid in the counsels of God, but to be revealed after the Lord had taken His seat on high. But all this was consequent upon the rejection of the Messiah, and coming back again to the close of Matthew 12:1-50, we find (verse 46) that the Lord now, in figure, breaks the last earthly link with Israel after the flesh. Everything of the old economy was over. The Jews might boast of having Abraham for their father, being Moses' disciples, having the law, and the prophets but prophets, priesthood, law, or kingdom was now of no account before God. The abuse of these privileges only rendered their guilt the deeper. In short, this chapter brings us to the close of the moral history of the nation. But new relationships of a spiritual character were about to begin, and these would be manifested by: —

1 Following Christ.

2 Hearing the Word of God.

3 Doing the Father's will.

01.06 - Section 06. Mat_13:1-58.

Section 06. Matthew 13:1-58. The Outward and Inward Aspects of the Kingdom in the Absence of the King The Bible is a book in two parts. The Old Testament has to do with the earth. It is the mind of Heaven revealed to man upon the earth to fit him for the earth. But man closed his ears to the voice of God, disobeyed the divine will, and made himself unfit for the earth in which God had placed him. Eden and innocence were lost by Adam. Canaan and liberty were lost by Israel. Happiness and holiness have been lost by all because of sin and disobedience.

Hence the New Testament has to do with heaven. It reveals the mind of God as to how men, who had made themselves unfit for the earth, might be made fit for heaven itself through the Gospel. The portion of our Gospel which we have so far been considering has had to do with Israel, still dealt with on the ground of responsibility. Messiah was presented for their acceptance or rejection, as men upon the earth; and, as we have seen, He had been rejected. Accordingly, at the close of Matthew 12:1-50, the Lord announces new terms of relationship — even that which was of a spiritual character. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother," and the same day He went out of the house and sat by the seaside.

Then follows the most remarkable series of parables given in any of the Gospels. Their number — seven — is in itself suggestive. We meet first with this number in Scripture in Genesis 2:1-25, where the seventh day is called the "Sabbath" from a root meaning to be "full," "satisfied," or "perfected." So God rested on the seventh day. His work was perfected. Nothing could be added to it.

These seven parables then set forth in symbolic language, systematic order, and historical sequence the moral characteristics of: — The origin, Outward progress,

Declension, and

Consummation of the Kingdom of Heaven as seen in the hands of men. At the same time, they also disclose the true inward and hidden aspect of that Kingdom in mystery, God's husbandry, God's building — against which neither the wickedness of men, the assaults of Satan, or the powers of hell can prevail.

Thus we see unfolded before us: —

1 What Christ does.

2 What Satan does, and

3 What men do.

Parable 1 The object of the opening parable is to show: —

1 The way in which the Word of the Kingdom is introduced.

2 The hindrances it encounters, and 3 The results it achieves. The sower is the Lord Himself. He is no longer seeking fruit from Israel, but He is beginning in the world at large a new work of grace, which, like the good seed, will reproduce itself.

But, as there were obstacles in the way of the seed, so there are hindrances to the operations of grace. The devil, the world, and the flesh oppose: —

1 Some of the seed fell "by the wayside." Here we have pictured that condition of heart which is, alas, but too common wherever the Gospel is proclaimed. There are hearts so careless and indifferent that they fail to see either their danger in rejecting the Gospel, or their blessing in receiving it. And in addition to this there is the enemy without who is ever ready to take advantage of the condition within. He catcheth away the word. These are the Hard-Hearted.

2 Again, some of the seed fell upon stony places where there was not much depth of earth. Two things are said of these. They had no depth of earth, hence no root, and when the sun was up they withered away. In His interpretation (Matthew 13:20) the Lord says of these here represented that they received the word with joy, but when persecution arose they were offended (stumbled). Joy, though a very important part of Christian experience, is not usually the first result of the Spirit's work in the soul. If the conscience be ploughed up there will be deep exercise as to sin, and joy will only come when the sin question is settled. Hence we gather that there was, on the part of those spoken of here, no real knowledge of either sin, self, or grace, and so no ability to continue when persecution arose for the Word's sake. In short, they are the Faint-Hearted.

3 "And some fell among thorns." Here the ground is already occupied with something else, and something also which is indigenous to the soil. The thorns were there before the seed fell amongst them. So much so that Matthew takes no account of the apparent growth of the seed at all — only of the thorns, and Luke notices it only to show that the flourishing condition of the thorns choked the seed. The Lord shows here the utter impossibility of producing fruit for God while the heart is occupied with the world, and in Luke the whole circle of worldly influences is represented its cares, its riches, or its pleasures. The three combined, or any one of them, may so fill the heart that the Word of God, though falling on the ear, and even being tacitly consented to by the mind, may yet produce no saving faith in the soul or fruit in the life, because there is no purpose of heart for God and no break with the world.

These may be classed as the Half-Hearted.

Yet, in spite of all the opposition of the devil, the flesh, and the world, the Word accomplishes the most remarkable results.

4 Some fell on good ground and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. Is the difference to be accounted for on the ground of fidelity or opportunity? The Lord does not here take up the question, but other scriptures show that both will be taken into consideration in the great Day of Rewards. But the disciples understood none of these things until the Lord opened out the meaning before them. To disciples it had been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom; and the Lord's interpretation of the "sower" and of the "tares in the field" would, no doubt, instruct them in the meaning of all parables.

Broadly speaking, the results of the sowing are such as follow the preaching of the Gospel in all ages and among all nations. Some are "good ground" hearers, and produce good fruit. Many, alas! are careless, and whether the hindrance be the devil, the world, or the flesh, they bring no fruit to perfection.

Parable 2 But in the next parable we have a further development of the history of the Kingdom, as committed to the hands of man, and four things follow: —

1 There is carelessness on the part of those who should have been watchers.

2 The enemy no longer "catches away" that which was sown. He adopts a new plan, and sows tares among the wheat.

3 The servants get instructions for their guidance under the new conditions, and 4 The Lord shows what is in store for both "wheat" and "tares" at the end of the age. The Book of Acts reveals to us how very early in the history of the Church Satan began his operations of introducing the "children of the wicked one" among the "children of the Kingdom." And though faithfulness on the part of Peter was able to detect and expose Simon Magus (Acts 8:21), yet such godly care and watchfulness soon, alas! disappeared, and evil men crept in unawares, just as the Lord here foretold. The servants, however, in the parable were prompt to appraise the evil at its true value when it showed itself, and they seek instructions from the Lord for wisdom to deal with it. And here we must note carefully the Lord's interpretation of the parable to understand rightly the force of the instructions He gives them. The field is the world — the kosmos. Here the word "world" indicates the sphere where the Word of God goes forth. In verses 39, 40 it indicates the space of time allowed for its dissemination. It is no longer a question of the land of Israel and a testimony to Messiah inside, with no appeal to Samaritan or Gentile outside of it, but the scope of the operations of grace will be world-wide, and the Kingdom of Heaven will be open to all without exception or distinction. The good seed are the children of the Kingdom. There is here a historical as well as a moral development. It is not a question of seed to reproduce itself as the result of a sowing, but it deals with what has been produced and is now in evidence in "the field." The "children of the Kingdom" are there, as was to be expected. But there are also the "children of the wicked one," wholly unexpected on the part of the servants who knew not the forces of evil at work, though unseen by men. It is the beginning of the "mystery of iniquity." Of those who bear the name of Christ, but have not the Spirit of Christ — unconverted and unregenerate, yet in the field of Christian profession, the Lord says, with solemn emphasis, that they are the "children of the wicked one." The servants have a suggested cure for these unexpected conditions, but the Lord shows them that their method is not the divine way. Penal judgment in divine things is never committed into the hands of men. The "tares" are in the Kingdom, and are to be allowed there until the "harvest." Evil men are not to be put out of the Kingdom, which could only be done by putting them to death.

Rome, interpreting "the field" to be "the Church," though in plain contradiction to the scripture, and which it is not, has endeavoured to root out those whom she branded as "tares," and thereby made herself responsible for the blood of fifty millions of the saints of God. Protestantism has gone to the opposite extreme, and with a spirit of latitudinarianism utterly regardless of the claims of Christ or the holiness of the House of God, has allowed all kinds of men and many forms of evil doctrine to enter the professing Church, arguing that as there were "tares" in the "field," so there

would be the unconverted in the Church — a right premise, but an utterly wrong conclusion.

How important it is to divide rightly the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

Continuing His instructions the Lord unmasks the cause of this condition of things: — The enemy that sowed them is the devil. For reasons beyond our ken, Satan is allowed to carry out his plans to the apparent disorganising of the plans of God. It was so at Eden, and his apparent success ended in man's expulsion from the paradise of God. In the post-diluvian world, although the original curse was partly removed and violence was no longer allowed to fill the earth to the same extent as before the flood, yet Satan was ready with something else to take its place, and mankind in the mass very soon became wholly given up to idolatry. No sooner was Abraham called out from his own country to be a stranger in the land of Canaan, than we see the wiles of the enemy under another form, and the son of the bondwoman is foisted into the place of the true seed. Foiled again in this, we trace the workings of the old serpent in the hatred of the ten brethren against Joseph, the uprisings against Moses, the grievous departure from God when in the land, the revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David, and the rapid declension of both kings and people from the ways of God, until He removed both Judah and Israel out of their own land because "they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy" (2 Chronicles 36:16). When Israel, for the time, is set aside, and the Kingdom of Heaven introduced, the enemy, alert in evil as ever, is ready with an imitation of that which is real. But the Lord brings the light of the future to illumine what is dark in the present, and He tells His disciples that the enemy's success is only for a time. Both wheat and tares grow together until the harvest, but at the harvest — the end of the age everything will come out in its true colours. It cannot be too often repeated that it is not the end of the world that is in view here, but a definite moment in the dealings of God with this world, and from other scriptures we learn that that time will be just before the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. It must be carefully distinguished both from the coming of the Lord for His people (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18), which takes place shortly before this, and also from the Judgment of the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:1-15), which does not take place until a thousand years afterwards. When the Lord comes for His people it is a question of the righteous being taken out from among the wicked.

Here it is a question of the wicked being taken out from among the righteous. At the Judgment of the Great White Throne, there is no separation at all, for all alike have died in sin, been buried in sin, and, raised again unrepentant and unforgiven, are alike cast into the lake of fire — solemn thought! But here the Lord takes the character of Son of Man, and as such He deals with the earth. He will come to deliver the faithful, judge the ungodly, purge the earth, fulfil to the suffering ones of Israel every promise of Matthew 5:1-48, and introduce the long promised Kingdom in power, and in glory, and in universal blessing according to Isaiah 60:1-22 and Zechariah 14:1-21.

Further, this scripture tells us how this will be done: — The Reapers are the Angels. — There will be angelic ministry in that day, such as heretofore the world has only had glimpses of. Under the old economy the angels were, if we might so say, in the place of rule (Galatians 3:19). In the present day of grace they are seen in the place of lowly service to the children of the Kingdom (Hebrews 1:14). But in the coming day will be seen the angels of His power as the executors of the judgment of God upon evil, and evil men.

Just as the husbandman gathers together the useless tares, and binds them in bundles with the ultimate object of their destruction, so evil men will be found at the close of this age banded together against the Lord and against His people, and as such their confederacies will be dealt with by the Lord. Their solemn end is the furnace of fire, where there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Then will be seen the final triumph of the ways of God, and the crushing failure of all the wiles of the devil. The wickedness of men, the malice of Satan, and the fruits of sin will all be fully exposed, righteously judged, and eternally punished. The triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ over all authority and power will be manifested. The righteousness of God will be vindicated. The redeemed will be brought into all the blessings of the New Covenant of Grace (Ezekiel 36:1-38), and Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

Parable 3

Parable 3 (Matthew 13:31-32) brings out a further development of world principles in the outward aspect of the Kingdom of Heaven. Not only would there be a mingling of wheat and tares — of mere professors with the children of the Kingdom — but here we are given to see that that which began as a small thing in the earth, and was to be heavenly in its character, as it was in its origin, would become a great "tree in the earth" — ever a symbol of world power — under whose branches the "birds of the air" — servants of the wicked one — would find a lodgment. It is what corresponds to the Pergamos period of the history of the Church (Revelation 2:12), and historically would doubtless begin with the Empire of Constantine the Great, A.D. 312. When Christianity ceased to be the persecuted, despised, and down-trodden confession of the few, but, embraced by the Emperor of the Roman world, received world-wide patronage and protection one, among many, of the evil results was that the way to become powerful in the world was to become great in the Church. Immediately "grievous wolves" (Acts 20:29) entered in, not sparing the flock. The professing Church became a great world power. It was no longer thought necessary for the bishops to fulfil the conditions of 1 Timothy 3:1-16. They would much rather sit on "thrones" drawing ample revenues, dispensing the "patronage of the Church" to their own advantage, and, alas! sometimes be found eating and drinking with the drunken (Matthew 24:1-51). This is no exaggerated picture, as every student of Church history will admit. Take either the earlier times or the later. Perhaps it was more marked in the fourth century because it was a new thing. Up till that period, to be an outstanding man in the Church was to be a mark for the shafts of persecution. After Constantine, it became a position to be coveted by the man of the world, for it brought with it money and fame and worldly influence. In short, the Kingdom of Heaven in the history of its administration by the hands of men, became a great world power, affording lodgment for much that was evil (the "birds of the air") instead of maintaining its heavenly character of separation from the world, holiness before men, and lowliness before God.

Parable 4 The next parable lays bare the inward principles which were at work, unseen, but pregnant with power, and that, alas! a power for evil.

It begins in the Thyatiran period when the "Woman Jezebel" (Revelation 2:1-29) is allowed to teach and seduce and, historically, it will have its complete fulfilment in Babylon (Revelation 17:1-18) when that which is merely hypocrisy and false profession will have passed beyond the Laodicean stage and become wholly satanic and abominable — the leaven hid in three measures

of meal till the whole was leavened.

There is a certain definite area supposed in the "three measures" inside of which the "leaven" works. Leaven being everywhere else in Scripture a type of that which is evil, we must so expect to find it here, and only thus can we have an orderly and progressive setting forth of the subject dealt with.

Just as former parables have shown the "children of the wicked one" in the Kingdom, so here we have shown to us that which fills their hearts. They are those "who receive not the love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:12). "They will not endure sound doctrine" but "shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (2 Timothy 4:12). They are men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith (2 Timothy 3:8). Let anyone but look round to-day and he will see how rapidly things in Christendom are hastening to the above consummation.

Think of some only of the great and rapidly increasing cults of evil doctrine in our midst to-day, such as Spiritism, Eddyism, Russellism, and many others. Then consider that these rapidly growing organisations are being recruited from the ranks of those who once made a profession of Christianity but are now apostate therefrom.

Then, in the various so-called "orthodox" denominations, see the indifference of many, and the opposition of some to the very cardinal doctrines of Christian truth. For example, take the Inspiration of Scripture. How loosely men talk and write of the "mistakes" of Moses, the "contradictions" of the Synoptists, or the "errors" in the later Scriptures, "understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Timothy 1:7). They have not hesitated to bring their irreverent and unregenerate minds to pry into the sacred mystery of the Son of God come down in grace; and teachings are received without protest, derogatory alike to His Holy Person, His finished work, and His divine glory.

These are but illustrations of the corrupting form of the leaven at work at the present moment in that which bears the name of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Here, then, in these three parables we have set forth a developing and an increasing growth of evil, both externally and internally, in that which professes to represent the rule of heaven upon the earth. At the beginning, a few tares among the wheat, at which the servants are surprised. Then a great tree instead of a lowly mustard plant. And, again, a leavening process by the evil doctrines of men, instead of the truth as "the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21). And at this stage, these things are accepted as matters of course. There is apparently no one now so much in the mind of the Master as to inquire: "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?" In view of these startling and wholly unexpected (on their part) developments, well might the disciples say, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares in the field."

Matthew 13:36 begins the second section of the chapter. In the house the Lord expounds the parable to His disciples. As we have seen, the just judgment of God will clear the ground for the reign of righteousness to begin, and the wicked will no longer be allowed to remain in the Kingdom, or even on the earth. They will be cast — solemn thought — into a furnace of fire. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

Parable 5 The next two parables are of special interest. The action of the narrative is no longer occupied with the development of events within the Kingdom either for good or for evil. It is no question of what men may either do or teach; but the mind and heart are centred upon the ONE who, in wonderful condescension and marvellous grace, became the Finder of the treasure and the Seeker of the pearl. As we get occupied with Him, we feel at once that we are in a different atmosphere. We no longer stand, as it were, on the plains of Moab, contemplating Israel as a "stiff-necked people" (Numbers 22:1-41), but We are beside the prophet on the "high places." It is no longer what the people are for God, but what God is for His people, and in spite of all Israel had been He could say, He had not "beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (Numbers 23:21). In the very beginning, or ever the earth was, that Blessed One could say, "My delights were with the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:31). In grace, and with satisfaction He views His people as grace will ultimately make them. His earthly people, redeemed Israel upon the earth: His heavenly people, a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The Kingdom in the hands of men had been shown to be mingled with that which is unreal, united to that which is earthly, and permeated with that which is evil. As such, all that was false and unreal was fast hastening on to judgment. It was necessary that the disciples should now see what was real and true, amidst all the confusion. To them it was given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us note here that the character of the figures is now changed. It is no longer, as at the introduction, "good seed" that could reproduce itself. Nor is it a "sowing" where darnel might be mingled with the wheat. Much less is it that which might become contaminated with evil men or evil influences externally as in the "mustard seed," or corrupted by false and satanic doctrines internally as in the "three measures of meal." But here we have a definite precious deposit of intrinsic excellence, and which, though hid in the earth, could not be defiled by the earth. The figures are few and simple, and other Scriptures accurately guide us in the interpretation. The field is the world. The Finder of the treasure and the Purchaser of the field is the Lord Himself. No other interpretation is possible. Who but He could purchase such a field? Who but He had anything to "sell" at all commensurate with the value of the object to be acquired, for in the field there was a treasure for which possession of the field was sought, and which was of infinitely greater value than the field itself. In Exodus 19:1-25, in that wonderful personal interview between Jehovah and His servant Moses, He could say, "If ye will obey my voice . . . ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people that are in the earth." Now we know that Israel did not obey that voice; but where Israel failed, grace triumphed on the ground of redemption; and we have already seen what God could say of His people in the plains of Moab, even when Satan had them, as he thought, at a disadvantage. How much more will this be evident when Psalms 135:1-21 "The Lord hath chosen Jacob for Himself, And Israel for His peculiar treasure.

Blessed be the Lord out of Zion Which dwelleth at Jerusalem, Praise ye the Lord." But before all, or any, of this could be accomplished, He, the gracious Finder of the treasure, had to buy the "field" itself at the cost of all He had.

There is, however, a wider application. There can be no blessing for either the earth, Israel, or the Church, apart from the death of Christ, and just here comes in one of the special points of this parable. The Lord Jesus by His death has purchased all mankind. This truth is of world-wide application, and on this ground His messengers can go forth and proclaim an accomplished work

on the ground of which men are besought to be reconciled to God. The world to-day is still ruled over by the usurper Satan, and men love to have it so. The Lord when on earth spoke of the devil as the "prince of this world," and after the Lord had been rejected and crucified, Scripture calls Satan the "god of this world." In other words, men are willing to accept from Satan both their rule and their religion, but it will not always be so. There is the earthly side as well as the heavenly side of the Kingdom. The earth, already purchased, will in that day be redeemed, and suitably prepared for the dwelling-place of saved Israel, under the New Covenant, and the nations who inhabit the millennial earth, for there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Parable 6 But a further figure is required to set forth the unity and the beauty of those who compose the heavenly side of the Kingdom. This is found in the "One pearl of great price." And remark here that, in the previous parable, the finder of the treasure bought the field that contained it. But here the merchantman seeks to secure the pearl only. There is no question of its surroundings. The pearl is taken out entirely from the place in which it was, in order that it may become wholly the delight of the heart of the finder. The parable without doubt marks the special place which the assembly occupies in the counsels of God and in the mind of Christ.

It is impossible to overlook this, and almost impossible to overestimate it. There are four remarkable ways in which the saints of this dispensation are looked at in the New Testament.

If it is a question of relationship, they are called "children of God" (1 John 3:1).

If it is a question of responsibility for God upon the earth, they are looked at as the "House of God" (1 Timothy 3:15), If it is a question of nearness and unity, they are spoken of as the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).

If it is a question of their affection and of their participation in His glory in the day of display, when all the ways of God in grace with men will be manifested, then the company of redeemed ones are brought before us under the striking figure of the "Bride of Christ" (Revelation 19:7-9).

These are four different aspects of the assembly of God, but all setting forth in a remarkable way the place of nearness, relationship, and affection which the Church occupies. Here it is a question of its unity and beauty, hence the figure of ONE pearl of great price — loved, sought, and purchased. "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" (Ephesians 5:26-27). "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white" (Revelation 19:8). May there be the practical answer in the life and walk of every redeemed one, to that position of wondrous blessing in which grace has placed us, and in which in the day of glory we shall be displayed. We may well adore the grace that sought, the love that suffered, and the power that triumphed over all the forces of sin, death, and Satan: and the day is fast approaching when the full results of His mighty work will be manifested before the universe; and, at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow to the glory of God the Father.

Parable 7

Still another similitude was needed to show the disciples the course of events at the close of that mysterious dispensation of the Kingdom of Heaven in the absence of the King, and this the Lord furnishes under the figure of the draw-net cast into the sea, and gathering of every kind. And in order to grasp the point of this, the closing parable, we need to keep in mind what has gone before. At the beginning we see the Son of Man coming forth as the Sower. The results of the sowing are then given, and the general effects in the hearts of men. Next, the enemy is seen at work introducing the tares among the wheat; and this knowledge becomes a guide to the servants under the new and unexpected conditions. The next two parables give the developments of the foregoing conditions — evil men and evil teachings waxing worse and worse. But following these, Parables 5 and 6 show that which is hidden and real and that which the Lord's heart is set upon; whether the saved remnant of His ancient people under the new covenant, or the Church which is His Body — both are before Him — and every event in His dealings with men and nations is leading up to a complete fulfilment of all the irrevocable counsels of God on their behalf. But there is still the question of the nations of the earth: manifestly the Kingdom of Heaven in its widest sense must include Israel, the Church, and the saved nations of the millennial earth. What events will lead up to, and what will ultimately determine the final separation of the "good" from the "bad"? This the Lord sets before us in His closing parable. And note here that, although there is a close similarity between this parable and that of the "tares," there is by no means a repetition. There the point and object of the teaching is, as already remarked, instruction for the servants for present need, in the light of the future, in what was to them an unexpected condition of things in the absence of the King. Here it is the grand results of the operations of grace, and the final assignment of every one to his own place, either in the Kingdom of Heaven, or — solemn thought — in the furnace of fire. The figures employed are few and simple, but divinely expressive: — A draw-net.

Cast into the sea.

"Every kind" gathered within its sweep. When full, drawn to shore. A sorting process, and A separation. The figure employed is of a net of the largest kind known or used by fishers. Where suitable circumstances permit, it may be as much as half a mile in length. Hence in its immense sweep it "gathers of every kind" — that is, of every species.

When, then, is the net cast, and of what is it a figure? Are we not reminded by it of Mark 1:1 "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God," and also of Matthew 13:37, "He that sowed the good seed is the Son of Man." But while the casting of the net would seem to synchronise with the beginning of the Gospel, yet the net itself is of wider application than the Gospel as we understand it. May it not correspond to all the dealings of God with men from the time the Kingdom began to be preached until the time when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and before Him are gathered all nations. Cast into the "sea" (of the nations) would seem to indicate the worldwide scope of its operations. No longer Israel only, or even professing Christendom, but every nation under Heaven to whom, in a future day, the Gospel of the Kingdom will be announced. Thus, from first to last it may well be said to gather of every kind. It is evident that the "servants" do not draw the net. It is drawn when "full," and it is equally evident that it is not "full" yet, else the gospel day would be over indeed. The ending of this solemn scripture is given more fully in Matthew 25:1-46. It is the sessional judgment of the Son of Man. They "sat down," conveys the thought of orderly and deliberative selection. The "good" gathered into vessels. The

"bad" cast out of the net. It is the final sorting out of those who had heretofore been going on together; alike perhaps in profession, but unlike in reality; and only the Lord Himself had omniscience and authority to decide.

Just as the Jew, according to the Mosaic law, (Leviticus 11:9) separated the contents of his net, the "clean" from the "unclean," so, the Lord says, will it be at the end of this age. And this will be done by angelic ministry (Matthew 13:41). The wicked are cast into the furnace of fire. The righteous are safely preserved for the Kingdom, and they enter into all the blessings that accompany and follow the introduction of the reign of righteousness over the whole earth in the day of Messiah's glory.

What a wonderful unveiling of divine counsels these seven parables present. Fortified with this knowledge of the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven, the believer can calmly survey all the varied phases which the great "harvest field" may present. He rests assured that, however contradictory things may appear, yet in spite of all the wickedness of evil men and all the opposition of Satan, God will assuredly bring to perfection every purpose of His counsels for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How far the disciples "understood all these things" we do not know, but we may rest assured that when the Holy Spirit came down He would bring all things to their remembrance and guide them into all truth.

They already had information, in all its full and varied details, in the Old Testament Scriptures, as to the glories of the Kingdom, and what it would be in the day of its display. That which was "new," as to the Kingdom in the absence of the King, He had now taught them. They were to regard such knowledge as a precious thing to be "treasured," and "brought out" when occasion required. Just as an householder becomes a dispenser of good things to his guests, so were disciples to be in a world that knew not the grace of Christ.

01.07 - Section 07. Mat_14:1-36; Mat_15:1-39.

Section 07. Matthew 14:1-36; Matthew 15:1-39.

Man's King and Man's Character Contrasted with God's King The Holy Spirit in Matthew's Gospel delights to group events in, what we might call, a moral order, instead of a strictly historical order, and the result is that we get striking contrasts between the ways of God and the ways of men which we might otherwise overlook. It is so in the two chapters now before us. But to go back for a moment to the last section, not the least remarkable thing in that remarkable chapter is that everything is viewed as in the absence of the King. But why was He absent? Departure from God and blindness of heart led the nation and its rulers to reject their King come in grace and power, as witnessed by His mighty works. And not only so, but the close of the chapter shows Him as the prophet of God despised and rejected in His own country. They might own His wisdom and His works of power. These they could not gainsay. But unbelief prevented them from sharing the blessings grace was willing to impart. Could unbelief go further than to see in Him only the "Carpenter's Son"? Nicodemus long before, with perhaps fewer opportunities of judging, had seen in Him "a teacher come from God," and owned that God was with Him. Of His own countrymen, it is said, "they were offended (stumbled) at him."

Now, at this point (Matthew 14:1-36) the Spirit turns back to recall events which had taken place previously, that is the circumstances connected with the murder of John, and to set before us THE Two KINGS.

CHRIST, in His compassion, power, and grace.

Herod, in his cruelty, lust, and pride. In Matthew 15:1-39 we get the two hearts. The heart of man with its seven streams of incurable evil, and the heart of Christ yearning to bless, whether it be the poor of the flock in the land or one poor Gentile at the utmost borders of Israel. In Matthew 14:1-36, then, we get in a short historical setting a vivid description of the moral corruption of things in Israel's land. Shortly, the case was this. Herod Antipas was a son of Herod, miscalled "the Great," of Matthew 2:1-23. He was the wicked son of a wicked father. At the death of Herod I. the kingdom was divided by the Romans, and Herod Antipas became "tetrarch" of Galilee, with the courtesy title of "king." He married a daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia, but afterwards made guilty overtures to Herodias, his brother Herod Philip's wife. Nothing loth, the profligate wanton responded, and the two were living in open sin. The righteous reproof of the fearless prophet rankled in the revengeful heart of the wicked woman, and, when the opportunity arose, she was ready to embrace it, in order to satiate her hatred. Herod, in spite of his conscience, became a pliant tool in her guilty hands.

Herodias' daughter danced, and John the Baptist died.

Let a man but start on the downward road, and the devil is never at a loss for some one to put a hand on his back to push him on. So it was with Herod, and in such a setting Israel's ruler is shown to us. An oppressor, an adulterer, a proud boaster, and a murderer; and yet the king. It reveals

how the very foundations of virtue were gone, and utter moral and spiritual corruption ruled in the kingdom of men. What marked Herod's dance, and every similar dance since, was the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and the end of these things is death.

Herod's case is a warning to all of the danger of trifling with the voice of conscience. Led on by the wiles of the devil, the hardening process grows apace, and a man soon finds himself performing actions, which a short time before he would have shrunk from with horror. Hazael, when warned by the prophet Elisha, could say, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" (2 Kings 8:13). Yet the very next day ambition led him to take the first guilty step in his downward career by murdering his master. At the beginning of John's ministry we read that "Herod was the friend of John and kept him safe" (Mark 5:20, R.V.). He believed John to be "a just man and a holy," and this made his own actions all the worse, for they were done in the face of light. But it is one thing to give an outward assent to truth, while continuing in the practice of sin: it is another thing to have truth in the inward parts, changing both life and actions. The latter Herod never knew. He loved his sins. John's stern reproof was his last warning. Henceforth he became "that fox," and it was the Lord Himself who so entitled him (Luke 12:32). In his short history we see man in sin and under the power of it. Man in his folly rejecting the last warning of the prophet of righteousness. Possibly John was the only man with sufficient moral courage to point out to Herod "all the evils which he had done" (Luke 11:19). Then, again, the moral weakness of the man comes out in his "fear of those that sat at meat with him." In short, Herod was what every man is by nature, afraid, before his ungodly companions, to do the right, but not ashamed to do the wrong.

What a remarkable contrast comes out in the man sent from God whose name was John. His ministry was short, his message was short, his life was short; and there is little said about his history, but that little brings out in a wonderful way the lovely character of the Forerunner.

How beautiful is his humility! "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (John 1:23). "The latchet of His shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark 1:7).

How great is his faithfulness! "Think not to say within yourselves we have Abraham for our father" (Matthew 3:8).

How absolute is his separation from the guilty nation and its more guilty leaders! "He came baptizing in the wilderness" (Mark 1:4).

How unflinching is his courage! and how tender his compassion for the poor and needy (Luke 3:11). In every aspect of his character we see reflected some of the many beautiful traits which came out in perfection in his blessed Master. The Lord could say of him that he was "a burning and a shining light"; that "among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:28). But immediately after describing the elevated and outstanding position filled by the great Forerunner, the Lord adds the remarkable words, "He that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."

John was rejected and slain. His Master was about to be treated in the same way, but the result of the Lord's atoning death would be to introduce a new order of things in Christianity, founded upon redemption and the purgation of sins, wherein would be manifested greater grace, fuller privilege, and more intimate nearness to God than ever could be known under the old economy of which John formed the last — if the greatest — prophet.

Everything in Judaism spoke of an unrent veil, and therefore of distance from God. Everything in the Kingdom of God is founded upon accomplished redemption. The VEIL is rent, and we have liberty to draw near. Yea, more, we are privileged to dwell where He dwelleth. Many believers, alas! are ignorant of this, and therefore they neither have settled peace in their hearts, nor yet can their lives present a consistent testimony. By comparing Mark 6:1-56, Luke 9:1-62, and our present Scripture, we find that the mission of the twelve, sent forth in Matthew 10:1-42, expired about this time, and they returned to tell the Lord "all things both what they had done and what they had taught." John's disciples just about the same time come to Jesus also. These brave men for it requires courage to take sides with an apparently defeated man had boldly gone into Herod's dungeon to recover the outraged body of their martyred master, and with hearts full of grief had piously performed the last rites for the one they loved.

Now they come and tell Jesus.

Christ's disciples come to Him with their mission of success.

John's disciples come to him with their mission of sorrow.

There is a precious lesson here for disciples still. Whether it be success in service or sorrow in life, He is the One to confide in, and by so doing we shall find rest unto our souls. May we daily practice it till the changing scenes below end in the unchanging bliss of His presence on high. The Lord's answer was to take them apart with Himself into a desert place near the city of Bethsaida on the shores of the lake. Doubtless the object was to seek opportunity in this seclusion for more intimate counsel and instruction for the disciples. But in any case the privacy was soon invaded by the multitude, who, at least, believed in His power, and were in earnest to secure blessing, for they brought their sick to His presence.

"And Jesus, moved with compassion" — nothing can exceed the beauty of this and what immediately follows. The Lord had just heard of, and doubtless sorrowed over, the death of John. At Nazareth, at the outset of His ministry, He had been met with open violence (Luke 4:1-44). On His recent visit to His own city of Capernaum He had been treated with rude contempt, yet nothing could stay the outflow of heavenly grace. He had compassion on the multitudes and healed their sick. It was the perfect contrast to Herod slaying the prophet. And not only is His grace brought in in contrast to Herod's cruelty, but in the next few verses it is contrasted with the disciples' helplessness in the face of the needs of the multitude. It was not only that the disciples could not meet that need, but they could not even trust the Lord to do so. "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" He said to Philip, "and this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:5-6). Philip and the other disciples had come to an end of themselves, but, alas! not to a beginning of faith in their 'Waster, so their ready advice was to send away the multitudes. But He said, "Give ye them to eat," and they discovered that their whole resources were five loaves and two small fishes. Five barley loaves and two small fishes AND Christ were, however, resources enough for any number, had the disciples but known it.

Many disciples to-day are like what the disciples were then. They are ignorant of the resources of faith at their disposal, for they have never drawn upon them. The Christian life to them is a valley of Baca all the way, without any "wells," and seldom any "rain." Like the widow of Sarepta, they have only a handful of meal and a little oil, not nearly enough for themselves, much less to share it

with others. But the day the widow went out to gather two sticks to prepare her last meal, and then die — that day was the beginning of a new life and a new experience. The word of the Man of God in the gate changed her objective. "Fear not," said he, "make me a little cake first" (1 Kings 16:1-34). Grace would lead her gently at first; and doubtless the prophet's cake grew larger as the woman's faith grew stronger. But from that day she discovered that she had inexhaustible resources, and henceforth the famine was over in her experience. Her own needs abundantly supplied, she became a dispenser of blessing to others; and this is exactly what the Lord expects His children to be to-day. And having the "meal" and the "oil" (Christ our life, and the Holy Spirit the power of it) though living in a world of dearth and drought and death, we can and ought to be channels of blessing to others. "As Thou hast sent me into the world, SO have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). But there is also the dispensational view of this chapter. The miracle of the "five loaves" is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. It is here a foreshadowing of what was spoken in Psalms 132:1-18. What marks the governments of to-day is that the people provide for the King. When Messiah reigns the King will provide for the people, and there will be neither grinding poverty, oppressive taxation, nor discontent. In our chapter we have an Edomite ruling in the land, and he a poor slave of the Romans, as well as a usurper and an oppressor. The true King is in the desert, but there He demonstrates His resources and His grace according to prophecy, "He shall satisfy his poor with bread." The disciples embark. The multitudes depart. The Lord goes up into a mountain to pray.

Prayer expresses two things — dependence and submission. These two things come out everywhere in the life of the Lord as Man below. He was pre-eminently the Man of Prayer and the Pattern of Prayer. On at least fourteen different occasions do we read of the Lord "alone praying."

1. At His baptism, "Jesus also being baptized and praying" (Luke 3:21).
2. At Capernaum, at the beginning of His ministry, "Rising up a great while before day" (Mark 1:35;).
3. On the occasion of choosing the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12).
4. After the miracle of the loaves (Mark 6:46).
5. Before Peter's confession of Him as the Christ (Luke 9:18).
6. On the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:28).
7. When He taught His disciples to pray (Luke 11:1).
8. When He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41-42).
9. The prayer in view of His sufferings (John 12:27).
10. The Lord's prayer (John 17:1-26).
11. His intercessory prayer for Peter (Luke 22:32).
12. The prayer in Gethsemane before His sufferings (given in Matthew, Mark, and Luke).
13. His prayer for His murderers when nailed to the Cross (Luke 23:34).

14. At His death, giving up His Spirit to His Father (Luke 23:46). But in Matthew's Gospel the only recorded occasion of prayer (with the exception of Gethsemane) is in the chapter before us, and it is in keeping with the dispensational character of this Gospel. Rejected as King, the Lord has gone on high as Intercessor, and in the "fourth watch" He will come forth to succour and to save the distressed and storm-tossed remnant of Israel. But there is also the present application. The Lord is on high. He is there executing His present service of grace, as our great High Priest and Advocate. He is praying for us, for while we are in this world we are in a scene of danger. The business of the world seeks to engross us. The pleasures of the world seek to attract us. The associations of the world seek to annex us. The opposition of the world seeks to hinder us. So we need the grace and power which He alone can impart. And He is watching over His people with that very end in view. "He saw them toiling in rowing" (Mark 6:48). But whatever the difficulties, and however contrary the winds may be, we can depend upon His watchful eye, powerful arm, and loving heart. "Light and truth" shall go before us (Psalms 43:1-5). "Goodness and mercy" follow after (Psalms 23:1-6). And the moment is fixed and may be very near when He will come to receive us to Himself, as later He will appear for the deliverance of His earthly people, whose hearts, turned to Him in repentance, will joyfully receive Him with songs of thanksgiving. The apostate nation was soon to cry, "Crucify him, Crucify him." In the coming day the converted remnant will say, "Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him" (Isaiah 25:9). But meantime the question is, "Can you walk on the water?" Peter did. We want to be more occupied with his success than with his failure. Affection for his Master led him out of the boat. Faith in his Master made him superior to nature. "He walked on the water to go to Jesus." The Red Sea and the Jordan were divided for Israel, as later, the same river was divided for the prophets Elijah and Elisha. But nowhere is there such a scene as this. It is a picture of a Christian walking through a world where everything is opposed to him, supported by power from on high. But the great point of the lesson is, that it is only as so supported, and only as depending on that support, that he can so walk. "Hold Thou me up," said the Psalmist, "and I shall be safe" (Psalms 119:117). And this Peter proved in his extremity, when he prayed the prayer that never fails to be answered on the spot "LORD SAVE ME."

If the beginning of Matthew 14:1-36 shows the works of men to be evil, Matthew 15:1-39 shows why they are so. The reason is, the heart is wrong. "Out of the heart proceed." Here we have hearts unveiled: Matthew 15:1-21 describe the heart of man, and it is seen to be incorrigibly evil. From Matthew 15:22-39 we gather something of the grace that was in the heart of the Lord Jesus. We see Him bringing blessing to one outside the circle of promise, healing all oppressed by the devil, and providing in the desert for "so great a multitude." But the Jerusalem Scribes and Pharisees who had followed the Lord into Galilee, seeking to catch something out of His words that they might accuse Him, had no eyes and no heart for grace such as this. They made the common mistake that exterior things will do for God, and forgot that Satan can use even a religious system as a power for evil. The Lord showed them that their hollow formalism had led them into the much more serious evil of hypocrisy, proving from their greatest prophet, Isaiah (Isaiah 29:13), that the tradition of men had led them into a course of action in direct contradiction to the Word of God. The subject is more fully developed in Mark 7:1-37. The gift (Corban) given to enrich the priest, instead of being employed to provide for the needs of relations, was only one of the "many such things they did." And although by doing so, they were disregarding the ties of nature, yet the priests, by their traditions, pronounced them to be free. The moment men's

opinions are brought in as a standard, there is distinct danger. Priestcraft, whether in Judaism, Roman Catholicism, or Protestantism, is ever fain to hark back to tradition to buttress up its own unscriptural positions; and thus its votaries are insensibly led to minimise the authority of the revealed mind of God over the conscience. May God save us all from such an insidious evil. It is an immense thing when the soul is guided by the direct Word of God alone, owning no intermediary whatever between itself and God. The Lord next shows the cause of this condition of things, and takes occasion to charge home the fact of sin by the terrible exposure of the heart of man given in Matthew 15:19-20.

Man's moral centre is the heart. Out of it proceed seven streams of deadly evil, showing the inward moral pollution which the history of fallen man, from Cain downwards, has abundantly proved to be true.

Now, this exposure is the very thing the natural man is averse to. His desire is to cover up everything under a fair show of religion and keep the evil out of sight. Hence the Pharisees were offended, and so is the natural man still. He will not believe that man is lost. Education, culture, environment, morality, surely these things can elevate and ennoble the man. That is the creed of the moralist to-day, just as it was of the Pharisees of old. But God says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing will do for God but a new creation. "Ye must be born again." The Lord, after exposing the human heart, manifests the Divine love in the heart of God for sinners by walking over twenty miles to meet and bless one woman for whom Satan had done his worst. And here was a remarkable case. A "woman of Canaan" accosts the Lord and claims blessing from Him as the "Son of David." Now as Son of David, His relation to the Canaanite could only be judgment, for they were the race Joshua was commanded to root out of the land because of their terrible iniquity. But the incident is doubtless inserted here to show the only ground on which any of us can get blessing, and that is on the ground of free grace alone, for we are, as she was, but "sinners of the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15). And so grace wrought in her heart until she was led to take the only place she could really lay claim to. Then mark the blessed result. She owned she deserved nothing, she would be thankful for anything, and she got everything her heart desired. Such are the ways of grace. The faith of the Gentile may well be placed in contrast to the unbelief of the Jew. This woman owned His authority by calling Him Lord, and she prayed what we might call a companion prayer to that of Peter in Matthew 14:1-36; and, as in Peter's case, the answer was graciously given immediately. And now the Lord, making a circuit round the extreme north of the land, continues His ministry throughout the region of Decapolis, on the east of the Sea of Galilee. This country was formerly inhabited by the half tribe of Manasseh, and at this time abounded with Gentile residents. The mixed population was looked upon with the greatest contempt by the southern Jews of Judea proper, who considered them a degree still lower than even Galileans. Yet even among these were found some of the poor of the flock, and to them the heart of the Lord went out in compassion. And so engrossed were they with His miracles of healing and His wonderful teaching that they abode with Him three days; and, after witnessing all His wonderful works, they might well exclaim, as Mark tells us, "He hath done all things well." Any food they may have brought was now exhausted, and the Lord proposes to His disciples the question of feeding the multitude before sending them away. At once the disciples see the difficulties, without seeing the resources. Did we not know something of our own hearts we should here be surprised. How shortly before had they seen the previous miracle of the multiplied loaves.

Yet here their faith is not one whit greater. Still in patient grace the Lord continues to teach them as to the resources that were in Himself to meet every need for their service. Almost reluctantly, it would seem, they give the information that they have seven loaves for themselves, and a few small fishes. It is enough. With His blessing added, they will be able to supply the hungry multitude with enough and to spare. The feast began with seven loaves, and ended with seven basketfuls. The previous miracle (Matthew 14:1-36) was a proof that Messiah was present in the midst of His people according to the prophecy of Psalms 132:1-18, and the "twelve baskets" was indicative of perfect testimony to that event. The present miracle (Matthew 15:1-39) was a proof of the long-suffering grace of the Lord, that, though rejected by the nation, He still carried on His mission of mercy in their midst. It also looks on to millennium times, and the "seven baskets" speak of divine completeness and ample provision for every need.

There is much practical instruction in this section of our Gospel. In it we are taught, both by precept and example, man's utter ruin, morally and spiritually. Man's actions, prompted by his sinful fallen nature, are only evil continually. That which is of the flesh is flesh, though we are slow to learn it. But when the lesson is truly learned, we say with the apostle, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth NO good thing." Now the soul is prepared to take sides with God against the flesh, and that is the first step in Christian liberty. But not only is the evil heart of man exposed. The grace of Christ shines forth in greater beauty, if that be possible, against the dark background of a graceless world. He walks through it in moral dignity and holy separation. He is seen as the Heavenly Stranger upon the earth, feeding the hungry, succouring the needy, compassionating the despised ones, healing the sick, and bringing blessing to those who were afar off. This section begins with man's utter ruin and ends with God's perfect grace.

01.08 - Section 08. Mat_16:1-28; Mat_17:1-27.

Section 08. Matthew 16:1-28; Matthew 17:1-27. A Prophecy of the Church with a Glimpse of Kingdom Glory

"When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." But even this, great and blessed though it is, is only preparatory to the supreme revelation that God has made of Himself, and to the place of blessing into which believers of the present time are introduced. This is set before the Ephesian saints as the mystery of His will now made known through the apostle, that in the dispensation (or administration) of the fulness of time He might gather together all things in one, in Christ. And then Paul prays that the saints may be brought into the knowledge of the position in which grace has placed them. His desire for them is that they might know: — The hope of His calling. The riches of His grace, and The greatness of His power.

God has put all things under His feet, and given Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. To the Apostle Paul it was given "to complete the Word of God," and until the revelation of the mystery of the Church, the body of Christ, His counsels could not be fully known. A glimpse of this wonderful subject comes before us in the section of our Gospel which we now reach. In it we have: —

- 1 The revelation of the Person of the Christ.
- 2 The confession of His Divinity by Peter.
- 3 The promise of the new thing — the Church — which He was about to build.
- 4 A glimpse of His glory as the One who would be the Administrator for God — Head over all things.
- 5 The Foundation on which everything would rest in righteousness.

We find here (Matthew 16:1) that Pharisees and Sadducees for the first time join their forces against the Lord. Bitterly opposed to each other both in their politics and their faith, they were united in their opposition to the Lord, and come to Him here only to have their ignorance and wickedness exposed. The solemn thing here is, that there is no longer either teaching or exhortation for them. They seek a sign and get a warning. Able to discern the face of the sky, they were unable, because unwilling, to discern the presence of the Lord in their midst, and if He was rejected, disaster (foul weather) must assuredly follow. The sign of the prophet Jonah could only add to their condemnation. He was, in type, a man out of death, preaching to the Gentiles, but before what that typified could take place, the nation of Israel must be set aside till the fulness of the Gentiles should be come. "And he left them and departed," as very soon He would leave the guilty nation, and that by the way of the Cross then, risen out of death, send the glad news of salvation and blessing far hence to the Gentiles. But even the disciples had much to learn. They

could not easily free themselves from the evil doctrines of the Pharisees, nor yet from the opinions of men as to the person of the Master. This point the Lord is about to make clear to them, and in Matthew 16:1-28 there comes before us, in the first place: — The revelation of the Person of the Christ.

Leaving the Sea of Galilee, the Lord journeyed with His disciples to the coasts of Caesarea Philippi. There, in that place of Gentile influence and display — for there Herod the Great had built a royal city in honour of the Emperor — He proposed to them the two great questions which laid bare the hearts of the men of that generation, and the heart of every man and woman since: —

1. "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?"

This, the first of these two questions, brought out two things. And taking the latter and more important first, He asserts that He is the Son of Man.

He was that sublime Person whom Daniel the prophet had portrayed on his mystic page, as coming to the Ancient of days and receiving "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).

He had been rejected as Messiah. He would now take up His title of "Son of Man" and bring in blessing for all the earth.

Every title given to the Lord is of the deepest significance, whether in connection with His official, essential, or acquired glories, and they are ever used in a discriminating way. There are at least 350 such titles, and more might be found by the diligent student. In Matthew 16:1-28 we have (1) the Lord rejected as Messiah, (2) confessed by Peter as Son of Me Living God, and

(3) soon to return in glory as Son of Man. Under this last title, as we have seen, He will dispense blessing world wide. Meantime He demands of His disciples what "men say" of Him, in order to demonstrate that the wisdom of men is but folly with God.

All alike are forced to own that He is some Great One, and their opinions range from the prophet of fire to the prophet of sorrow, but -none are able to see in Him the Sent One of God. This faith alone can discern; and when He demands an answer from His disciples to His second question: —

2. "Whom say ye that I am?"

Peter, taught of God, can answer, unhesitatingly, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

It is faith's unchanging answer to the question of the ages made good in the experience of every true believer. This confession of Peter's is twofold. By "The Christ," (Heb.) Messiah, (Eng.) the Anointed One, Peter is led to declare all the official glories which centred in Him as Man upon the earth. He was "The Woman's Seed," the Root and Offspring of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Shepherd of Israel, and the Blessor of every Nation. But in addition to what the Lord was as the Sent One of God, there was also revealed to Peter something of the personal and essential glories of the Eternal Son. He was the Son of the Living God. Peter, taught of God, is led to declare something of that divine mystery as to what the Lord was in His Person, Nature, and Being in relationship to God the Father. This is more fully developed in John 1:1-51, Php 2:1-30,

Colossians 1:1-29, Hebrews 1:1-14 : —

"In His Existence — Eternal."

"In His Nature — Divine."

"In His Person — Distinct."

He was the Word in all eternity — the Eternal Son of God. This revelation to, and confession by, Peter gives occasion for the Lord to reveal now, for the first time in Scripture, the secret of the ages — His Assembly. He was about to begin a work of which nothing had ever been revealed to saint or prophet in Old Testament times (Ephesians 3:4-5; Colossians 1:26) Under the new economy believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, would be builded together for a holy temple in the Lord. They would be "The Body," "The Bride," "The City." They would be holy and royal priests to God now, and co-heirs in the regal glory of the coming day. This building would be His work alone (Acts 2:47), and would be founded on what He was as Son of the living God, according to the confession made by the apostle. No wonder, then, that the "gates of hell" — all the adverse powers of the unseen world — would not prevail against it. To destroy her, Satan has used his utmost endeavour; the greatest of earthly powers have exhausted all their resources; but the true Church of God continues to triumph over every foe, and continues to point dying men to her risen, living, and glorified Lord, her Head on high, with whom she is united by the Holy Spirit. The Father calls, the Spirit unites, the Lord builds; and not man, angel, or demon can hinder that constructive work of the Son of the living God the formation of His Church, which is, while in the world, the "pillar and ground of the truth."

Following on Peter's confession, we get Peter's commission. To this warm-hearted disciple was given the "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." That is to say, in figurative language, that into that new economy about to begin on earth, Peter would have the honour of introducing both Jew and Gentile, as we find later in the history of the Acts he did (see Acts 2:1-47 and Acts 10:1-48). And further, we learn from Matthew 18:1-35, that this same power of "binding and loosing" was afterwards conferred upon the whole company of the disciples. But we must keep in mind that it was the "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" that were given to Peter; not the keys of the Church (if there be such), in spite of all that either Anglican or Romanist may say to the contrary. In the Book of Acts, Peter preached Jesus as "Lord" and "Christ," both titles distinctly connected with the Kingdom of Heaven, and by these names of authority he commanded the Jews to own His rights, bow to His claims, and be baptized in His Name (Acts 2:1-47). Similarly, in the centurion's house, after Peter had learned the great lesson that all earthly distinctions of clean and unclean had been abolished, and when he had seen the Holy Spirit poured out upon the Gentiles, he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord (Acts 10:48).

Peter's ministry never goes beyond this. To another servant was committed a further revelation as to the mystery of the Church, and Paul, immediately after his conversion, began to preach Jesus as "The Son of God" (Acts 9:20). This is the first time we get this title in Acts (Acts 8:37, it should be noted, is, according to the best authorities, not in the original text).

But, returning to our chapter, we here find (Matthew 16:21) a striking dispensational change. The disciples are commanded no longer to testify of Him as the Messiah. As such He had been rejected. For Him there was to be at this time no national recognition of His just rights and divine

authority. Instead of a Crown, the nation was about to give Him a Cross. Instead of a palace, a grave. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day (Matthew 16:21). Only on the ground of death and resurrection could there be either earthly blessing for the Jew, or heavenly blessing for the Christian; and, had Peter known this, he would never have taken upon him to "rebuke" the Lord as he did. Israel will be associated with Him in the day of earthly glory. The Church, on the other hand, will be associated with Him in heavenly glory, but meantime she shares with Him in His earthly rejection.

We have this lesson to learn in a practical way, and so the injunction to every disciple to take up his cross and follow Jesus. The man with a cross on his back being led to the place of execution was finished with the earth for ever. So the figure is here used of the Christian's relationships to things of the world. The believer is dead to sin (Romans 6:11), dead to the law (Romans 7:4), and dead to the flesh (Romans 8:9); but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:11), and, in the power of resurrection life, he stands fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free. He shares with Christ now, in His rejection, as he will share with Him, by and by, in His glory. The world, under Gentile rule, crucified the Son of God, and is fast going on to judgment. The Kingdom of Heaven, in the hands of men, is fast hastening to that terrible climax when it will be seen to be a "cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2, compare Matthew 13:32). But before that moment arrives, when "the whole will be leavened," the Lord Himself shall descend (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18), and His waiting Church will be called up to meet Him in the air. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus. Afterwards, as the Son of Man, He will come in the glory of His Father, with His holy angels, and then shall He reward every man according to his works. A glimpse of this Kingdom glory the Lord was now about to give to the three disciples specially chosen to be witnesses of it.

It is a feature of the dealings of God with His people, that He often delivers them from present things whether it be the sufferings, the trials, or the glories of earth — by bringing in the light of the future. So with Stephen amidst his murderers: so with Paul, who counted present sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory that should follow. On the other hand, Moses was enabled to forsake the glory of Egypt and endure as seeing Him that is invisible, and when the disciples were becoming occupied with the magnificence of their earthly temple, the Lord dispelled their illusion by setting before them the startling truth that the time was near when not one stone would be left upon another. The disciples here, had had their first lesson in Cross-bearing. The Lord was now (Matthew 17:1-27) about to give them a glimpse of the time when the Crown-wearing would begin. The Father had revealed the glory of the Son to their minds. He was now about to reveal it to their eyes. Later on (2 Peter 1:17) Peter would set the glory before the eyes of suffering saints as salvation ready to be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ," reminding them also, that he himself had already been an eyewitness of that glory when with Him in the holy mount. And with the Lord were seen Moses and Elias, talking with Him (as Luke tells us) of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. These two blessed men, already in their glorified bodies are talking with the Lord Jesus upon that very subject — His death — on which their present blessing was founded. And so when at home in the glory, the very delights of Heaven will only cast our minds backwards with ever-increasing awe and wonder to THE CROSS on which the Lord of Glory died. There was laid in righteousness the foundation upon which all the grace and glory of

God will be displayed, whether in righteously saving sinners of the Gentiles, or righteously gathering out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them that do, iniquity, and casting them into a furnace of fire.

These two honoured servants were also doubtless representative of those, who, in the coming day will "shine forth as the sun" (Matthew 13:43). Moses, a type of those dead and raised again at the first resurrection; Elias, of those translated without tasting death, which will be the happy experience of those "who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). And, in addition, there were present in this display of Kingdom glory, the three chosen disciples, typical surely of the nations who walk in the light of the city (Revelation 21:24). The men of the earth will be blessed upon the earth, under the reign of righteousness of the Son of Man.

Well might Peter say, "It is good for us to be here," and well had he said no more. Yet Peter's mistakes only bring fuller revelations, and the Father's voice is heard in testimony to the Son. The mental attitude of the devout Jew was summed up in the words, "we are Moses' disciples"; and nothing but the voice of divine authority could convince the disciples that a "greater than Moses was here." The glory cloud overshadows the mount. Moses and Elias depart, and the Son of Man descends from the mount — to suffer. He might have ascended to reign, but how then could the Scriptures have been fulfilled?

It is interesting to notice that at the four lowest points, if we may so say, to which the Lord went in grace, we get Heaven's appreciation visibly expressed. Thus, at His humble birth, the angel host came down with the message of peace and goodwill. When He took a place beside the repentant remnant and went down into the waters of Jordan, Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. At the close, when He bowed His head in death, and it seemed as if the enemy had triumphed after all, then we read of rending rocks, and quaking earth, and opening graves. And so here, though finally rejected and disowned as King of the Jews, yet Heaven owns Him, and the Voice of the Father proclaims Him as, "My Beloved Son," adding the expressive words, "Hear Him."

Peter, in haste to honour the heavenly visitors, would put all on the same level, but he had to learn what Christendom has not learned yet, that the day of both Lawgiver and Reformer had gone by. What could law do for lost sinners? Only condemn them. What men need is regeneration, not reformation — "Ye must be born again." And in the "Beloved Son," there would be a revelation of God far and beyond any yet given through Old Testament servants, however great these may have been. In Him, God would be known as Father, and to know the Son would be to know the Father also.

Coming down from the mountain the Lord warns His disciples to "tell no man." Further testimony to His Messiahship could only add further condemnation to those who deliberately rejected Him. The shadow of the Cross was fast darkening across His pathway. A few short months, and all that was written of Him would be fulfilled. But the vision would be a stimulus to the disciples' faith in view of the fact that they would soon be compelled to be the helpless witnesses of His Crucifixion; and the conviction was being gradually forced upon their unwilling minds that there would be no throne for Him in Jerusalem at this time at least. Their great object now was that He should escape that Cross of which He had so recently spoken. Hence their unwillingness to accompany Him on the last journey to the city (see John 11:1-57). The hope of the earthly glory was dying out of their

hearts. The dread that He might be taken and slain oppressed them. Faith in the word He had spoken that He would rise again, had, as yet, no place in their hearts. But deep and true affection for their beloved Master comes out in the few simple words in verse 23 — "They were exceeding sorry."

Now, as they tried to reconcile Old Testament prophecy with this new teaching as to His death, they ask a question which gives occasion for the Lord to open up Scripture both for them and for us: —

"Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come?" If the Son of Man is to be slain, where is the mission of Elias, who is to come as the restorer, before the great and terrible day? And the Lord shows them that in the spirit and power of Elias, John the Baptist had come, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of a rejected and suffering Forerunner, introducing a rejected and suffering Messiah. Malachi's prophecies will yet be fulfilled by the prophet of fire, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come; and more signal success will attend his mission in the days of Antichrist than ever attended it in the days of Ahab, great though that was.

But, best of all, immediately following it the conquering and glorified Lord Himself will appear — no longer now as the Star of Bethlehem, but as the Sun of Righteousness "with healing in his wings." What promise of fulness of blessing is contained in that one word — healing. It is just what this poor earth stands most in need of, after centuries of sin and strife, ruin, and want, and war. But if disciples on the mountain top were learning the secrets of Heaven as to the glory of the future, disciples in the plains below were face to face with the power of the devil. If those in the mount saw the King in His beauty and had visions of God, those below saw but the results of Satan's handiwork in the case of the lunatic son, sore vexed.

Now, so far. the believer of to-day is in both these positions. On the mountain top the Kingdom glory is present to faith, but as to experience, we meet with the power of Satan in evidence in the world every day. He has been defeated, but he is not yet expelled from the scene of his usurpation. And we do well to mark that the cause of the disciples' failure to cast out the demon was their want of faith. This, on the other hand, brings out the deeply important principle that the man of faith is superior to all the power of evil. If it be the world in its ways, or its influence, or its oppression — "this is the victory that overcometh the world — our faith" (1 John 5:4) If it be the direct assaults of Satan, he can be resisted, if we be "steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9). Here the disciples at the foot of the mountain were out of touch with the Lord above, and there was failure on their part, as there must ever be for us all, under like conditions. Neither is it any guarantee that because a man overcomes at one time, he may not fail before the same difficulty on another occasion. These same disciples had doubtless met cases just the same before (see Chap. 10). Why, then, had they failed here? Because, there they went in the power of the Master, here they went in their own power. "Why could not we cast him out?" they ask. Later on they would learn the great lesson of John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing." The two grand principles, against which all the power of Satan is harmless, are prayer and fasting; for prayer brings God in, and fasting puts flesh out, and where there is self-emptiness, and divine fulness, there will ever be overcoming power. The closing incident in Matthew 17:1-27 really comes within the scope of the next section, but we notice it here in order to keep within the present arrangement of chapters. It is also a beautiful introduction to that which characterises the next portion of our Gospel. For while

the believer is placed by grace in the highest possible position as a child of God, even while here, yet the same grace enables him to walk through this world seeking no place in it, and accepting no place from it, other than the place given to the Lord Himself — that of being both despised and rejected. And just in proportion as he is true to the Lord, so will he find that the world will treat him as it treated his Master. Here we find that this truth is developed as the outcome of Peter's hasty assumption that the Lord, as a good Jew (for Peter's appreciation of the Lord here rises no higher), would necessarily pay the temple tribute. But the Lord takes occasion to teach Peter three lessons.

First, that when the kings of the earth levy tribute, they take it from strangers: their own children are free.

Second, that He, though He was the Son of God and Lord of the temple, yet claimed no right and demanded no place, but maintained His position of lowly grace, and was willing to be treated, even as the kings of the earth treat "strangers," as indeed He was — the Heavenly Stranger upon the earth. And

Third, He would associate with Himself, His followers, providing for them at the same time and meeting every need of their pathway.

Here, as in other places, our Gospel testifies to the eternal power and Godhead of the Lord Jesus. The following list might be greatly extended.

- 1 His power over Satan (Matthew 4:4).
- 2 His power over disease (Matthew 4:23).
- 3 His power over demons (Matthew 4:24).
- 4 His power over the elements (Matthew 8:26).
- 5 His power to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6).
- 6 His power over death (Matthew 9:24).
- 7 His power to increase the provision (Matthew 14:1-36, Matthew 15:1-39).
- 8 His power over creation (Matthew 17:27).
- 9 His power to foretell the future (Matthew 24:25).
- 10 All Power in Heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18).

Now all this is very blessed, for it shows that all the power of God is for the believer now, as to the difficulties of his pathway, and it is a matter of individual experience in a scene where everything is against him. But when the Kingdom comes in manifested glory, then will be seen the full display of all that of which we have had but glimpses.

If it be a question of Satan, the accuser of the brethren, he will be bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20:2).

If it be a question of evil men, they will be gathered out of His Kingdom (Matthew 13:41).

If it be a question of disease, "the inhabitant shall not say 'I am sick'." (Isaiah 33:24).

Then Creation itself will undergo a remarkable change: the very nature of the wild beast will be transformed, until the wolf and the lamb shall feed together (Isaiah 65:25).

Under present conditions, the peoples of the earth are taxed to maintain their kings but in that day the order will be reversed. The King will maintain His people, according to the prophecy of Psalms 132:15.

Thus, then, the believer walks through this world in the conscious knowledge that he belongs to the Kingdom of Heaven: that when the Son of Man comes again in power and great glory to establish His rights over the whole earth, he will come with Him, and reign with Him. Surely in the light of these heavenly truths, we may well walk through this world as those, who, though in it, are not of it, for we have been saved out of it and are here only to witness for our absent Lord in this the day of His rejection.

01.09 - Section 09. Matthew 18-23

Section 09. Matthew 18:1-35; Matthew 19:1-30; Matthew 20:1-34; Matthew 21:1-46; Matthew 22:1-46; Matthew 23:1-39. The Characteristics of those who enter the Kingdom, the Responsibility of those connected with it, and God's way of bringing Men into it: The King presented, and the Leaders of Israel morally judged We have now reached, in the history of our Gospel, the last winter of our Lord's ministry here below. By comparing the other Gospels, we find that much patient service and gracious teaching were crowded into these few closing days. At least two visits to Jerusalem were made between this time and the day when the last journey began. From Galilee He went up privately (John 7:1-53) for the Feast of Tabernacles, which took place in the seventh month of the Jewish sacred year — Tisri, corresponding to our September October and the narrative in John's Gospel, John 7:1-53, John 8:1-59, John 9:1-41, details the events which then took place. The ever-increasing enmity of the Jews led Him to retire from the city at this time, but from John 10:22, we learn that He paid another visit to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Dedication, which was held in the month of Chisleu, or about the beginning of December. When the Jews again sought to take Him, He went away beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized, and there He abode (John 11:46). This period would seem to correspond with that of Matthew 19:1, and here, "in the wilderness of Judea" (Matthew 3:1), the Lord spent the few remaining months of His earthly sojourn.

Let us follow Him with reverent footsteps and share in the precious ministry of the Kingdom vouchsafed to all who drew near.

If Matthew 17:1-27 gives us a glimpse of Kingdom Glory, Matthew 18:1-35 reveals to us something of the moral atmosphere that should exist in that Kingdom into which men are born from above. The Lord shows that meekness, grace, and forbearance should characterise the disciple, even as these, and every other grace, shone forth in perfect display in the Master. In our chapter we have this teaching developed, and it is further enforced by the parable of the two debtors, and the discipline measured out to him who failed in grace in his dealings with his fellow-servant. The broad outlines of Matthew 18:1-35 are: —

- 1 The Way into the Kingdom (Matthew 18:3).
- 2 Unsparing Self Judgment as to Walk and Ways (Matthew 18:8).
- 3 The Spirit of Grace to be manifested by every child of the Kingdom (Matthew 18:15).
- 4 The Centre of Gathering (Matthew 18:18).
- 5 The Great Lesson of Forgiveness enforced (Matthew 18:22).
- 6 And Illustrated (Matthew 18:23). The Lord's teaching is ever both formative and corrective, and both are needed by the believer.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16). Of this, surely, apostles stood in need; and in these closing counsels the Lord was fitting them for the position they would have to fill when He was no longer with them in the flesh. Then, with opened understandings, and the indwelling Spirit to bring all things to their remembrance, they would be able to bring forth from their treasures things both new and old. In the present case (Matthew 18:1) the disciples had apparently been unable to settle among themselves the ever-recurring question as to what qualification entitled a man to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Their minds were ever hankering after earthly greatness, as men in the flesh, and so far, they seemed to have grasped divine things in but a very feeble way. In correcting their mistaken ideas, the Lord begins at the very foundation, and shows that so far from ambition and self-seeking giving them a high place in the Kingdom, these things would prevent them altogether from even entering into it. The very first essential would be to lay aside all these and be converted. Not, of course, that the disciples were not converted, but it is the broad principle of entrance with which the Lord is dealing. To manifest the new nature, men must have the new life, and this truth needs to be enforced to-day, as much as ever it did, if not more so. There never was a time when the foundation truths of the Gospel were more insidiously attacked than at the present moment. Men point to the life of the Lord Jesus as our example, while denying the necessity of His death as an atonement for sin. Such teaching is deadly error. That perfect holy life, apart from that vicarious death, could only show the sinner the extent of his failure, and add to his condemnation. Moreover, far from being able to imitate it, he is unable even to take the very first step, for he has no desire to do so. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. Every blessing for man must begin with the death of Christ; for, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. The Lord might have stepped back into the glory from any point of His earthly pathway, but if so He would have been in that glory alone as far as the sons of earth were concerned. But "the Son of Man must be lifted up." There must be a work done for us, and we "must be born again." There must also be a work done in us, and all is brought about by the sovereign grace of God alone.

This, then, is Conversion, and everything in Christianity begins here. Let us mark it well. The character of one thus born again, the Lord illustrates by the little child. The child is simple, loving, forgiving, truthful, trustful, and humble. All this should come out in the character of the one who is turned from Satan to God; from sin to holiness. David's mighty men were great in the earthly kingdom according to their great deeds in war and in the overthrow of their foes. But in the Kingdom of Heaven the very opposite of this subsists. The truly great in this wonderful new dispensation are marked by the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and faith. And as these very characteristics would naturally lead the one who manifested them to be oppressed by the world, the Lord immediately warns as to what would be the fate of those who so "offended" them. And so it will be, though the world little realises it. If it could be said of His ancient people that He "kept him as the apple of his eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10), shall His care be less over us?

Next the subject of self-judgment is dealt with in the most solemn way possible. It is a question of responsibility in the Kingdom to manifest the character of the King. Nothing short of "Be ye holy for I am holy," is to be the believer's standard, and in order that nothing of flesh may come out in our ways, the very beginnings of sins in our members are to be checked.

Doubtless the Kingdom is here viewed in its broadest aspect, and men are looked at on the ground of their outward profession. If a man is walking in the ways of his heart and in the lust of his eyes, there is no proof at all that he is converted, and though in the Kingdom by profession, there is no assurance that he may not end in hell-fire. The place occupied by children, in the economy of grace, the Lord next illustrates, using the child He had called to Him in verse 1 as an object lesson.

Even disciples might think lightly of children, and despise them; and in the kingdoms of earth they have little weight. But the Lord lifts the veil for a moment and gives us a glimpse into the unseen. "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven." They are not innocent, neither are they hardened in sin. But they are lost, because come of a fallen race; yet the Son of Man has come to save them, and it is not the Father's will that one of them should perish. The joy of the shepherd expresses the delight of the Great Shepherd, and His joy in saving the lost. Lost because Adam sinned. Saved because Jesus died. In Matthew 18:15-20 we next get the most important guidance as to the course of action to be taken when sin is manifested in another. The early part of the chapter instructs as to personal holiness Here the question is, "If thy brother trespass [against thee]." The last two words are of doubtful authority here, while their place and importance in Matthew 18:21 will be seen later. Here it is the broad aspect of a brother "sinning." What then? Love, not law, is to be set in motion, the object being the recovery of the erring one, that the name of Christ may not be dishonoured in the world.

But, oh, what grace is needed here. To go to such a one in the spirit of self-righteousness and superiority, will only tend to harden him in his sin. The "meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1) are required by the under shepherds in a very special way when they have work like this to do. And they have need also of the apostle's exhortation, to consider themselves, lest they also be tempted (Galatians 6:1). But progress in the path of departure is not easily checked. It is possible that the individual personal dealing of the one who alone knew of the sin may be disregarded. If so, it becomes necessary to take "one or two more with thee, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." With the failure of these, if they fail, the privacy of the matter ends. Sin cannot be ignored. The holiness of God's house demands that it should be dealt with. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." Here the importance of the witnesses come in. They are able to give a faithful report of every word, said both to him, and by him, and by their testimony every word is established. If he neglect to hear the Church, the Church, as the custodian of the rights of God on earth, will have to deal in righteous discipline with the unrepentant one, and no longer accord him the place his sin has unfitted him to fill. "Let him be unto them as an heathen man and a publican." And this action of the assembly will be ratified in Heaven, either in "binding" the sin upon the guilty one, or in "loosing" him from it, when there is evidence of true repentance and restoration of soul to God.

Now, in all this, the Lord is speaking anticipatively. In Matthew 16:1-28 He had spoken of "My Church," but there the expression comprises every believer from Pentecost to the Coming. Here, for the first time in scripture, we get a local assembly mentioned, and connected with it are the foundation principles upon which such a gathering rests.

1 Its CENTRE of gathering is the Lord Himself. Believers are gathered "unto His name."

2 LOVE is the ruling principle in the intercourse of its members, one with another; and

3 HOLINESS characterises its testimony in the world, to ensure which, the Lord promises His Presence, His Authority, and His Approval of what is done in His Name.

Mark the grace that condescends to be "in the midst" of the "two or three," so gathered. Encouragement in prayer is in the same connection, for be it remarked that all Answered prayer is Conditioned prayer. Mark 11:24; John 14:13, John 15:7, John 16:23-24; 1 John 3:22, further develop this deeply-important subject.

Peter's question in Matthew 18:21 gives occasion for the Lord to bring out in the most beautiful way the absolute superiority of grace over every form of evil. You cannot offend a truly gracious man, for he refuses to take offence. You cannot take down "a truly humble man, for he is already down. All that may be done against such a one, only the more brings out the grace that is in him, and the more others seek to do him evil, the more he desires their good. And this not "seven times" only, but without end. Jewish Rabbins had said that forgiveness was to be extended three times to the repentant brother. Peter is willing to extend it seven times, but the Lord says in effect, "How great is the restoring grace of God, and how often has it been extended to you? If you are in the sense of that grace, manifest it to others without any limits. If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4). But there is the other side. If grace be not manifested, God will deal in government with the one who so fails, and in the end, it may be shown by his final and eternal condemnation, that he was never in the Kingdom at all, except on the mere outward ground of profession only. This the parable of the Unmerciful Servant teaches us.

It will be noticed that in this section (Matthew 18:1-35, Matthew 19:1-30, Matthew 20:1-34, Matthew 21:1-46, Matthew 22:1-46, Matthew 23:1-39) there are four different kinds of parables. Five parables in all.

1 The Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:1-35) teaches us Responsibility in the Kingdom.

2 The Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-34) teaches us that God is Sovereign, and maintains His rights as being such.

3 The Two Sons, and the Wicked Husbandmen (Matthew 21:1-46) declare the setting aside of Israel; and 4 The Marriage of the King's Son (Matthew 22:1-46) shows God's way of bringing men into the Kingdom. Our chapter deals with the first of these subjects. But it may be well to notice at the outset, before looking at this great object lesson of Forgiveness, that there are three aspects of Forgiveness in Scripture: —

1) Forgiveness for Sinners, or Eternal forgiveness, is received, and should be enjoyed by every believer. But many do not enter into it. Some hope for it. Some think that they were once forgiven, but may lose it again. Others suppose they are partly forgiven. God says, "I write unto you children, because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

GRACE provides it. The BLOOD procures it. The SPIRIT proclaims it. FAITH appropriates it. Because God has spoken, I am sure.

Three things follow: —

1 It produces Happiness. "Blessed (happy) is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalms 32:1).

2 It produces LOVE. "Much forgiven, the same loveth much" (Luke 7:47).

3 It produces holy fear. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:4).

2) Forgiveness for BELIEVERS, or restorative Forgiveness. When we were converted, we were received into the family of God and became children. Confession of our many failures restores to us the joy of forgiveness, and we remain happy children. Instructions to railwaymen are that "when a train breaks down, report to headquarters." So must we. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

3) Governmental Forgiveness is what the parable in this chapter deals with, and closely connected with it is the supreme importance and necessity of forgiveness by believers of each other. Any other attitude is contrary to the whole spirit of Christianity, and there is no evidence that the man who cherishes an unforgiving spirit is a Christian at all. Having been forgiven our "great debt," we ought to forgive each other without limit. To do otherwise is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. But there is also the dispensational aspect of this parable.

"The King" is God. The "Great Debtor," Israel. "The Debt," all the privileges and blessings they had received from God ever since they became a nation. For the "taking account" compare Matthew 3:10. The axe was then at the root of the tree. The "patience" following first on His three years' ministry among them, and again on His prayer for them on the Cross — "Father, forgive them" — was extended down to Acts 7:1-60. The "hundred pence" debtor may represent the Gentiles. The attitude of the Jew towards the

Gentiles and towards God is shown in many passages in the Acts. Compare Acts 7:51, Acts 13:45, Acts 14:2, Acts 17:5, Acts 21:27, Acts 22:21, Acts 28:28, and it is finally summed up in 1 Thessalonians 2:15 : —

1 They killed the Lord Jesus.

2 And their own prophets.

3 They persecuted the Apostles 4 They please not God.

5 They were contrary to all men.

6 Forbade to preach to the Gentiles, and thus they filled up their sins so that wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. In the words of the parable, they have been "sold" — cast into the prison of the nations, as they are to this day, and will be until the time spoken of in Isaiah 40:1-31, when the punishment of the guilty nation will be completed, her warfare accomplished, and her iniquity pardoned.

There is here indeed a solemn warning to every servant, in every dispensation to walk in love, humility, and lowliness; forgiving from the heart every one his brother their trespasses.

Two words give the secret of the unmerciful servant's failure. He "went out" from the presence of his Master. In a spiritual sense this will always mean failure. To abide in the light is to abide in communion with the Father and the Son. May this ever be our happy experience, and so shall our "joy be full." Matthew 19:1-30 may be divided into four parts: —

1 Marriage.

2 The Little Children.

3 Creature Goodness; and

4 Discipleship.

Here we come, in the first place, to the Lord's teaching as to the relationships of nature which had been established by God Himself, and which, being of divine origin, and being ordained "from the beginning" must necessarily continue to exist in the Kingdom. The Pharisee's question — "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause" — was put with no desire on their part to accept from Him an authoritative ruling on the subject, but only to entrap Him into taking sides in the great "divorce controversy" then raging. A school of Jewish Rabbins were busy endeavouring to undermine the law of God, given through Moses, and provide scope for the carnal passions of men to work unchecked. The door had been opened wide enough to allow of "many causes" instead of the one, but all so trifling that the Lord refuses even to take notice of them. So may we. The great point is established that marriage, as originally instituted by God Himself in Eden, subsists in the kingdom on earth; and if the man and the woman act according to the spirit of that kingdom, there will neither be the occasion nor the need for separation between them.

It is God's order for man in nature, and it is an evidence of the greatest human love. But it is more. It is a type of the most wonderful thing in the universe, and that is — Christ and the Church. The Pharisees endeavour to quote Moses against the Lord, but He at once shows them that Moses, instead of condemning Him, condemned them. Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered — not commanded — her to be put away. Here, as on another occasion, Moses, instead of becoming their vindicator, becomes their accuser and judge. "There is one," the Lord says, "that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust" (John 5:45). It is ever a dangerous thing for a sinner to take his stand upon the law, which can only expose and condemn him with no power to pardon and forgive.

Now, the disciples' comment on this teaching brings out another phase of wrong-thinking. The Pharisees would have marriage with all the licence that their loose morals craved for. The disciples, if marriage was to be without these liberties, would argue that, "it is not good to marry." But this was to contradict the very words of God. At the beginning He had said, "It is not good that man should be alone," and this ruling still exists. Christianity may produce in some that which is beyond nature, and for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake a man may have a special gift so to abide.

Nothing is more illustrative of the tender grace of the Lord than His attitude towards the little ones, and nothing can be more encouraging for all who have to do with such, be it either parent or teacher. He had already taught (Matthew 18:1-35) that what should mark the one who was in the Kingdom was that which did mark the child. Here the further truth is revealed, that such are in the Kingdom. Who brought the little ones to the Lord we are not told, but it is clear that having come

themselves they had faith to bring their children also. And this faith the Lord honoured. They sought that He would put His hands on them and pray. He did more. He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:1-52). Not only was He willing to invoke the blessing; but, being Himself the Blessor, He was able to bless. So it ever is where there is real faith. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). But if the Lord graciously responded to the claims of faith, the Spirit of God, on the other hand, gives us to know His attitude towards even His own disciples when they misrepresented Him. They rebuked those who brought the children. He rebuked them, and so much was the spirit they manifested opposed to the spirit of the Kingdom that, as Luke tells us, "He was much displeased" (Luke 18:1-43). Still seeking for honour and place, they thought to find it in being the disciples of so great a Rabbi. Alas! how little they knew as yet either His true greatness or that spirit which marks the truly great. This lesson He was now about to teach them (Matthew 20:26). But before that they got an object-lesson as to the real value of all earthly things, be it either riches or rank, and as a result, there had to be in their case a revaluation of values in the light of Heaven, if they would arrive at that which was the current coin of the Kingdom. The Rich Young Ruler to whom we are now introduced was no common man. As far as this world went he had everything that it values, and he was everything that it respects.

He was a religious man, a ruler or judge among the people. He had money, friends, position, and influence. He did all that the law commanded, as far as he understood it, and he was sincere in thinking that by the deeds of the law he could enter into life. In short, he is set before us as the best that nature could produce, but the Lord has now to show him, and us too, that nature's best is not good enough for God. To do so He brings the true inwardness of the law to bear upon his heart and conscience. If he really loved his neighbour as himself, why not share with him in all he possessed? Put in this way, the idol of riches in his heart is exposed, and in spite of what he professed his failure is manifest, for "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen" (1 John 4:1-21). And this young man had professed to love both God and his brother.

Matthew 18:21 is not the Gospel; it is the Lord exposing the young man's heart to himself. The Gospel is not "give up" this or that, but take Christ, and with Him pardon, forgiveness, and life; peace, power, and joy. But with Him also the Cross; and, at this saying, the rich young man was very sorrowful. Treasure in heaven doubtless he would receive, for the "Good Master" had said it. But treasure in heaven was far away, and to him but visionary. His own riches on earth seemed to him both real and tangible, but alas! he forgot the thief of time who would ultimately steal both them from him and him from them.

"And Jesus beholding him loved him" (Mark 10:1-52). It is one of the most interesting stories in the Gospels: also one of the saddest. Instead of owning himself condemned by law and casting himself upon the mercy of Christ, he clung to his rank and his riches, with all that they cost him, and all that they lost him, "and went away grieved, for he was very rich." So will it be with every one who shuns the narrow path of following Christ. To suffer with Him here is to reign with Him in Kingdom Glory hereafter.

Now the thought of the disciples was that riches was a sure mark of the favour of God, and that they at least supplied the means of doing good. If no one was "good," and riches — the means of

doing good, not only valueless, but in themselves a positive hindrance — "who then could be saved?" The Lord's answer is emphatic, No one. On the ground of human merit, a camel might sooner pass the needle's eye than a rich man, trusting in his riches, enter the Kingdom. But with God all things are possible. Grace makes no account of what man is, either at his "best" or his "worst." Salvation is of the Lord.

Peter, doubtless seeing the young man going away preferring his possessions to Christ, ventures the question, "We have left all. . . . What shall we have therefore?" In His reply the Lord gives some of the most precious encouragement as to discipleship, coupled as ever with that which will guard it from the abuse of human merit. This we have in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. The apostles had done what the young man had been invited to do. First, then, the Lord says, that, as to His immediate followers, the disciples, they would be princes in the Kingdom. And all, at all times, and in all places, who prefers the name of Christ above what is dear to nature shall receive an hundredfold here, and life everlasting hereafter. He had already told them of the persecution and suffering they would have to endure by becoming His followers. Now He reveals to them something of the glory that should follow. And even here more friends would be raised up to them for Christ's sake than ever they had lost for their own sakes. The day of Kingdom Glory is the time of recompense, and nothing done for Christ will be forgotten by Him in that day. But along with this cheering promise goes another line of truth intensely solemn, and that is that "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Corinthians 3:13). And the gain or loss of that day will be in accordance with the character of the work done in this. May the thought have due weight with each one of us, so that everything be done in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, and all our ways below may meet with His approval. Peter, perhaps, put a value on his boat and nets which they never possessed, and we are all in danger of doing likewise. But Peter had forsaken them to follow the Lord, and nothing is little in His eyes where the motive is true love to Himself.

Only lest we should go to the opposite extreme in self-righteousness and be tempted to put our own value upon our own work, we get the Parable of "The Labourers," in which the further truth comes out that God is Sovereign, and will do just as He pleases; and that what He pleases to do is right. Self-righteousness may lead a man to estimate himself as "first," but, if so, the true estimate may show that he is last of all. This the parable develops, and shows that rewards in the Kingdom will be in accord with the principles both of sovereignty and grace There are five groups of labourers: —

- 1 The First Company go into the vineyard early in the morning, having agreed for a penny a day.
- 2 The Second Company go into the vineyard at the third hour, depending on the promise of the householder.
- 3 and 4. The Third and Fourth Companies go into the vineyard at the sixth and ninth hours on the same terms as the second.
5. The Fifth Company go into the vineyard at the eleventh hour with no promise at all, if we omit, with the best authorities, the last clause of verse 7.

It is a manifold picture of sovereign grace: God continuing to come out unceasingly, in order to bring men into the place of blessing; and not only so, but to give them the honour of serving Him: give them grace to serve; and then, and beyond all, reward them for the service that His sovereign

grace has enabled them to fulfil.

"So when even was come the Lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the labourers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first." And when the eleventh hour labourers came, they received every man a penny. And when the first company came they also received every man a penny. People argue that all were rewarded alike. But not so. The point of the parable is, that all were rewarded. Not that all were rewarded alike. There is a great difference between a penny a day and a penny an hour. Nevertheless, what right had the first to murmur? They had been dealt with in perfect righteousness. They had received what they bargained for, and what had they to do with the value of other men's service? That lay with the goodness of the householder. If all reward be a reward of grace, as it is, that reward can only be measured by the sovereign grace of God alone. If He make the last to be first who shall question His ruling? Many who thought themselves to be first may be seen to be last, and many who came in late may get a first place. The dying thief came in at the eleventh hour surely, but his one short hour of witness to Christ was given at a time when all had forsaken Him.

We must ever keep in mind that the Parables in general deal with Kingdom truth on the broad lines of profession. There will be no murmurers in the day of glory. Whatever the penny may have meant to the first group in the parable, it certainly means no place in the Kingdom for those to whom the parable applies, and it is equally certain that love for the Master had no place in their hearts. It is a scriptural principle that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." But, on the other hand, if he work for his hire only, it proves him to be merely a hireling who has never known what the true spring of service really is. How beautiful it is to compare with this what the apostle knew to be the compelling power in all true Christian service. "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 live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

We may well pause here for a moment. This parable dealing with service, and God's rights in rewarding it according to His own sovereign grace, are the closing words, given by our Evangelist, of the Great Servant, before setting out on the last sad journey to Jerusalem. His holy life of devoted service had been marked by obedience to the Father's will and love to the souls of men. He was the Dispenser of blessing wherever He went, and men wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. Yet in spite of all this perfect display of heavenly power and grace, He had to say, "They hated me without a cause."

Now He is on the way to the Cross, and once again He takes the twelve apart by themselves in the way, to give them the third recorded lesson as to His rejection and death; and to prepare them for what must now be to them the shattering of all their hopes. For even yet their eyes and hearts were filled with visions of an immediate earthly reign, and to secure first places there, James and John endeavour to forestall the others. This self-seeking appeal for the Sons of Zebedee gives opportunity for the Lord to bring to light the things of the spirit. He had come as the Messiah, bringing blessing for Israel, and had been rejected. Laying aside His rightful claims as Israel's King, He had then announced Himself as the "Son of Man" — a wider title which declared His rights world wide, and therefore spoke of blessing for all. But before there could be blessing for any, the Lord must die, in order to lay the righteous foundation on which all the purposes of God

might rest secure.

All this the disciples were as yet ignorant of. But before that day of display came, He had something to give to His followers. It was suffering. They were slow to learn that this was the highest honour they could have from the world. So are we. Knowing not what it involved, they said, in answer to His question, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" "We are able." Circumstances would very soon test their pretensions. And yet if at one time it had to be written — "They all forsook him and fled" — the Spirit is careful to record of them on another occasion, that "they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). But if the Sons of Zebedee were full of themselves, the ten, when they heard it, were full of indignation. They wanted to put the two down, perhaps only in order to put themselves up. But again the patient grace of the Lord shines out. He called them around Him, not for rebuke but for instruction. He, the Son of Man, the Lord of all, had become a Servant, and gone to a lower place than it was possible for any one else to reach. They were not to imitate the rulers of the nations, but to follow Him. So should we. If you want to be great, go down. If you want to be greater, go lower; and the lower we go, the nearer we get to the Master "who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." His service here was leading Him on to that supreme act of self-surrender — laying down His life for the sheep. Now in the glory His service of love still continues, though in another character. He is there as our great High Priest, and His priestly service is able to maintain us in the light of the presence of God, and in the sunshine of His love every moment.

Soon the day of Kingly service will come, when He will come forth to serve; and we shall be with Him and like Him as He is. What a day of blessing will it be when such a King reigns in righteousness. May the contemplation of such love produce in each of us the Christ spirit — which seeketh not his own, and is ever ready to lay down life itself for the brethren. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (hired servant), and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (slave)." The man in whom self is least in evidence is the man who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Passing through Jericho the two blind men are met, and healed. They hail Him as "Son of David," follow Him, and become witnesses to His power. It is fittingly the last-recorded miracle of healing in Matthew's Gospel, and it is a dispensational picture of the time when the "blindness" that has happened to the nation will be done away, and the remnant will recognise and acclaim their rightful King that cometh in the name of the Lord. This the multitude now do, according to the prophecy of Psalms 118:1-29. When they reach Bethphage He sends for the ass and the colt, both doubtless used by Him in succession, according to Zechariah 9:9. Matthew alone mentions both animals: typical they are, no doubt, and, with many similar things, it looks on to the day when the remnant of the nation will be brought into blessing under a King come in power. But the meek and lowly One is about to be rejected, and the next verse of the prophecy (Zechariah 10:10) remains unfulfilled until the day when He comes again riding upon the "white horse" (Revelation 19:1-21). The procession reaches the brow of Olivet, and the city bursts upon their gaze. Just in front, on the other side of the Kedron Valley, shining in all its recent adornment, stands the Temple — the Holy House, as the Jew so fondly called it, soon to be left desolate, and in a few short years become a prey to consuming fire. To the left, on the Hill of Zion, lay the "City of David," recalling all the glories of their greatest ruler. And here was David's Royal Son, surely, thought the disciples, now

about to assert both His authority and His power.

But, see, the King weeps! (Luke 19:1-48). It is no scene of triumph His eye rests upon. The inconstant multitude will soon change their cry of acclamation to cries of derision. Jerusalem, knowing not the day of her visitation in grace, will soon bitterly realise that the day has come for her visitation in judgment. Yet still His heart yearned over them. How often would He have gathered them as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings? — "I would: ye would not."

Ascending up from the Kedron, they enter the Temple, probably by the East gate, "and the whole city was moved." But, alas! however moved, they knew Him not. They can only ask, "Who is this?" And the voices that acclaimed Him at Olivet as "Son of David" can now only reply, "It is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth." He had reached the city, not to reign, but to die.

"And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple" — it is the evening of the First day of the week — and when He had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went out into Bethany with the twelve (Mark 11:1-33). Not till next day — Monday — as Mark tells us, did He cleanse the temple. Matthew, as we have seen, groups the incidents in keeping with his subject, and so we have together, the withering of the Fig Tree, the Parables of the Two Sons, and that of the Wicked Husbandmen, teaching so plainly the setting aside of Israel, that even the Pharisees understood it. And let us notice that neither of these two parables is said to be a "likeness of the Kingdom of Heaven." That new thing begins consequent upon the rejection of Messiah, and so we have in order, in Matthew 22:1-46, the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, showing God's way of bringing men into that Kingdom. The Jews would not come. The Gentiles will, as we shall see later.

"Now in the morning (Monday) as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.' And presently the fig tree withered away."

Here we have both a miracle and a parable. It is the only miracle other than that of blessing the Lord ever performed. And as to the parable, if we connect it with the parable in Luke 13:1-35, we shall find that three years of patient cultivation had been spent before the word went forth, "Cut it down." The Lord's ministry of patient grace had continued for a somewhat similar time, but now it was over, and Israel's day had gone by. As to the action itself, it was symbolical, and for the instruction of disciples. So must we understand the teaching consequent thereupon. They would nowhere have to do either with a literal fig tree or a literal mountain. But, as God's planting, Israel was the "fig tree"; and as a power in the earth, Israel was the "mountain." The day came, in apostolic service, when an apostle was led to utter the warning, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish" (Acts 13:1-52). And again, "The Salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles" (Acts 28:1-31). Even after the crucified and risen Lord had gone back to the glory, one last message of mercy was sent again to His earthly people, through Peter, and after their rejection of it, and the murder of His witness, Stephen, Israel was indeed cast into the sea of the nations. She had proved conclusively that, in her history, there had neither been fruit for God, nor power among men. But there is more. In verse 22 there is the most unqualified assurance that all things would be given to the man of faith. So accustomed are we to the little faith (often no faith) of our own hearts, that, when we find such a statement as this, we are tempted to explain away the power of it. But there it stands for believers of all time. The twelve were about to be parted from the Master

upon whom they had relied in every emergency. He now connects them with all the power of God on high which they were to lay hold of, by faith, for their service; assuring them that, to the man of faith, all things he asks, he shall receive. When He reached the Temple, He cleansed it, as we have noticed, and at once begins what we might call His closing public addresses. For His last words of encouragement and instruction to His own we must look elsewhere, but Matthew gives us very full details of the public ministry of these two busy days. The nation was hearing the voice speaking in grace, which it would not again hear, until that same voice speaks in judgment in a later day. But now it was only a question of setting forth in symbolic language the state to which the blindness of the leaders had brought the nation. The outline of the Temple addresses is as follows: —

- 1 The Jews refuse to obey God (Parable of the Two Sons).
- 3 They refuse to bring anything to Him (Parable of the Vine-dressers).
- 3 They refuse to accept anything from Him (Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son).
- 4 Grace refused goes out to the Gentiles (The Second Invitation to the Marriage Feast).
- 5 Their political bondage turned on what they had failed to be for God (The Tribute Money).
- 6 Sadducean difficulties are shown to be the result of Sadducean infidelity (The Woman and Seven Husbands).
- 7 The law exposes the motives of the heart: till that is right everything must be wrong (The Lawyer's Question).

Let us look into these things in a little more detail. The Lord no longer replies to the cavils of the elders, except to bring truth to bear upon their consciences. They ask Him for His authority. Had it not been displayed before their eyes in acts of power, which proved that it must be heavenly in its origin? But now, would they answer His question, "John's Baptism, was it from heaven?" He had been a burning and a shining light and they had been willing for a season to rejoice in that light (John 5:35). Their national pride had gloried in a prophet being raised up amongst them, as so often among the fathers of old, but their self-righteousness had prevented them from accepting his testimony to Messiah. John had been murdered and his Master they had rejected. Hence their difficulty. Rather than own their sin, they refuse to answer. Then the Lord brings their moral state before them in the parable of the Two Sons.

Open opposition to the father, followed by repentance, marked the first. False profession, unrepented of, marked the second. Open sinners were converted by the preaching of the fearless Baptist and brought into the Kingdom of God. Self-righteous Pharisees saw no need for repentance. In the next parable a deeper principle is touched upon. The nation was not only in a state of malevolent neutrality, it was in a state of active opposition to God and His ways of grace. Israel had been likened to the vineyard of the Lord, as they very well knew from their own scriptures (Psalms 80:1-19 And according to Isaiah 5:1-30 everything had been done for it that the care and forethought of the husbandman could do. Indeed the prophet had challenged the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah on this very point. And what? — "When I looked that it should bring forth grapes it brought forth wild grapes." Then the Lord shows from their dealings with His servants, the prophets, what their moral history had been, until that moment

when their hearts were fully exposed by the presence of the Son Himself in their midst, and their diabolic counsel among themselves was "This is the Heir, come let us — kill

Him." It is no question of ignorance. He is known, and when known, hated. So trenchant and convincing is the argument that they are forced to answer the question — "When the Lord of the vineyard cometh what will He do?" God was about to take a hand in the affairs of men. What will happen to those who up to that time had been the custodians of the Kingdom of God: of whom were the fathers, and to whom were the promises? "Did ye never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." He was the Stone of Israel (Genesis 49:1-33), the Tried Stone, the Precious Corner Stone, and the Sure Foundation (Isaiah 28:1-29). But to Israel He became a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence (Romans 10:1-21). Nevertheless, though disallowed of men, He was chosen of God and precious, and on Him the spiritual house is now being builded, and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded (1 Peter 2:1-25). If they who stumbled at the Lord come in grace would be "broken," what could happen to those with whom He had to deal in judgment, but that they should be "ground to powder" (compare Daniel 2:35). It is the inevitable end of all who would contend with God.

Then He tells them that the "Kingdom of God" should be taken from them. It is the last time we have this term in Matthew, and it marks in a very specific way the difference between it and the Kingdom of Heaven. The Jews, entrusted with the revelation from God, owned Him as their King, and were in His Kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven was the form the Kingdom of God would take, consequent upon the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ to the right-hand of God on high. The Kingdom of God, then, taken from the Jews would be given to a "nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This, doubtless, has a twofold meaning. Peter, writing to believers, could say, using no doubt Old Testament forms of speech (Deuteronomy 10:15), "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Then, in a coming day, it will be said to Israel, in the sublime words of the prophet, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come . . . thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever" (Isaiah 60:1-21). But meantime it is proved conclusively that men under the best of conditions could produce nothing for God. Not only so, but in addition to abusing the servants, they murdered the Son. Enmity could no further go. What will God do now? Can grace meet such a condition as this? Matthew 22:1, Matthew 22:1-46, answers the question. It is no longer a question of what man has done, but of what God is doing; and the Lord hereupon gives a similitude of the new thing, and God's way of bringing men into it, under the form of the parable of the Marriage of the King's Son. And here a further startling development of evil is seen. Men not only refuse to bring anything to God: they also refuse to accept anything from Him. This is a true picture of the natural heart, and a very humbling truth indeed. But for sovereign grace, not a single soul of Adam's race would ever be in the glory of God.

"A certain king made a marriage for his son:" The world dishonoured the Son. God will have Him to be honoured. The world gave Him a low place. God will give Him the highest place that heaven affords. Every knee must bow to Him, and those who will not bow in grace shall bow in judgment. The Lord puts the divine counsels in true perspective. The proper "point of sight" is not so much man's need, as God's glory, and while the convicted sinner naturally views the Gospel from the

first standpoint, the believer should seek to see things from the last. The Marriage Feast sets before us the way grace goes out either to Jew or Gentile; and along with that there is the response it meets with. As to those that were bidden, "they would not come." A second invitation manifests the indifference of some and the malevolence of others. The agricultural and mercantile classes (Matthew 22:5) are singled out from the remnant (Matthew 22:6), who slew the servants. These last would fittingly represent the leaders who were ever the first in persecution. In the first invitation we have the ministry of the Apostles before the Cross. In the second, the preaching of the Apostles after the Cross, and until the death of Stephen. "Repent ye therefore and be converted," Peter could say, "that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshment may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19, R.V.). But they repented not. Instead of their sins being blotted out, their city was burned up as the parable had forewarned.

Now, the call of grace can go out to all, without exception or distinction. It is no longer, what man is, but, what God is. A praying Lydia, or a jailer steeped in sin, need, and alike receive, the same grace. From the "highways" the servants gather both "bad and good," and the wedding is furnished with guests. But something more was needed. The glory of the King, and the honour of the King's Son, demanded that there should be not only acceptance of the King's invitation, but fitness for the King's presence. This the "Wedding Garment" supplied. It was needed by the guests, and provided by the King. Hence there was no excuse for the man without it. His "best" would not do for the King, neither will man's best do for God. Only as a sinner is clad in God's righteousness, can he stand before Him, and God's righteousness is Christ Himself. The measure of the believer's standing is nothing less than Christ risen. Wonderful truth. How little we enter into it. But there could not be Christ risen, until He had first gone into death. Apart from that atoning death to which He went down in grace, He must have been alone in the glory. But, blessed be God, risen out of death, He became the First begotten from the dead, and the First born of many brethren. The prodigal's highest aspiration was the place of a hired servant. But nothing less than the robe and the ring and the feast would satisfy the heart of the father. The close of the parable looks on to the end, and the judgment is solemn, final, and eternal. It is the end of every mere professor — outer darkness and untold woe. Oh that men would be warned in time. Notice that the word translated "servants" in Matthew 22:3-4, Matthew 22:6, Matthew 22:8, is not the same as that used in Matthew 22:13. The first (bondservants) refer to those who go forth with the Gospel. The second (ministers) refer to the angels who are the executors of His judgments. These two things are never confounded. The later half of the chapter brings out the folly of the three great classes of the nation, in their endeavour to "entangle him in his talk." The Pharisees were the religionists of the day, the descendants of the patriotic men who had so nobly supported the Maccabees in the War of Independence. The Herodians were those who, in their endeavour to perpetuate the national existence at any cost, were willing to give up the national faith, in order to support the anti-national Idumean succession of the family of the Herods. These two classes, whose principles were diametrically opposite, and who hated each other with age-long hatred, agreed together to tempt the Lord. With divine wisdom, and grace combined, the Lord meets these men. Showing them that He knew their thoughts and thereby exposing them to themselves, He sought to deliver them from the snare of Satan into which they had fallen. Had the rights of God been rendered to Him, Caesar and his legions would have had no power in their land. The reply was unanswerable, but though they marvelled, they did not believe. The hypocrisy and infidelity of the Sadducees are next exposed. As to creed, they denied everything that the Pharisees believed. The law of Moses,

as they expounded it, had to do only with the earth. There was no future life. Now they come to the Lord, apparently anxious to settle a question about the resurrection, when the very fact of the resurrection itself they denied. Could hypocrisy go further? The Lord showed their difficulties arose from two sources. The first was their ignorance of their own scriptures, and the second was their ignorance of the power of God. Slow to own the first, they are equally slow to ascribe to God that power which belongs to Him by sovereign right, and thus they perish in their own folly. Unbelief is ever ignorant. "By faith we understand." But here comes a lawyer. He is a learned scribe, and everything that is to be known about the law he knows. The One who was among them in a love that went far beyond law keeping he knew not. His question, however, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" brings out God's standard for men upon the earth, a standard from which he has fallen, alas, how far. The mission of the prophets was restorative, and intended to bring the people back to the ways of God. But they only added to their guilt. The law they had broken, and the prophets they had slain. Law knows nothing about producing conditions in which its righteous precepts can be displayed. That awaited a later revelation. Only when a man is born of God, can he display the character of God. Then, the flesh set aside, the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:4).

These three questions asked and answered, the Lord next propounds to them the question of questions: — "What think ye of Christ: Whose Son is He?"

Earlier in our Gospel (Matthew 16:1-28), a somewhat similar question had been asked of disciples, and answered in a way that spoke of spiritual enlightenment and intelligence in the ways of God. Here there is only the darkness of unbelief. As David's Son, He had presented Himself to them and had been rejected. The day was coming when they, as His enemies, would be made the "footstool of his feet." And so the tempters, confounded in all their tactics, withdraw from the conflict, and the disciples and the multitude listen to the summing-up of the righteous Judge (Matthew 23:1-39), before whom the hearts of all are exposed. But first of all He sets up the Scribes and Pharisees, not as an example, but as a warning, whose works the disciples were to avoid. Whatsoever they taught from the law was to be observed, for the age of law was not yet closed. God still recognised that order which He had ordained, however much men had abused it. So the Lord speaks of them as "sitting in Moses' seat," that is — continuing his teaching. As such they were in the place of responsibility — before God, and would be held to be so. As the principles that governed their lives are exposed, we can only exclaim with the prophet, "The heart is deceitful above all things: who can know it?" And the answer is: — "I the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:9). Here we get that which appeals to the natural mind.

Imposing on others what we refuse in ourselves (Matthew 23:4).

Wrong motives in service (Matthew 23:5).

Spiritual pride (Matthew 23:5).

Outward appearances (Matthew 23:6). The applause of men (Matthew 23:7).

Deference from the world (Matthew 23:7).

Surely all of these are out of place in the character of the disciple of Christ, and yet how much there is in every heart to which these things appeal.

Such things were not to be among believers, and the Lord next puts His finger, as it were, upon the beginnings of things, which, if allowed, would produce the very same thing in Christianity as they had done in Judaism. Hence —

1 They were to avoid the principles of the Rabbi who sought to form a school around himself. Their Instructor was Christ, and His word their sole authority and unerring guide.

2 Nothing was to be allowed that would weaken their sense of relationship to God as their Father.

3 And there was to be no leadership, apart from the leadership of Christ Himself. One is your Master, Christ, and all ye are brethren.

Alas, how these three great principles have been ignored in Christendom, and the result has been that things are as we see them to-day. Sects and parties have been formed around men, which must ever be wrong, or around doctrines which may, in themselves, be right, but the True Centre — Christ — has thereby been ignored, and the Sole Authority, the Holy Word of God, has been set aside for the traditions of men. The great moral principles of Christianity are again enforced in three short apophthegms: —

1 The greatest among you shall be your servant.

2 The self-exalted one shall be abased.

3 The humble minded shall be exalted.

He could say, "I am among you as he that serveth," and it could be said of Him, "Therefore hath God highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name" (Php 2:1-30). The first man in the pride of his heart sought to go up. The Second Man, in the grace of His heart, went down, even to the dust of death. The Seven Woes that follow (for Matthew 23:14 is of doubtful authority) disclose not only the condemnation of the leaders of Israel, but why they are condemned.

Tradition played so large a part in their system that by it the Word of God was made of none effect. Indeed, it was made to mean the very opposite of what it said, and thus the light to them became darkness, and what was darkness, that, it follows, they held to be light. A single illustration will make this clear. Under the ceremonial law, creeping things were pronounced unclean. Yet no one was admitted a member of the Sanhedrim who did not possess sufficient ability, or rather ingenuity, to prove by many reasons that creeping things were clean. Well might the Lord say of such that they were hinderers in the way of life, neither entering the Kingdom themselves, nor allowing others to do so.

Those whom they succeeded in proselytising, reproduced only the positive evil of their teachers.

All righteous principles were set aside by vain casuistry, and they could so arrange the "Corban Oath" (see Mark 7:1-37) that they made their own gain out of the temple gold. To fill up the Corban treasure, men were taught to break the fifth commandment. His own teaching on vain swearing had already been given (Matthew 5:34), and it is well to compare it with what we have here. In the third woe, He had condemned their corrupt teaching. Here, in the fourth, He condemns their corrupt practice, and, in the next, we get, under a correct exterior, the corrupt affections of the

natural heart. Again, they were more anxious to appear right before men, than to be right before God. It was outward paint to cover inward pollution. The grass grown green on the sides of the volcano snow lying white on a manure heap. The last woe is more comprehensive still in its sweep. It looks both backwards and forwards. Their fathers had killed the prophets. They professed to abjure their fathers' deeds by building tombs for the slain, but both their hypocrisy and wickedness would be exposed by the way they would "kill, crucify, and scourge" the "prophets and wise men and scribes" of the new dispensation. This can be followed out in the short forty years that remained of their national history. Much of it is recorded in the Book of Acts. We need not further pursue it here. But it is well to notice how Christendom has copied, and indeed far surpassed in extent, the persecuting spirit of the Jew of old. It is believed to be a fair estimate that the Apostate Church of Rome is responsible for the blood of fifty millions of the saints of God. Well, truly will it be said of her that she is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Revelation 17:6). The Lord, having now finished His public ministry, by convicting and condemning the leaders of Israel, seems, as it were, to cast His eye forward to that time when, God's patience being exhausted, the just judgment which grace alone had restrained, would fall. As He views it, the love of His heart for the guilty city again overflows.

What love indeed is here? In the very place where prophets had been slain, and where He was about to die, He would have "gathered her children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings." "I would — ye would not." It is the mystery of the perverted will. And because of it their house would be left desolate, as it has remained until this day, and will so remain until the remnant, converted and brought into blessing on the ground of the New Covenant of Grace, shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Psalms 118:1-29). Then the Stone rejected by the builders of the past day will become the head Stone of the Corner, and the temple choir of redeemed Israel will chant the National Anthem, "O sing unto the Lord a new song, For He hath done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm Hath gotten him the victory. The Lord hath made known his salvation: His righteousness hath he openly showed In the sight of the heathen.

He hath remembered his mercy and his truth Towards the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth Have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalms 98:1-3).

01.10 - Section 10. Mat_24:1-51; Mat_25:1-46.

Section 10. Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-46. The Great Prophetic Outline. The King's Dealings with the Jew, the Church, and the Nations

There are many wonderful things about the Word of God. No other book is like it in this, that it has a Divine Author. God has spoken. What He says must be true, authoritative, and final. It can be subject neither to revisal nor development, for the Author is infinite and All-wise.

Then again it does what no word of man can ever do in the same way — it speaks to the conscience. Men address their words to the intellect, the emotions, or the imagination. God speaks right home to the conscience. He deals with the foundation questions of man's sin, and God's righteousness, and so unconverted men hate the Book because they love not its Author.

Yet another most wonderful thing about the Bible is that it tells of the future. Other books tell of the past, or give details of current events, but when the line of the present moment is reached, all beyond it becomes mere idle speculation.

God's Book with graphic touch, and precise definition, gives an outline of the course of time, from the time that time began, until the time when time shall be no longer. It lifts the veil that shuts in the future from mortal ken, and shows us the glories of the ransomed around the throne of God, and the awful fate of the lost in that place where hope never comes. We can know about the end of time with just as much certainty as we know about the beginning of it, for the same word has revealed both. With this assurance of faith, then, let us draw near and listen to the words of the Lord Jesus, as recorded for us in these wonderful chapters. He here takes the place of the Prophet of God, according to what was before spoken of Him by Moses: —

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren . . . and I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). It was a solemn moment in Israel's history when He went out and departed from the temple. Never more would His voice be heard in its courts. Never again would His feet stand within its gates. Jerusalem had rejected her King, and the things that belonged to her peace were hid from her eyes. The temple was that in which the Jew of that day made his boast. Even disciples were still occupied with its glories, and the Lord, to deliver them from the influence of things seen, brings in the light of things as yet unseen. Doubtless it was with something of dismay that they heard of the day of distress so soon to overtake their "beautiful house," and they waited only for a more convenient season to learn more about such a startling event. That occasion soon presented itself. Leaving the temple and the city, they take their way towards Bethany, and when sitting on the slopes of Olivet, it may be to rest after climbing up from the Kedron Valley, the disciples come to Him, eager for information as to the solemn events of which He had but darkly hinted, as they left the temple courts. With this object they put to Him the three great questions: —

1 When shall these things be?

2 What shall be the sign of Thy Coming?

3 What shall be the sign of the end of the world (age)? The Lord, in replying to their questions, gives them, as is ever His wont, instruction and guidance far beyond what they had asked for. And in the present section of the Gospel we have an outline of events beginning from the moment then present, and carrying us on to that time of blessedness for the earth, still future, when "the King shall sit upon the throne of his glory," and the Kingdom will no longer exist in mystery, but will be seen in manifestation, and "everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord," according to Psalms 150:6. The prophecy divides itself into three distinct parts, which we must carefully distinguish, if we are to profit by our Lord's teaching: —

1. The First Part has to do with the Jew (Matthew 24:1-41).

1 His Trials (Matthew 24:9).

2 His Temptations (Matthew 24:24).

3 His Deliverance (Matthew 24:31).

2. The Second Part has to do with Christians (Matthew 24:42-51, Matthew 25:1-30).

1 As Ministering (Matthew 24:45).

2 As Waiting (Matthew 25:1).

3 As Working for their Absent Lord (Matthew 25:14).

3. The Third Part has to do with the Gentile Nations (Matthew 25:31-46).

1 As Receiving (Matthew 25:34); or 2 As Rejecting the King's Messengers (Matthew 25:41).

It will be seen at once that the first part of the prophecy carries us right on to the "coming of the Son of Man," taking no notice of the Church period, which must necessarily lie within its bounds. Having done so, the Lord turns back to deal with the Christian position, not so much in relation to "times and seasons" which have to do with the earth, but giving instead an outline of what the motives which govern Christian profession are, whether real or unreal; with the necessary teaching connected therewith. And this is as we would expect, and is on the lines of all prophecy which, strictly speaking, has to do with the earth, and an earthly people. So Peter says the prophets "spake of the sufferings of Christ — and — the glory that should follow." To them the mystery of the Church had not been revealed, and the disciples here were in a somewhat similar position. They are looked upon representatively, as the followers of Christ, in His absence, and at His return to the earth.

Let us notice further that Matthew does not give us, except in a general way, the Lord's answer to the first question — "When shall these things be?" — that is, the overthrow of their temple and polity. The answer to this is given very fully in Luke, see Matthew 21:12-24, and is in keeping with the line of truth he is presenting. As a Gentile, writing to Gentiles, Luke shows the results of Gentile invasion of the land, which was, in its immediate consequences, the destruction of both temple and city by Titus, 70 A.D. But here the Lord sets first before the disciples what would be the state of the world after He left it, and what would be their own condition in it. As to the nations of

the earth, they would not only hate the disciples, but they would hate each other. Wars and rumours of wars would be the result. The King of Peace rejected, peace will never again find a home on earth until He returns. Famine follows war. Pestilence follows famine. And not only are these dreadful results seen as the effects of men's sin, but inanimate nature itself seems to respond to the universal unrest.

Such would be the condition of things in the absence of the King. They would be the "beginning of sorrows." In addition to the persecution from without, there would be that which would cause them even greater suffering than the physical torments to which they might be subjected — many would be false to their profession. The persecution of the world tests the reality of the professor. Many such are offended, and instead of standing firm as confessors of Christ, they become, alas! betrayers and haters of those they once professed to love and serve. With minds in such a condition the words of the false prophet find ready reception, and, turned aside from the truth, many are deceived thereby. The deadening effect of abounding iniquity is also seen in another way — the love of many waxes cold. Ephesus is not alone in this. Who is there among us who has not experienced it? Grace alone can keep.

Many deceived: many offended: many disheartened.

Many false Christs: many false prophets: many betrayers.

Every art of Satan is here laid bare by the eye of Omniscience, and the encouragement is added to the faithful that he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

We are introduced in Matthew 24:14 to something which marks in a special way the time of the end. "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come."

We must not confound the Gospel of the Kingdom with the Gospel of the grace of God. These are two distinct lines of truth as we shall see.

We get the Kingdom Gospel first mentioned in Matthew 4:1-25, where the Lord Himself began to preach it, and along with it went the healing miracles which marked that dispensation. Again, in Matthew 10:1-42, we find the proclamation more widely extended by the twelve apostles, still with the same signs following, but with the definite injunction to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As we have seen, Israel rejected both the Kingdom and the King, and with the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God on high, the "good news" is now of a different character. It is no longer a call to Israel to repent and be converted in order to be ready for an earthly reign, but it is a command to all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness. Before that day comes, God, in the operations of His sovereign grace, is saving sinners out of the world, and uniting them to Christ in heavenly glory; uniting them also to one another as well as to their Head on high, and forming the Church which is His Body. When the last member has been gathered in, the Lord Himself shall descend, and we shall ascend to meet Him in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18). This is the "Blessed Hope" set before the believer now, and we shall rejoice in the Hope, just in proportion as our hearts are occupied with the Person of our risen and glorified Lord on high. But none of these things are developed in Matthew's Gospel. They were still future, and could only be spoken of in type and figure, as we shall see.

What we now know is that God is saving souls out of this world in grace, and the day is coming when He will establish a Kingdom in this world in power, and the preacher who is taught in the word will not fail to declare both these precious truths.

Here in our Gospel, then, we have reached a period beyond the rapture of the Church, and just before the "end." In spite of all the opposition and persecution of the world, there will be an evangelistic revival, such as this world has never yet witnessed. From restored Israel will go forth foreign missionaries, with something at least of the zeal and devotion of the greatest and most successful foreign missionary that this world has ever seen — the Apostle Paul. And their message will be, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1)." The Lord. God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, yet will I gather to the gathered ones" (Isaiah 56:8). "Also the sons of strangers that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord . . . even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer . . . for my house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isaiah 56:6-7). The Lord had reminded them of this prophecy when He cleansed the temple (Matthew 21:13). Its fulfilment awaits the day when He shall sit as a Priest upon His throne. In short, there will be a world-wide testimony to a coming Messiah. Christendom has never accomplished this with the Gospel of the grace of God. In spite of the utmost self-denial and self-sacrifice on the part of very many devoted servants of Christ, whose efforts have been beyond all praise, yet it is a fact that Christendom, in modern days at least, has never succeeded in evangelising more than half of the known world. And the opinion of those best able to judge is, that the heathen nations of to-day are increasing faster than the present missionary activity can overtake. It is a humbling thought for all of us, if so it be. But the Lord now goes on to say that when this has been accomplished, the "end" shall come. It is no question of the world being entirely converted. That it will not be so, other scriptures clearly prove. But the testimony goes out, and in Matthew 25:1-46 we shall see what the results of accepting or rejecting that testimony will be, to the nations then upon the earth. Of what "end" does the Lord here speak? Clearly not the end of the world, as many teach, and as we shall endeavour to show later; but the end of the "age" about which the apostles had inquired in Matthew 25:3. That "age" would expire with the expiry of the period spoken of by the angel to Daniel the prophet (Daniel 9:24) as "seventy-sevens," beginning (as we know from the same scripture) at the 20th year of Artaxerxes in the month Nisan, B.C. 454. As every careful reader knows, that period is divided into three parts. "Seven weeks," "Three score and two weeks," and "One week " : and it began at the restoration under Nehemiah, when the commandment went forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Seven "sevens" (forty-nine years) of "troubulous times" passed, during which the city and state were being laboriously reconstructed in the midst of many enemies. Another three score and two "sevens" pass, and again it is the month Nisan (April), 29 A.D. The Messiah of Israel presents Himself as her King, but instead of receiving the Kingdom He is cut off and "has nothing." Instead of sitting upon His rightful throne He is cast out to lie in a borrowed grave.

Evidently the seventieth "week" is still future, and two reasons out of many will show it:

1 In Daniel 9:24, the angel gives the prophet to understand that at the end of the last week, six things would be accomplished, and the sorrows of Jerusalem and its people be over. These six things are set out in detail in the text referred to; none of them are yet accomplished, and Jerusalem's sorrows only began after the Lord was crucified.

2 In Daniel 9:27, we learn that the prince that shall come shall confirm a covenant with (the) many for "one week." This "prince" is clearly not Messiah, for when He came, He was "cut off ": it is as clear that it is not Titus who is referred to; for when he came, instead of making any covenant with the Jews, he destroyed both their city and their state. The whole of Daniel 9:26 is fulfilled between the end of the sixty-ninth and the beginning of the seventieth "week." It is the great "interval" during which the mystery of the Church is brought to light, and when that period is over, times and seasons referring to earth will again begin to run their predestined course. The "coming prince" and the "last week" is still future. This "week" will be divided into two parts. Matthew 25:4-14, while giving a description in a general way of the world in the absence of the King, will really find their complete fulfilment in the first half of the "week." Matthew 25:15-28 describe the events which take place in the latter half.

These we now have to consider.

Just as the making of the "Covenant" marked the beginning of the first half of the week, so the breaking of the "Covenant" marks the beginning of the latter half of the "week." This event, according to Daniel 9:27; Daniel 12:11, is followed by the taking away of the daily sacrifice, and the setting up of the "abomination that maketh desolate." Our Lord refers to this in Matthew 25:15, and also connects with it another thing, and that is — the great tribulation.

If we set out these events in order we shall find that the latter half of the week is marked by seven important occurrences:

- 1 The Covenant confirmed by the Roman prince with the mass of the Jews is broken by him.
- 2 The antichrist arrogates to himself the titles of Christ, and endeavours to manifest the power of Christ.
- 3 The ordered temple services are interrupted.
- 4 The abomination that maketh desolate (or astonisheth) is set up in the Holy of Holies.
- 5 The Great Tribulation begins, as the result.
- 6 The Testimony of the "two Witnesses" continues during three and a half years.
- 7 The faithful remnant who remain true to God, and refuse the mark of the beast, are persecuted and slain. In the midst of this "time of trouble," the great arch-enemy, Satan, is abroad in the earth (Revelation 12:12), and true to his character as the Deceiver, he at once raises up false Christs and false prophets to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect (Matthew 25:24). His two great masterpieces of evil we get in Revelation 13:1-18. The one a "beast" out of the "sea" — the political unrest of the nations — and heading up in himself all the forces of infidelity and militarism which, though prominent now, will then be all but universal. He will be the finished product of man's will as opposed to God: the super-man, in whom wicked men will find a chief so much superior to themselves in wickedness that they will fall down and worship him. He will both blaspheme God and persecute His saints. And, as his henchman, he will have the "beast" out of the "earth," who, although he may have "two horns like a lamb," yet betrays his Satanic origin by speaking like a dragon. Under his sway idolatry is again introduced into Jerusalem. The unclean spirit returns to his house, and in his company seven other spirits more wicked than himself. It is

the fulfilment of the prophecy of Matthew 12:45. One very subtle form of the coming idolatry will be this — the worship of a living man. Such a thing had been foreshadowed in the history of King Darius, Daniel 6:7. Here we have it full blown. And what makes the delusion more strong is that the false prophet has power to give breath (not life, as in the common text) to the image of the beast, so that it shall be able to speak, and to cause those who refuse their homage to be killed. The "fiery furnace" will be seven times heated again, and so fierce will be the persecution that it will have to be written "Blessed are the dead" (Revelation 14:13). But God is over all. A limit is ever set to the power of evil — "He shall continue forty and two months" (Revelation 13:5). At the end of the latter half of the last week the judgment of God descends, and the beast and false prophet, "these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20). In the midst of this terrible persecution disciples are warned not to be deceived by those who say that Christ has come in secret. Before the dread event of that coming, all the powers both of nature and government seem to lose their wonted control, as the symbolic language of Matthew 25:29 would (seem to) indicate, and instead of any secret coming, His appearing would be like a lightning flash, sweeping with dazzling intensity across the vault of heaven from the east unto the west. "And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Now has come the day of deliverance for elect Israel, and of vengeance for their oppressors. God has taken in hand to "destroy them that corrupt the earth," and just as Israel had been "spread abroad as the four winds of heaven" (Zechariah 2:6), so will they be gathered from the four winds. The "great trumpet" shall be blown (Isaiah 27:13), and the outcasts shall be gathered, converted, and purified to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. Scattered by the oppressor because of their sins: regathered by angelic power, according to the free and sovereign grace of their covenant-keeping Jehovah. The rapidity with which the events move which lead up to all this, is doubtless taught by the "parable of the fig tree" — ever an emblem of the nation. As leaf and fruit appeared in rapid succession, so would the Lord hasten the day of deliverance for the people of His Covenant. And there is a needs-be for His solemn assurance in Matthew 25:32-34. "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." Now, some at least of those who listened to His words, and many of those to whom they would be repeated, would see the city and land swept clean of its inhabitants — "wiped as a man wipeth a dish; wiping it, and turning it upside down" (2 Kings 21:13); and they might well be tempted to think that all was over for the nation — and the promise unfulfilled after all. "Not so," says the Lord; "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." We have only to look around to see the confirmation of that word. The prophet Hosea, who flourished in the days of four of Judah's greatest kings, 800 years before Christ, had said, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim" (Hosea 3:4). It may be that speaking as he did in the palmy days of Judah's history, few believed his words, but so the Jews abide to-day. Having neither a king nor the hope of one, unable to sacrifice to the true God, yet so far they are preserved from image worship. With all genealogies lost, no one can lay claim to wear the priestly ephod wherewith to ask counsel of God; neither do they seek after oracular responses of lying spirits, through teraphim, as their fathers did of old. But to the same prophet was given the promise that "afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord, and his goodness in the later day" (Hosea 3:5).

Amid all the changing scene of time the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

Three things come out in the next section of our chapter (Matthew 25:36-44): —

1 The Day of the Coming of the Son of Man is known only to the Father.

2 The Coming will introduce a time of discriminative judgment for living men upon the earth: "taking," as in Noah's flood in judgment, or "leaving" upon a redeemed earth for blessing.

3 To the men of the earth, the Coming will be as that of a thief in the night, unexpected, and unprepared for. [Hence the necessity for disciples to watch, for their Lord was coming, and as "Son of Man," coming to the earth. The world might say "Peace and Safety" when the dark cloud of "sudden destruction" was just lowering over it, but they were no longer in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief (1 Thessalonians 5:3-4).]

We turn next to consider the three parables which have to do with Christianity. Strictly speaking, they do not contain any outline of prophetic events, but deal rather with the moral condition of things which will obtain, as well as with what ought to obtain, on the part of those professing to be the Lord's servants in His absence.

Three things confirm the view that the Lord is here speaking of Christianity: —

1 The Coming for which believers are here enjoined to wait, is the Coming of the LORD. The title — Son of Man — which He takes in connection with the earth, does not occur in any of the three parables under consideration. (The best authorities omit the last clause of Matthew 25:13.)

2 No "times or seasons ": no synopsis of earthly events: no signs, preparatory or introductory, are anywhere mentioned. The absent Lord is coming for His waiting people. It is the outline of truth more fully developed later in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 and other scriptures of the New Testament prophets.

3 No Old Testament prophecy in connection with this subject is quoted in any part of the section, and this is as we should expect, for no such prophecy exists. Many prophecies — at least three hundred — speak of the Coming of the Messiah, His rejection, and death. And again, many glowing pages picture the glory of the Kingdom established under the King in power. But the period of the Kingdom, in the absence of the King, during which the Church is formed, is nowhere spoken of in the Old Testament. Of what would transpire in this period the Lord here speaks to His disciples, using language they were able to understand, and yet in such a way that further light would enable them to comprehend more fully the deeper things of the Kingdom of Heaven. The first parable then, Matthew 24:45-51, deals with the servant in his Lord's Household. He is placed there for the express purpose of giving them meat in due season. Why, of the three parables, does this come first in order? Is it to show that the Lord's interest in His people down here holds the first place in His heart? The thrice repeated injunction to Peter in John 21:1-25 to feed the flock, shows at least the importance of the position of the household servant. He may be a "faithful and wise" servant, or, on the other hand, he may be an "evil" servant. The condition of things is still viewed here, as in all the parables, on the ground of profession. But the servant is in "the house," and on the ground of responsibility. As such he will be dealt with when his Lord returns. His commission is from the Lord.

He is responsible to the Lord.

He will be rewarded by the Lord.

Taught in the Word himself, he is to teach others. He is to "give them meat in due season." If in the mind of his Master, he will provide the "sincere milk of the word" for the "babes," and "strong meat" for those of mature age. He will be blessed at the Coming of his Master, if found so doing. But there is more. The Lord adds that "he shall make him ruler over all his goods." We shall get further light here by comparing this with Revelation 2:26. The promise to the Thyatiran overcomer was power over the nations. The apostasy of Thyatira will mark the time of the coming, and the servant found true to his master, in time of peril, will by his master be promoted to power in Kingdom glory. But there is another side, as there is in all the parables. The hope of the coming was, alas! soon lost, and those who should have been "faithful and wise" became unfaithful and evil. Then, again, connected with the loss of the right spirit came the assumption of the wrong position and fellowship with the wrong company. He is found "eating and drinking with the drunken."

Morally, this is a complete inversion of true service, as defined by the Lord in Matthew 19:1-30, where, as we saw, the two great principles that actuated the true servant were love and humility. Here it is exaltation of self and oppression of others. And it is not difficult to trace the progress of this spirit in the history of the professing Church through the ages. Even in the days of the Apostles men were found who "loved to have the pre-eminence," and they soon had many followers. But the Lord is not unmindful of the interests of His people, and He will recompense. The "evil servant" is a hypocrite, and, in the day when the Lord judges, his place will be appointed with such.

We must not confound the coming in Matthew 24:46 with the coming in Matthew 24:50. The faithful and wise servant is living in the expectation of his Lord's return. All his service is performed in view of that-to him-longed-for moment. To the evil servant, the coming is an event both unexpected and undesired. It carries us back to Matthew 24:37, where the wicked, whether open foes or false professors, meet their doom at the hands of the Son of Man. The next parable opens in a somewhat remarkable way, by indicating a particular time when the Kingdom of Heaven would be likened to "Ten Virgins." That time was clearly some period near the end of the age, when the various events would have transpired, of which the imagery of the parable treats. It contemplates the history of the Kingdom, not in a forward view, as in Matthew 13:1-58, but is, as it were, a backward view over its history from the time when the Ten went out on the ground of profession, until the moment when the Five went in to the marriage feast. The great subject of the parable is readiness to meet the Bridegroom. The chief business of the household servant in the last parable was occupation with his Lord's interests. Here pre-eminently the great thought is occupation with the Lord Himself. May we all know more of it in a practical way day by day. The Coming of the Lord is the Hope of the Church, and therefore necessarily the hope of the individual believer, and it is from this latter standpoint it is looked at here. The imagery of the parable is extremely simple, yet divinely expressive.

"Virgins" — Separated ones, from a Greek root to "set apart."

"Lamps" — Profession.

"Oil" — The Holy Spirit.

"Vessels" — Hearts.

"Bridegroom" — Christ.

"Sleeping" — Unwatchfulness. The hope of the Coming lost to the Church for many ages.

"The Midnight Cry" — Is this truth restored. The first thing that the Lord emphasises is that the ten Virgins "went out" to meet the Bridegroom. And this is another proof, if such were needed, that He is here contemplating the heavenly calling of believers of the present dispensation. In no sense could the Jew be said to be called out of the world. Indeed, the world was, and is yet to be, the sphere of his blessing. But to His own the Lord could say, "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). When the Church lost that "called out" character and gave up the Hope of her heavenly calling, she began to fraternise with the world. When she came down to the world's level, the edge of the world's hatred was blunted, persecution ceased, and the Virgins "slumbered." Very soon even real Christians became like the world, and the world took on a profession of religion and became like the Christians, as we see in Christendom to-day. The result was that the precious truth of apostolic days, dear to the heart of every persecuted saint — the nearness of the Coming of the One he loved — was lost to view. Christians were at home in the world and did not need Him. Mere professors did not want Him. True and false, they all slumbered, and finally slept. But an explanation of the promise was needed and easily found. It was taught by those who wanted to prophesy smooth things, that He "often came." So He came at the fall of Jerusalem, or at the Reformation. So He comes at death, and will come at the "day of judgment." How any one of these comings — if we may call any of them such — agrees with the Bridegroom character of the Coming of the Lord Jesus, it would be difficult to say. The turning point of the parable is the Midnight Cry: "BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM!"

Evidently it is the Spirit preparing His way by means of watchmen raised up for the purpose. Is the midnight cry and the recovery of the doctrine of the coming, so long lost, one and the same thing? If so there is this difficulty that in the parable, after the cry, the awakened foolish Virgins were too late to procure oil for their dying lamps. But we could not carry the simile into history or else we should have to say that it is now too late for the mere professor to be saved; which, thank God, is not the case. May it not be, that, even as, after the Lord was crucified, risen, and ascended, there was still the lingering of grace over Israel, according to Peter's testimony in Acts 2:1-47; so it is to-day. The Bridegroom has been announced, yet the long suffering of our God, which is salvation, induces Him to tarry yet a moment longer before the trumpet sounds. If this be so, how near is that moment? He is, as it were, on the way, and may arrive at any moment. May our loins be girded about, and our lights burning, and we, like unto men that wait for their Lord (Luke 12:35). When the awakened foolish Virgins realised that even the possession of trimmed oilless lamps was not sufficient preparation for the Bridegroom, they further manifested their foolishness, by going for oil to the wrong place. So it is, and so it will be in Christendom. Mere professors may hold even the truth of the Lord's Coming as a mere doctrine or creed, which never influences either their hopes or their ways. They will learn, alas! when too late, that nothing but saving grace in the heart communicated by the Holy Spirit Himself can fit any soul for the Coming of the Lord; and the great point of the parable is preparedness for that coming. The great essential for the Virgins was oil. The one thing needful for all is the Holy Spirit in the heart. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ,

he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). "They that were ready went in with him" — it is the heavenly hope realised. The Bride is not mentioned. Co-related truths are never all stated in one parable. In Matthew 22:1-46 we have a parable dealing with the condition of the Guests. Here it is a question of the Coming of the Bridegroom. In Revelation 19:1-21 we get a glimpse of the Bride in her bridal array, and in Revelation 21:1-27 we again see her, but now it is the day of display. "And the door was shut." Five little words, yet of the most solemn import. To-day they come to all as a warning. Some day soon they will express an accomplished fact, with tremendous realities for all. Some will be shut IN, with the Lord they have loved and longed for; in the presence of the Father, and in the Father's House.

"Oh I what a Home, but such His love That He must bring us there."

"And the door was shut." Some will be shut OUT from all the joys and all the glories of the heavenly home, and shut out for ever. To the impassioned prayer, "Lord, Lord, open to us," the answer is, "I know you not." Scripture knows nothing of a "second chance," or "larger hope." These are vain ideas conceived only in the minds of foolish men, who love sin too much to turn to God now in the day of His grace, and so fall into the snare of Satan, to the loss of their souls. Is the reader a mere professor only? If so, oh, be warned in time, for the Coming of the Bridegroom is nigh, even at the door.

"Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

One other parable was needed to express yet another aspect of Christian profession during the absence of the King.

He has gone into a far country, and the question is, "What are His servants doing for Him in His absence?" In the first parable of our chapter He takes the title of "Bridegroom," and every thought connected with that is of love and affection. It is pure grace on His part without any thought of merit on the part of the loved one, and that is one aspect of truth. But here He takes another title, that of "Lord." He was "the Lord of those servants" (Matthew 25:19). As such, they were under His authority, and it was to Him that they should render an account, on His return, for the "goods" He had committed to their trust. We do well to remember that this is before each one of us. "Wherefore let us labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him" (2 Corinthians 5:9, R.V.). In the parable the servants receive, in varying amounts, goods from their Lord to trade with in His absence. It is grace going out to others, and by those who have received gifts from their risen Lord so to serve Him. The parable is similar to that in Luke 19:1-48, only there, the great point is the Christian's responsibility according to his opportunities. There, all received equal amounts, but produced different results, for which they are rewarded differently. Here they receive different amounts, and secure different results, but the good are rewarded each cent per cent, because both were alike faithful to the amount of their gift. Here it is the sovereignty of God. In Luke it is the responsibility of man. The talents, then, were given to be used for the Lord, not for the glory of the servant. We are in a world of need, and there are souls to be won for Christ. Just as a business man is in business, to do business, so should the Christian be here for Christ. The Lord Himself could say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49), and He was the Pattern Servant.

We may gather from the Lord's teaching that every believer has some talent imparted to him according to his "several ability," and that it is expected of him that he will use that gift or talent for the Lord's glory. Now, ability may be either natural, or acquired, and, if acquired, may also be developed in proportion as he seeks diligently so to do. This, taken in connection with the injunction to Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him, would show that by diligent and faithful exercise of our talents and abilities, both the vessel and the talent it contains will alike increase, the sphere of service widen, and the blessing extend. This should be the desire of every servant — the object in view ever being the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, even a believer may allow his gift to lie dormant, and through mere slothfulness either of body or mind, neglect to equip himself for the service and opportunities that may lie just at hand. A man cannot "do the work of an evangelist" unless he goes where souls are to be found. The Word of Christ cannot "dwell richly" in a saint unless he make it his study. No Sunday school teacher will succeed unless he seeks diligently, earnestly, and prayerfully to learn the Book he has set out to teach. To speak a word in season to him that is weary, we must be ever drinking from the Living Spring. There are ever very practical lessons to be learned when the Lord is the Teacher. No one teaches like Him. But the possibility is counted upon here, as in all parables, of a man taking the place of a servant who never knew the Lord. There is no question at all of the "wicked and slothful servant" being a Christian. He was not. His words, his actions, and his end abundantly prove it. But the Lord uses the case, and the end of the mere professor, to warn of the possible danger a real Christian is exposed to in this matter. The man hid his talent in the earth, instead of using it for his Master, and it may be possible that for some the "earth" is a greater snare than the "world." A Christian man may have no desire for the world's concert rooms or theatres, and yet allow his business concerns so to engross his heart and life that every moment is devoted to the things of earth, and he can find neither time nor interest for the things of the Lord. It was the man with one talent that proved false to his trust, and it may be safely assumed that men of this class compose the majority of the servants. Outstanding "five talent" men are but few; hence the warning in the parable extends to the greatest number. We are tempted to think that because we can do but little, that little left undone will not matter. But not so. The sons of Merari bore the pins and cords of the Tabernacle, and their service was just as important as that of the sons of Kohath, who bore the sacred vessels.

We have next to consider the Lord's relationships to the earth in His character of "King." He has already been before us as "Bridegroom," and "Lord," and if, as the Bridegroom, He touches all the springs of the heart's affections, so as Lord, He reminds us of the salutary truth that we belong to Him. He has bought us with His Blood. But nowhere in Scripture is He spoken of as King of the Church. He is the King of Israel and the King of Nations: when He reigns, "all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him. Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." Well might the Psalmist, as he considered that Glorious One, of whom Solomon in all his glory was but a faint type, exclaim, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious Name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory" (Psalms 72:1-20). The introduction of this day of blessing for a groaning creation is now set before us.

"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" (Matthew 25:31-32).

It is no question of a general judgment at the "end of the world," as so much of the current theology of the day would teach, but which scripture nowhere warrants. If it be compared with the judgment of the "Great White Throne," it will be seen that the subjects, test, time, place, and sentence are all different. Far from there being only one judgment spoken of in the Bible, there are at least seven: —

1. The Judgment of the Cross: the basis of every blessing for man.
2. The judgment Seat of Christ: the manifestation day for every believer (2 Corinthians 5:10).
3. The Judgment of the Living Nations upon the Earth (Matthew 25:31).
4. The Judgment of the Great White Throne, when earth and heaven have fled away (Revelation 20:11).
5. The Judgment in the House of God: the Father dealing in Government with His own (1 Peter 1:17).
6. The judgment by the Assembly, as to that which is in keeping with the Name of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:4).
7. The Judgment of ourselves, by ourselves, so as to allow nothing in our ways inconsistent with Christ's death (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Here, in our Gospel, however, we have the details of the picture of which Matthew 13:41-44 gives the outline. It is the deliberative, sessional judgment, by the Son of Man of the living nations upon the earth at His appearing. The passage links up with Matthew 24:31. The Lord takes up the thread of events in connection with the earth and pictures what will take place after the upheavals of the "last week." At His appearing He has destroyed the beast and the false prophet, taken, as it were, in red-handed rebellion against Him (Revelation 19:1-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:8). He is now about to put right the place they had put wrong: to measure out judgment to their self-deluded followers: recompense to the faithful of the earth who had been true to the Hope of His Coming, and introduce the righteous nations into all the blessings of the millennial Kingdom, of which Psalms 72:1-20 gives so glowing a description.

What, then, is the condition of things upon the earth just before the Son of Man appears, and who are its occupants? The Church has been called away to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18), and with the Church, the Holy Spirit, whose operations of grace will, after that period, assume a new form. Men of the world little realise how much the world owes to the presence of the Spirit of God now. He is that restraining power who is preventing the outbreak of the powers of evil. When the Spirit is taken out of the way, evil will come to a head, under a man so wholly possessed by the spirit of Satan, that Scripture knows him as the Man of Sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Ten different names are applied to him, clearly defining both his origin and his character. He is called: —

- 1 The Man of the Earth (Psalms 10:18).
- 2 The False Prophet (Revelation 19:20).

- 3 The Antichrist (1 John 2:18).
- 4 The Beast from the Earth (Revelation 13:1-18).
- 5 The Son of Perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
- 6 The Man of Sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
- 7 That Wicked [One] (2 Thessalonians 2:8).
- 8 The Idol Shepherd (Zechariah 11:17).
- 9 The King (Daniel 11:36).
- 10 One Coming in His Own Name (John 5:43).

It is the revealing of this Person that brings matters on earth to an issue. To-day, the question is — For Christ, or against Him? Then the question will be — For Antichrist, or against him? The mass of the Jews will be "for him." Having come in his own name, he will be received by them as the Lord forewarned them (John 5:43). Apostate Christendom, taking pleasure in unrighteousness, and having refused the love of the truth, will believe "the lie" and find themselves in the same unhappy company. It is a most solemnising thought, that, when the Lord comes for His people, the day of grace for Christendom will be over for ever. Sudden and rapid will be its development into the "Babylon" of Revelation 17:1-18, and as swift will be its overthrow at the hands of the Son of Man. In addition to the nation of the Jews gathered back to Palestine in unbelief, and apostate Christendom in European and other lands, there will also be the vast masses of the hitherto unevangelised heathen nations. How will the solemn events of the time of the end affect them? To answer this question we must turn to Romans 11:1-36. See the whole chapter. The argument there is, that Israel, rejecting Christ, was rejected. Israel rejected, blessing thereupon flowed out to the Gentiles. God visited them to "take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). "Now," says the apostle, "if the fall of them, (the Jews) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" (Romans 11:12). In other words, Israel's fall brought blessing to the Gentiles, and Israel's restoration, when the Lord comes back, will bring double blessing — "life from the dead." This blessing these nations are offered in the proclamation of the Kingdom Gospel of Matthew 24:14, and Revelation 14:6; and the acceptance or rejection of the King's messengers ("My brethren") fixes their place and title to life, or condemnation. But the King's commendation of the righteous here (Matthew 25:34-36) brings out another thing. Those who had heralded the tidings of the Coming King had done so in the face of the greatest difficulties. Antichrist's followers had accepted the "mark of the beast" (Revelation 13:1-18), and were content with the great pseudo-religious-social system introduced by him. They wanted neither God's King, nor God's righteousness. So hunger and thirst, banishment, nakedness, and prison lay before the evangelists. With these servants the King here identifies Himself, even as with another persecuted company, when He arrested their persecutor, Saul of Tarsus. And those who ministered to their necessities hear, with joyful wonder, that what they had done was reckoned by the King even as if done unto Himself. And now we reach the time when the promises in Matthew 5:1-48 will receive their complete fulfilment. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Now, the mourners are comforted; the meek inherit the earth, and the merciful obtain mercy. The

day of regeneration has come, and they go into life eternal. But there is the other side. He gathers out of His Kingdom all things that do offend. It must be so, for righteousness is about to reign. During the present day of grace righteousness suffers because evil is predominant. In the eternal day it will dwell. Every stain of sin will then have been for ever eradicated. But here, not only is there the company on the right hand — "the sheep"; but there are also those on the left hand — "the goats." And the remarkable thing about the latter is that their judgment, as here set forth, is simply on the ground of what they had not done. It would seem as if they had tried to take a middle course between the "for" and the "against." They had not been among the followers of the "beast," taken in high-handed rebellion against the King, and slain with the sword (Revelation 19:21). Nevertheless, neither had they identified themselves with His cause and with His servants. They had seen the servants both persecuted and slain, and had extended neither succour nor sympathy, thereby showing the state of their hearts. Is not the lesson here, that, in divine things, there can be no middle ground. Men are for the Lord, or against Him, as He has already declared.

Solemn and sad is their doom. They had done the devil's work by abstaining from the work of God, and they find their place in "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

It is well to note that every mark of the moral condition of the later day is with us now. Superstition and infidelity are as rampant in Europe to-day as ever they were during the dark ages. In addition, men of the world are binding themselves together into all kinds of "associations" and "brotherhoods" to further their own selfish ends. And, sad to say, many Christians are voluntarily joining themselves up with such, thereby both slighting their heavenly calling and participating in the "unequal yoke." In a coming day the "beast" will grasp the reins of all such confederacies, and use them for his own ungodly ends. Mark the fidelity of the coming witnesses, who will rather give up life itself than compromise their testimony by receiving the mark of the beast. The Father's Name on their foreheads will bring persecution and death here, but life and glory hereafter.

Well will it be with us if our every gift, every power and every hour, be consecrated to Him alone, who, in grace, hath called us to be for Him, in a world that is still against Him.

01.11 - Section 11. Mat_26:1-75, Mat_27:1-55, Mat_28:1-20

Section 11. Matthew 26:1-75, Matthew 27:1-55, Matthew 28:1-20. The King goes into Death and Judgment, in order that His Followers may enter into Life and Glory

What feelings of awe and wonder must have filled the hearts of the disciples, as they sat on the green brow of Olivet, in the dusk of that April evening, and listened spell-bound to those prophetic utterances which fell from the lips of the Master. With words of startling imagery He had unrolled before their gaze the scroll of time, right up to that moment when — the "Times of the Gentiles" ended — His feet would again stand upon that same mount. The sorrows of earth: the glories of Heaven: the unutterable woes of hell, had been revealed to them, by the One who alone could reveal them. And when He ceased, their minds might well be arrested by the contemplation of the solemn events of which He had spoken. But His next words were more arresting still.

"Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified" — that which they had so long feared, had come at last. Their Master was about to die. And with saddened hearts they rose up and pursued their way to Bethany. The next day (Thursday) until the evening, seems to have been spent here by the Lord in seclusion and retirement. We may not seek to enter into that which occupied His mind during this — the one day of repose in all His public ministry. But with reverent and subdued hearts let us follow the narrative of that which is revealed. On this same day, it would appear, His enemies in Jerusalem were busy plotting His death, not like the dignified and responsible authorities of an ordered state, in open Council Hall, but plotting in darkness, in the high priest's house, like a company of lawless brigands. So are Israel's rulers here set before us. And now our Gospel goes back to tell us of another meeting, which had been held four days previously (see John 12:1-50) in Bethany, in the house of Simon the Leper. In point of time, this feast had taken place on the evening before He rode into the city; but Matthew frequently groups the events of his narrative so as to present arresting contrasts to the reader.

Here we have two gatherings, both occupied with the Lord Jesus. The first, a gathering of His foes, thirsting for His blood. The other, a gathering of His friends, longing to lavish upon Him the tribute of their love. Only two feasts that we read of were ever made to the Lord. The first we get recorded in Matthew 9:1-38 and Luke 5:1-39. There a great company of publicans and sinners had gathered around Him for blessing, and blessed they assuredly would be. Here, it is a company of believers gathered in type on resurrection ground. Lazarus, who only a few weeks previously had been raised from the dead, was one of them who sat at the table. And Martha, busy as of old — served. But Martha's spirit is mellowed and ennobled with the passing years. She is no longer the critic of others, as we first find her in Luke 10:1-42, and doubtless the Lord's eye here rests upon her with approval. This feast is not in her own house. She might have claimed the place of a guest at the table, beside her brother; yet such is the humility of her mind, or shall we say, the activity of her temperament, that she prefers to be among them as one that serveth. If the disciples had not learned the lesson, she had. The Church of Christ owes much to the patient, hidden, unselfish,

devoted service of sisters like Martha. Their service may be unrequited and unacknowledged on earth, but "the day" will disclose it, and the reward is sure.

Lazarus is in the place of communion, but Mary alone enters in spirit into the "fellowship of His death." The King is going into death and judgment that His followers may enter into life and glory. She pours the precious ointment on His head. She anoints the King, but it is for His burial. These three were in the circle of closest intimacy with the Lord, and it would be unwise to appreciate the one at the expense of the other. Communion, service, and worship they assuredly typify, and these three things make up the sum of all true Christian life. So far the disciples had learned none of all this. But we must not forget that, historically, they were still on the road to Jerusalem. They had not yet seen the reception He met with there; neither had they as yet heard the words recorded in Matthew 26:2. Visions of earthly glory may still have been before them, with themselves in places of honour as almoners for the King. John's Gospel shows us that the spokesman on this occasion was the betrayer; and one sinner destroyeth much good. Alas, that real disciples should have manifested the Judas spirit, where, by closer intimacy with their Master, they might have exhibited that of Mary, and shared in the blessed memorial of the one who "did what she could" (Mark 14:1-72). For Judas nothing was of value that could not be turned into money. Christ Himself, to him, was only an object whereby he might add to his ill-gotten gains. For half the cost of the ointment or less, he was willing to betray his Lord — himself a deceived tool of the devil, before he became a willing tool of the priests. Such is the danger of trifling with temptation. From that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. This opportunity Judas found on the evening of the Passover. The Passover is a subject of the deepest interest, and it is all-important to get a right view of the truths taught thereby. It is God's starting point in all His ways of blessing.

God is essentially holy. Man is essentially sinful, and the question was — How can a holy God righteously bless a sinful man?

Adam — a sinner and forgiven — where was God's righteousness? Adam — a sinner and punished — where was His love? But in the Cross, of which the Passover was a type, every attribute of the character of God is displayed, and all the deep, deep need of sinful men fully met. The Passover spoke, in the first place, of the just judgment about to descend upon every house in Egypt not sheltered by the token of the blood. God was seeking sinners to slay — not to save. The Blood on the lintel stayed the stroke of justice, for it showed that death, in type, had already been there. They were sheltered. Inside the house, and under that shelter, they partook of the lamb roast with fire. It was identification with the victim, and thus a confession that death was deserved. Sheltered by the blood and sustained by the feast, Israel marched out of the land of bondage. God was known to them first as a Judge, whose claims had been righteously met in the death of another, and then as a Saviour-God, whose power and grace were now free to flow out towards them without measure and without end. The death of the Lord Jesus not only fulfilled every type of the old economy, but brought in blessing far beyond what Old Testament saints could have dreamed of. The supper is not a type of His death, as the Passover was, for in His death the type is fulfilled. It is a memorial of dying love. The shed blood in the sacrifices of old spoke only of a remembrance of sins. The Blood of Christ declares the glorious truth that now there can be remission of sins. The sins are gone, and the believer is brought to God. The bread broken, and the wine poured out, speak of Christ in death. We remember Him in the place of death, where He

has been; but we know Him now alive for evermore. And further, we do this in expectation of seeing Him again — "till He come." The Coming of the Lord is what we wait for. This feast is a testimony to the world that we take our place with the Lord of Glory whom the world crucified. In the presence of God, of angels, men, and demons, we "show the Lord's death till he come." The blood is shed for "many." If Israel reject Him yet the blessings procured by the Cross will flow out world-wide, and Gentile aliens will become, through grace, partakers of the heavenly calling. Luke records the Lord's touching request, "This do in remembrance of me." His people are ever on His heart. He would have us never to forget His dying love. Four things come out in connection with this feast of love: —

1 The Word of Christ — "This do."

2 The Work of Christ — "In remembrance."

3 The Person of Christ — "Of ME."

4 The Coming of Christ — "Till He come." When He comes the Supper will cease. The Passover is unlike the Supper in this: It was to be "observed as an ordinance for ever" (Exodus 12:1-51). And in the coming millennial day, the Passover feast will be celebrated with greater solemnity than has ever yet been seen. The bullock, which speaks of fullest intelligence, will take the place of the passover lamb, and living waters will go forth in abundance from the threshold of the house, nourishing the tree whose fruit is for meat, and whose leaves are for medicine (Ezekiel 45:1-25).

Then, again, the Supper cup is the blood of the new Covenant. The old Covenant was a covenant of works, and the blood in Exodus, which sealed it (Exodus 24:8), was a sign of death for the Covenant-breaker, as Israel has proved to their sorrow. The New Covenant is also with Israel, but the shed Blood in connection with it, speaks, as we have seen, of remission, instead of remembrance of sins, and Israel through it, will be brought into blessing on the ground of sovereign grace alone.

Believers today are blessed exactly on the same ground, but with this difference, that with Gentiles there was no Covenant relationship, yet all that Israel will receive as the earthly people, we shall receive in a richer, higher, and fuller way as a heavenly people, and this, too, before Israel's day of blessing is introduced. The day is soon coming when He will drink the cup in a new way, with His own in the Father's Kingdom. Then, indeed, will have come the time of which the prophet spake — "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:1-12). At His Table we respond to His desire, remember His death, return His love, rejoice in His presence, and our hearts beat high in the prospect of soon seeing Him again (John 16:22). But men are ever ready to abuse what grace provides, and Christendom, by making this memorial into what they call a "sacrament" (from the Latin "sacramentum," the Roman military oath), and defining it as an "outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual grace," have largely lost the true meaning which the Supper is intended to convey. Not only so, but the first error has led to others, Transubstantiationists believe that, at the word of the priests the bread and wine changes its substance and becomes the very body and blood of Christ. Such is Romanist ignorance, darkness, and blasphemy.

Consubstantiationists believe that with the bread and wine there is present the body and blood of Christ. Such is the error which one man, otherwise greatly used of. God, has brought into the

Lutheran Church. Consecrationists believe that before there can be a "real communion" the bread and wine must be "blessed" or "consecrated" by the ordained "priest" who officiates.

Thus, what was intended by the Lord to be a loving remembrance of accomplished Redemption, has become, in the minds of many, mystified into what they call a "sacrament," or a "means of grace." Ritualism has taken the place of reality, and man has usurped the place of the spirit of God. Others, alas, who profess to love the Lord, ignore His last request by neglecting altogether this wondrous privilege of the saints. May we take heed to the apostolic injunction, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Hebrews 10:25). In the Gospels, then, we get the Supper Instituted; in the Acts we get the Supper Celebrated; and in the Epistles we get the Supper Expounded.

"And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives." The Jews at their Passover Supper were in the habit of reciting Psalms 113:1-9; Psalms 114:1-8 after the "first cup"; and then, after the "third cup" — called the "cup of blessing" — they sang Psalms 115:1-18; Psalms 116:1-19; Psalms 117:1-2; Psalms 118:1-29. If the Lord here used the same psalms, how well they would apply and be fulfilled in Him —

"The sorrows of death compassed me, And the pains of hell gat hold upon me:

I found trouble and sorrow.

Then called I upon the name of the Lord;

O Lord, I beseech thee, Deliver my soul.

God is the Lord, which hath showed us light:

Bind the sacrifice with cords, Even unto the horns of the altar" (Psalms 116:3-4; Psalms 118:27). And now He goes forth to Gethsemane's sorrow. But before entering the garden He warns the eleven that they were about to meet a time of testing which flesh and blood would not be able to bear. All would be offended in Him. The shepherd smitten, the sheep would be scattered. But what a word for their hearts, had they but had faith, even as a grain of mustard seed — "When I am RISEN AGAIN I will go before you into Galilee."

Peter's history here comes before us as a warning against self-confidence. And we have to mark that neither love nor knowledge is sufficient provision against the power of the enemy. That Peter loved his Master with all the true warm love of which his impulsive and affectionate nature was capable is certain (John 21:15). That he knew Him to be the Christ of God is equally certain (Matthew 16:16). But let us be less occupied with Peter's failure than with the lesson for ourselves arising therefrom. And that is, that if the first of the Apostles needed a strength beyond his own in the hour of trial, how much more do we need it?

Taking with Him the three disciples who had stood with Him at the bedside of Jairus's daughter and there witnessed His power — who had followed Him to the Holy Mount, and there witnessed His glory, He went a little farther, and, counting upon their human sympathy, said unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with me." Alas, they prove as unsympathetic towards His sufferings as before, they had been irresponsive to His glory. Just here the secret of all the failure comes out. A prayerless life is a powerless life. There can be no

standing for God, where there is no dependence upon God; and if there be no going forward in the Christian life there is certain to be failure and backsliding. So Peter found to his cost. At the close of the chapter he gets his own moral weakness disclosed to himself, by the One who alone could restore, strengthen, and forgive. Peter is seen (Matthew 26:33) self-confident, (Matthew 26:40) sleeping, (Matthew 26:51) rash, (Matthew 26:56) cowardly, (Matthew 26:70) bold in denying his Master. Inside the high priest's house there was the good confession of the Master; outside there is the thrice-repeated bold denial of the disciple — "I know not the man." And yet, as if torn two ways, love makes him linger near. The cold, weary hours of the April morning creep slowly past. Peter is sitting with the servants and warming himself beside their fire (Mark). Suddenly, what would be to others a common and unimportant sound, reached their ears. But to Peter, no thunder-burst could have been more appalling. In letters of light, his every word, motive, and action of the last few hours rose before him, and turning away from himself with utter loathing, he rose up, went out and wept bitterly. What a fall! What repentance, and what grace that could produce such a recovery! It is here we get a true insight into the real character of this great-hearted disciple whom we have learned to know and love. But to return. Matthew 26:39 — "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Now He is alone with the Father. The moment was near when even God would forsake Him, and He would be alone, as no one ever was before, or could be. Separate from men because of what He was — the Holy One of God — He, on that Cross of shame, would be separated from God because of what He had voluntarily become — the Sin-bearer. No human eyes witnessed that scene in Gethsemane. No human ear listened to that cry of sorrow. Matthew, who wrote this account of it, was not even among the favoured three, who were the nearest to their Lord. The Holy Spirit of God alone inspired the record, and, in revealing the details of this solemn scene, surely He had something for us to learn therefrom. It is clearly the anticipation of the Cross. But if this is the anticipation, what must the reality have been? Shall we ever know? He knew, and spread it all out before His Father. The thrice-repeated prayer could not be heard. The Son of Man must be lifted up. As the Holy One, we see Him shrinking from becoming the Covenant-Victim, yet as the Obedient One, He receives the cup "from His Father's hand." Our sins had filled it. Satan presented it But here He looks past all these, and in perfect communion with His Father says, "Thy will be done." The prophetic utterances of Psalms 22:1-31 had already given the exercises of His soul, in view of, and upon, the Cross; as Isaiah 53:1-12 had spoken of Him as the great substitutionary Victim — the Lamb led to the slaughter. In Psalms 22:2, He speaks of a prayer that is not heard, but Hebrews 5:7, referring surely to this same solemn moment, tells of Him "offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, to him that was able to save him from (literally, out of) death; and was heard, in that he feared." And saved out of death He was; and in resurrection life, and power "he became the Author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him."

Returning to the three disciples, the Lord found them asleep and, addressing Peter, He said, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." The gentle rebuke might well have been a warning to Peter. Not many hours had passed since he had vowed to die with his Master. Might he not, then, be expected to watch with Him? But if he refused to profit by the Lord's instructions, he had to learn by his own bitter experiences, what the

flesh is even in an apostle. So will it be with all who enter the school of God. The traitor comes. The Lord, having passed in anticipation through all the awful agony and sorrow of the Cross, is now calm in the presence of the ruffian mob.

Oh, what a scene is here! Judas in his treachery. Peter in his rashness. The shrinking disciples. The priestly hirelings. The Lord Jesus in divine dignity in the midst. One word from His lips and twelve legions of angels would have taken the place of Peter's faltering sword. But it was their hour, and the power of darkness. The chief priests in the high priest's house sit in judgment, not to find the truth, but to find false witnesses. And even here their search is vain, for though many are called, yet none agree. Before the priests the Lord is condemned because of His own confession that He was the Son of God. But on their part, Caiaphas's question itself was only a cover for their hypocrisy. His death they had long ago decided on, and any means to reach that end was acceptable in their eyes. The Lord, as ever, gives them truth beyond what they desired to learn. The day was coming when they would see Him, as "Son of Man," sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. At the moment, the power seemed to be on their side, and they would use it to the full. No sooner has He been unjustly condemned than His judges step down from the bench to spit in His face (Mark), while the servants buffet, blindfold, and mock Him. It is neither the rude soldiers of the governor, nor the Gentile executioners here. It is the leaders of Israel that are so brought before us. They are seen seeking false witnesses: condemning the guiltless and setting an example in hatred and cruelty. The Son of Man thus stood before the leaders of Israel. What a moment when the leaders of Israel shall stand before the Son of Man.

Matthew 27:1-66 opens with "all the chief priests and elders" united in the awful sin of delivering up the Son of God to the Gentile power. Thus the greatest guilt falls upon those who had the greatest light. So Peter, in Acts 3:1-26, charges home their guilt upon them. Having condemned the guiltless, they now seek to colour their unholy proceedings with a show of legality, and deliver Him bound into the custody of Pilate.

Meanwhile, if they are not seized with remorse, Judas is. He brought back the wages of unrighteousness, and confessed his sin to the priests instead of to God. Satan, having finished with his dupe, insults him before destroying him. "What is that to us?" is their sneering answer to his conscience-stricken cry. Casting down the money he had sold his soul to acquire, he hastens, bent on self-destruction, to carry out the will of the devil. And now the hypocrisy of the human heart is here laid bare, as lately was its cruelty. The priests, with the money, purchased a burying-ground for strangers; but the public voice which is often keen to detect the motives of public men, gave the field its rightful name "Aceldama" — "The Field of Blood." Such their city and land soon became. And, alas, the whole world; for the guilt of Innocent Blood rests yet upon the world where the Lord of Glory died.

"And Jesus stood before the governor" — the presence of the Lord exposes the motives of every heart, and here we have next unfolded before us the heart history of a man scheming to retain place and power in this world, and utterly infidel as to the next. The policy of the priests, in bringing Him to Pilate, was to secure the intervention of the military power, and so shift the odium of the crime from their own heads, to that of the Romans. Pilate easily saw through their hypocrisy, and very soon arrived at the conclusion, which he held all through the closing scenes, that "it was for envy they had delivered him up." Finding no fault in Him, Pilate from henceforth sought to release

Him. But though strong in brute force, Pilate was wholly lacking in the true strength of moral principle. To release the Lord, Pilate must first placate the priests, in order to secure his own position with the cruel and suspicious Tiberius at Rome. Three attempts were made without avail. First, Pilate declares, "I find no fault in him." Then he offers to release Barabbas. And lastly, as if in the endeavour to assuage their thirst for blood, he declares himself willing to scourge the One whom he had thrice declared to be innocent. Such is the righteousness of man. But no man goes to hell unwarned. For the Roman of that day, the old "gods" of the Pantheon were "dead." A less virile and still more degrading superstition held them in bondage. Signs and omens were their guiding lights, and voices from the mystic land of dreams held powerful control over their minds. And God used what was perhaps the only avenue left open to that man's conscience, through the message sent to him by his wife. Her urgent entreaty but added to his indecision and increased his guilt, without giving power to do what he knew to be right.

Pilate's next shift was to send the Lord to Herod. And now the two Kings are together God's King and Man's King. We have already seen the character of man's king in Matthew 14:1-36 Here his acts are in keeping with his character. "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate" (Luke 23:11).

One more effort the governor made, but it was answered by the fierce cry, "If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12). It was their last argument, and it prevailed. To retain the favour of Caesar, Pilate knowingly condemned the Innocent. That Pilate, after all, lost that favour, history, which we have no reason to doubt, records. And shortly afterwards he followed Judas on the same road to self-destruction. His mockery of hand washing was a feeble attempt to conceal his weakness and shift the guilt of his crime, but it was enough to induce the priests to invoke the consequences of the awful crime upon themselves and their children. That God in righteous government took them at their word, their history conclusively declares.

What a revelation of hearts is here, and all against the Son of God. The leaders persuading the people to choose a felon. The governor yielding up to death the Innocent. The king of Israel mocking Israel's Messiah. The people willing to accept any one if only the Lord is condemned, and finally accepting the responsibility of slaying the Prince of Life.

Now Pilate scourges the One he had thrice pronounced innocent. The soldiers gather round to satiate their cruelty with a sight of His sufferings. Here it is not the Jews that surround Him. The soldiers of the governor had little in common with the servants of the priests, but they were alike in this — the natural cruelty of the human heart, led on by Satan.

He is

- (1) stripped;
- (2) scourged;
- (3) buffeted;
- (4) mocked;
- (5) spit upon;

(6) crowned with thorns;

(7) crucified.

Sevenfold sufferings measured out to the Holy Son of God by the guilty sons of men. The Jews demand His blood. The Gentiles shed it. And psalm and prophecy is fulfilled as they gather round His Cross to insult the Holy Sufferer. Even the guilty robbers can forget, for a moment, their own agonies, to add to His. But to continue the narrative of our Evangelist — let us notice here how God overruled all the malice and mockery of men for the fulfilment of prophecy and a testimony to His Son, the very opposite of what they intended. Matthew records that they put on Him a scarlet robe, and by that kingly colour they thereby declared that He was the King of the Jews. In Herod's palace He was arrayed in a "gorgeous" (white or shining) robe, thereby testifying to His sinless character. The priests and scribes who had followed might stand and "vehemently accuse" Him. He was arrayed before them in that which spoke of perfect innocence. Mark and John, again, tell of a purple robe. All are divinely suited to the way in which the Lord is brought before us in the different gospels. John tells us that He was the Son of God. Mark says that He became the Servant. But blessed be His name, the Son who became the Servant will in a soon-coming day be known as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His Imperial character, expressed by the purple, will then be manifested to the whole universe. And so again at the Cross, Pilate wrote a title — was it not this time to mock the Jew, instead of mocking the Lord? —

"This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." So the complete title read, but each of the evangelists gives that portion suitable to his subject. They may be compared as under: — This is Jesus * the King of the Jews (Matt.) * * * The King of the Jews (Mark) This is * *The King of the Jews (Luke) * Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews (John) Such was man's part. But "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." God draws a veil of darkness round the scene when the great question of ATONEMENT is taken up. The bitter cry from that darkness, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" expresses a forsaking which He, the Holy Victim, could alone measure. As we contemplate this most solemn scene we can only bow our hearts and worship.

It has been well said, that the Cross is the centre of two eternities. The past eternity, if we may so speak, looked forward to it. All eternity to come will look back. In it God was fully displayed as Light and Love. His righteousness was so vindicated that His mercy might flow out unhinderedly. By it we are brought to God. "He is the propitiation for our sins." God's holy nature has been glorified. God's perfect love can now be lavished upon those who have been reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. The Great Work of ATONEMENT is God's wonderful provision whereby all this may be accomplished (Leviticus 16:1-34).

God has been pleased to present this to us from different standpoints: —

1 The propitiatory character of the death of Christ provides the ground where God can meet the sinner in righteousness (1 John 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31).

2 The expiatory character of the death of Christ meets our guilty condition. We were sinful, and sin must be put away (Hebrews 9:1-28).

3 The substitutionary character of the death of Christ meets our responsibility. We were condemned, and Another must take our place and bear our judgment (1 Peter 2:1-25).

4 The redeeming character of the death of Christ meets our state. As slaves of sin and Satan, only a mighty ransom could deliver us. We are now no longer slaves, but sons, with the spirit of sons, and waiting for the redemption of the body (Romans 8:1-39; Revelation 5:1-14).

Here at the Cross every question is raised and settled. God's glory is righteously vindicated. Man's need is fully met. Satan's power is for ever broken. But — to complete the mighty work — it remained but for Him to die. Death followed sin; and, taking the sinner's place, He met the sinner's doom. But He went into death in order that He might destroy him that had the power of it — that is, the devil. He was already the Victor over him. Now, by the assertion of His divine power, He dismissed His Spirit and died. He had power to lay down His life and power to take it again (John 10:18).

There are seven utterances on the Cross, somewhat in the following order: —

1 "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

2 "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

3 Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani (Matthew 27:46).

4 "Woman, behold thy Son!" (John 19:26).

5 "I thirst" (John 19:28).

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

7 "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). The Prince of Life has gone into the domain of death. Great results will certainly follow, and they begin immediately. The number of separate striking incidents which are grouped together within the sixteen closing verses of this wonderful chapter is remarkable. The first and immediate result of the Lord's death was the rending asunder, from top to bottom, of the temple veil. And this event was coincident with the offering of the evening sacrifice at the ninth hour. Our Evangelist records the fact. Another inspired apostle gives us the divine commentary thereon. Never more need another innocent lamb bleed under the sacrificial knife. The true Lamb of God, the great Antitype of every sacrifice, had died, and now, for the believer, there is remission of sins, instead of their remembrance (Hebrews 10:3-14). The temple, as is well known, was divided into two parts. Into the first went the priests daily. In the second, or Holy of Holies, there was, in Solomon's temple, a manifestation of God in the Shekinah glory. Man durst not go in, and God did not come out. But now the rent veil spoke of the fact that God, through the death of the Lord Jesus, was fully revealed, without a veil, either to hide or separate. And further, there is also what that death has done for the believer. It has fitted him for the presence of God in light. And so, to refer again to Hebrews 10:1-39, we are fitted to draw near. We are invited to draw near, and we have a Great High Priest to maintain our souls ever in the place of conscious nearness. THE BLOOD is the foundation of our every blessing.

Nature itself seemed to have its part at this sublime moment. Quaking earth and rending rocks were doubtless only the agencies employed by the mighty hand of God to open the graves of the

saints, but they testify to the solemn character of the events which are taking place. And Scripture is careful to state that it was after His resurrection that the saints themselves arose.

There is also the effect upon the Gentile centurion. All the synoptists record it, but only Matthew includes "those that were with him." Our Evangelist, as we have frequently seen, often indicates the widening out of Kingdom blessing far beyond the narrow bounds of Israel, and here for the first time we have a Gentile company convinced and confessing, "truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

Let us pause here, and contemplate for a moment the condition of things on the evening of this day of days in the world's history.

It is between the hours of four and six o'clock (our time). A dead Christ, refused by His nation, betrayed by one of His own disciples, murdered by the Gentiles, hangs upon a gibbet. His few followers, in whose breasts hope and fear had alternated during the week gone by, now find themselves with every hope gone, fear crushing out their courage and despair filling their hearts. Only one of them — the one who had lain in His bosom, now stood by His Cross. But if disciples fail, there are others who do not. The women that followed Him from Galilee, are, at the beginning, seen "afar off" (as we should expect) from that scene of horror: but later, it would appear (John 20:1-31), draw as near as the javelins of the Roman guard would permit. Faith may have died out of their hearts, but fear found no place there. Love — never stronger than when its object is most in need — is what characterises them, and the Spirit of God so describes their devotion. They would watch by His body until the stone concealed it from their sight. And now, to prepare for their "high day," the priests desire Pilate to order the removal of the bodies from the Cross, doubtless to be cast into a felon's grave. But again prophecy was to be fulfilled to the letter. "His grave was appointed with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death" (Isaiah 53:1-12). They might break the legs of the others, but "a bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:1-42). After the witness of the blood and water, which flowed from His spear-pierced side, God took care that no indignity should be offered to Him in death, who had so perfectly glorified God in His life. And just as one professed disciple had been bold in denying Him, so now a secret disciple becomes bold in confessing Him. Love for the Lord overcame the fear for his fellows. And Nicodemus, another rich man, shares in this most privileged service. If John 3:1-36 be Nicodemus's Conversion, and John 7:1-53 his Confession, here surely we have his Consecration. In open face of His enemies, in the time of their seeming triumph, these two devoted men identify themselves with their crucified Lord.

Joseph's new tomb receives His body. Love laid Him there. Hatred sealed the stone and set a watch. The women who had followed Him from Galilee, and who had waited at the Cross, to see, as they thought, the end, wait still to see the place where He was laid.

Three of the Marys are here there are four mentioned in the Gospels — and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward. Salome also is here with all her high hopes for James and John, which hopes now lie buried in His tomb. And so perhaps with them all. Nevertheless, oh, how they loved Him! But two of the Marys are singled out beyond the others — apart from the others. The great stone has been rolled to the door of the sepulchre. Joseph and the others have departed to their own homes, but "there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre" (Matthew 27:61).

It is the gathering dusk of the Friday evening. We shall meet them again in the glorious dawn of the third day morning, once more wending their way to the same spot, to be the first to hear from angel lips the heart-gladdening words, "He is not here: He is risen." But if Joseph's tomb received His body the priests would make sure that it should remain there. With this end in view they request from Pilate that means be taken to "make it sure." Pilate said unto them — was it again in mockery? — "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can." What words are adequate here? Imagination itself fails to cover the ground between the opposing forces. The puny power of the priests on the one side: on the other the almighty power of God. Man striving with his Maker.

Nervously, tensely apprehensive of that "third day," in spite of their apparent triumph, the priests are now as anxiously considering the question of how to keep a dead Man in the grave, as but yesterday they were scheming how to slay Him. But God overrules all for the glory of Christ. The world will demand proofs of His resurrection. His enemies will supply them abundantly. So again the servants of the priests visit Golgotha. They affix the official Great Seal of the Sanhedrim to the stone covering the door of the sepulchre. They set a watch — a watch of soldiers — of the best soldiers in the world — a watch of Roman soldiers, and depart to keep their "high" Sabbath, while the Lord of the Sabbath lies low within the tomb.

Surely death, the sealed stone, and the soldier guard can be jointly trusted to keep their prey secure. The seeming triumph of Satan is complete.

01.12 - Section 12. Mat_28:1-20.

Section 12. Matthew 28:1-20.

Resurrection, Victory, and Joy The great apostle of the Gentiles, in restating the foundations of Christian truth, emphasises three great cardinal facts: —

1 That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

2 That He was buried.

3 That He rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

"If Christ be not risen," argues the apostle, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." Our Evangelist gives us the historical narrative with which these truths are connected. The first and second we have already considered. The third comes within the scope of the present chapter. Matthew 28:1-20 is the Victory Chapter, and it opens with all the pomp and circumstance connected therewith. Triumph is its keynote, joy its dominant, and all power its climax. Man might set his seal upon the grave of Christ, but here God sets His seal upon the work of Christ. Having gone down under all the wrath of God and exhausted it, He is raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

Spite of stone, and seal, and soldier guard —

"Up from the grave He arose With a mighty triumph o'er His foes, Hallelujah." Of what use, then, all the scheming and planning of the priests? Much. They provide proof positive to the world of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The believer has, of course, another set of proofs which other Scriptures fully develop. But let us look at those His enemies supply. The Lord had so frequently foretold His resurrection, that, although His disciples had forgotten it, yet His enemies could not. Hence all their plans to prevent it. That He was dead before being taken down from the Cross, is proved by Pilate's refusal to allow the Body to be removed until assured by his own centurion that the Lord was already dead (Mark). The priests also testified to the fact when they demanded the watch — "He said, while he was yet alive." Now they knew He was dead. Again, they themselves, or by their servants, sealed His body in the tomb; and further, they drew a cordon of sixty soldiers round the sepulchre. Yet, notwithstanding all the precautions taken by the Jews to prevent it, early on the morning of the third day the stone was rolled away and the tomb was seen by all to be empty. The frightened soldiers announce it. The priests confess it. Fifty days afterwards the disciples proclaim it throughout the city, and the priests never once challenge their veracity. In Matthew 28:1-20 we have two different accounts of how this event took place, one by His friends and another by His foes.

Let us look at the latter first. Early in the morning some of the watch, fleeing from the terror of the angelic presence, entered the city to report the extraordinary event to their employers. The question now before their third council was no longer — How to keep Him in the tomb, but — How

to conceal the admitted fact that the Lord was risen. Boldly they will attempt the impossible. In the face of a rent veil the priests invent the lie. In face of angel and earthquake and empty tomb the soldiers disseminate it. They told the truth to the priests. Bribed, and taught by the priests, they lied to the people — "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept." The words of the priests so evidently carry their falsehood in their face that the Evangelist does not trouble to refute them. Neither need we. But it is well we should mark this: There is no fact of history more credibly attested by human evidence than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, when anyone, be he open infidel or religious "professor," denies this fact, he also denies with it the value of evidential testimony to all other facts of bygone time.

Nothing can be more conclusive than the way in which that great master of logic, the Apostle Paul, marshals the proofs of the resurrection for the Corinthian doubters; and the testimony of 500 witnesses cannot easily be overthrown. See the whole passage, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. There is: —

1 The testimony of the Scriptures (Matthew 28:3-4).

2 The testimony of Cephas (Matthew 28:5).

3 The testimony of the Twelve (Matthew 28:5).

4 The testimony of about 500 brethren (Matthew 28:6).

5 The testimony of James (Matthew 28:7).

6 The testimony of all the Apostles (Matthew 28:7).

7 The testimony of Paul (Matthew 28:8). A sevenfold chain of evidence, convincing and conclusive. Modernism, when it denies the fact of the resurrection, proclaims itself to be not only infidel, but illogical. Scripture exposes both its wickedness and its weakness. But let us return to the narrative of inspiration.

Very early on the morning of the first day of the week, the two Marys again seek the one spot on earth round which their affections centre. So far as their knowledge went, their visit could only result in "seeing the sepulchre." Did not the stone conceal the grave and the guard defend it? But early though they went, a visitor had been there before them who could brush these things away as the mists before the morning sun. The angel had come from the land of light, and brought with him some of the characteristics of that land. His countenance was like lightning and his raiment as white as snow. We are going to that land, and it is our privilege to have the light of it in our hearts even now. That which brought fear to the keepers, brought joy to the women — deeper in that it was so wholly unexpected, and to still further deepen, as they would learn later, all that the resurrection meant to His followers. And they in turn are commissioned to carry the message to the disciples. This portion is very beautiful. The angel, in calm dignity, sitting on that which had covered an empty tomb. His very presence, without any exertion of power, is sufficient to overcome the guard. His intelligence in the mind of the Lord is as marked as his activity in the service of the Lord. He could instruct the women, and through them, the disciples, where to go to meet the Lord. Another Scripture describes angels as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14). And even the Lord Himself, when on earth, was frequently the recipient of their ministry. On one occasion we read of an angel from heaven strengthening Him. The thought of the Creator and Lord of Angels being strengthened by an angel,

gives a wonderful glimpse of the real manhood of our blessed Lord. Their mission of service to believers is often mentioned in the New Testament. We find them in Matthew 18:1-35 watching over the little ones. In Luke 15:1-32 we read of them rejoicing over the repentant ones. In 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 they are present with the worshipping ones; and in Luke 16:1-31 they are seen bearing the spirits of redeemed ones to paradise. Thus they are represented in the present age as the ministers of God's grace to believers: in the coming day they will be the executors of His judgment upon the guilty. But if the presence and message of the angel filled the hearts of the women with mingled fear and joy, Another was about to meet them who would banish fear from their hearts for ever and communicate to them, in His soul-inspiring word of greeting, something of the joy that filled His own heart on that glorious morning.

"And as they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail."

We are so accustomed to be occupied with our needs, and to rejoice in our blessings, that we are in danger of failing to enter into His joy. And yet it is only as we enter into His joy that we perceive the basis on which our highest joys rest. He had to say, before the Cross, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50). Now, on the further side of the Cross and the grave, standing on resurrection ground, He can associate with Himself, in resurrection life, those on whom His love has been set from all eternity. Redemption's work completed, nothing intervenes to hinder all the love and grace of His heart flowing out to His own, in order to bring them into the place of established relationship with the Father and conscious nearness before Him: and not only so, but giving us a nature that enjoys the light of His presence, knowing that the glory of that light only manifests the perfection of our standing, which is nothing less than Christ Himself.

Doubtless but little of this could be known by the women in Matthew 28:1-20, but the great point here is, that they had found the One who was the centre of their heart's affections, and "falling at his feet they worshipped him." Here is the first essential of all worship, and the greater the love, the higher the worship. The Lord confirms the angels' instructions; but by changing one word, He adds a link of precious intimacy which never could have been known before the Cross. It is no longer "my disciples," but "my brethren." Disciples they still were, of course, but He was about to declare the Father's Name to them, according to the prophecy of Psalms 22:22, and from henceforth become the Leader of their praises. The congregation of them that praise Him has but a small place in the world to-day, but the day is fast nearing when He will be the Centre of the Great Congregation, and "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee" (Psalms 22:27). At the Cross the foundation was laid of which this will be the glorious consummation. On that first Lord's day morning the keynote was struck of that universal song of praise which will fill the redeemed earth. It will be expressed in the language of Psalm c., and men will learn, according to the theology of the psalmist, that Jehovah is God, and that Jehovah is good. Even "the creature itself will be brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God" (Romans 8:21).

All this is intimately connected with the presentation of Kingdom truth in Matthew's Gospel. The disciples are instructed to meet Him in Galilee, not in Jerusalem. The nation and its capital city no longer represent God's centre upon the earth. A Kingdom is about to be instituted, the scope of whose operations will not be confined to one nation, but will go on expanding and increasing until

every nation under heaven be brought under its beneficent sway. But before following the company into Galilee, it may be well to notice the ten different appearances of our Lord, to His disciples, after His resurrection. They are as follows: —

1 To Mary Magdalene alone (Mark 16:1-20; John 20:1-31).

2 To the women returning from the sepulchre (Matthew 28:1-20).

3 To Simon Peter alone (Luke 24:1-53).

4 To the two disciples on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:1-53).

5 To the Apostles at Jerusalem, Thomas being absent (John 20:1-31).

6 These first five appearances all took place on the first Lord's day.

7 Eight days afterwards to the disciples, Thomas being with them (John 20:1-31).

8 To seven of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-25).

9 To the disciples in Galilee (Matthew 28:1-20; 1 Corinthians 15:6).

10 To James alone; time and place unknown (1 Corinthians 15:1-58). To the disciples at Jerusalem, on the day of the Ascension (Luke 24:1-53; Acts 1:1-26; 1 Corinthians 15:7). By comparing 1 Corinthians 15:6 with Matthew 28:10 it would seem that the appearing in Galilee was to the whole company of the brethren, and that the occasion was the institution of the Kingdom in world-wide character. Matthew began his career as a disciple by gathering in a "great company" into his own house. He is now to learn from the lips of the Lord that the blessing is to extend to every house under heaven, the scope of Kingdom blessing being nothing less than "all nations," in contrast with the mission in Matthew 10:1-42, which extended only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." But how much needed was this word of encouragement — "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The disciples could not be ignorant of the fact that, all the powers of the world, backed by the power of Satan, were against them, as they had been against their Master, and they needed to be reminded that their Master was the Victor over every foe. He had already said to them, as another Gospel tells: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And the same apostle who records the fact gives us later the key of the overcoming life: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith" (1 John 5:4). The man of faith, walking in faith, is invincible. Satan has no dart strong enough to pierce the shield of faith. The world has no allurements sweet enough to attract the heart that is filled with the love of Christ. The world is an enemy's land, but Satan, the prince of it, is a defeated foe, and ALL POWER is in the hands of our risen Victorious Lord. Oh, that every young believer would firmly grasp at the very outset of his Christian pathway this great and inspiring truth — the LOVE and POWER of Christ are both for ME, to-day, and all the days, until I see His face.

Now we get, in closing, the Great Commission. It will be noticed that each of the Gospels give this in different terms: the superficial reader may think, in contradictory terms. But not so. A little closer attention will show that all four are required to express the different aspects of the great work of grace that began in the world at Pentecost, is going on to-day, and will continue all the days, until the consummation of the age.

Beginning first with John's Gospel (John 20:21), we have brought before us the Person who sends, and the fact that the disciple goes forth with the message of grace in the same manner, sent by the Lord, as the Lord Himself became the "Sent One" of the Father, "full of grace and truth." He came, suffered, died, rose again, showed them His hands and His side, became the Door, that by Him "if ANY man (no longer Jews only) enter in he shall be saved (John 10:1-42). Judaism knew nothing of this. It was a new and wondrous truth even to Apostles, and were we less familiar with the Gospel sound, it would be the same to us. In Luke we read (Luke 24:46-49): "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. And ye are witnesses of these things."

Here we get the foundation on which the proclamation rests, coupled with the moral condition produced by the reception of the testimony.

Mark sets before us, in few words, the responsibility of the hearer, with the results of either the acceptance or the rejection of the gospel of grace. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

Returning now to the Commission as given by our Evangelist, we find that Matthew carries us onward to the grand climax of all the ways of God in grace, with men. The Father's Name is revealed, and "all nations" are to be baptized — no longer into John's baptism, as in Matthew 3:1-17, or even Messiah's baptism, as in John 4:1-54 — but "in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The whole wide world is the sphere of the testimony, and the day is coming when the Commission will have been executed, the Testimony received, and "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:34). "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

Till that moment the King, though absent in Person, has been, is, and will be present with every servant, in the face of every foe, every day, and all the days until the "end of the age," when "He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Then —

"Kings shall fall down before Him, And gold and incense bring.

All nations shall adore Him — His praise all people sing.

Outstretched His wide dominion O'er river, sea, and shore, Far as the eagle's pinion, Or dove's light wing can soar."

01.13 - Section 13 - Notes and Outlines

Notes and Outlines 1. Matthew 1:1-25.

1. CHRIST AS MESSIAH.

1. Introduced as "Son of David," and, as such, Heir to the Throne of David. Compare Psalms 89:29 : —

"His seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven."

2. Also as "Son of Abraham," and, as such, Heir to all the Promises. Compare Galatians 3:16 : —
"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

"In thee shall all nations be blest" (Galatians 3:8).

2. NOTE THAT THE GENEALOGY is divided into three parts, and traces His descent from His kingly ancestor, David, and the Receiver of the Promises, Abraham.

1 Abraham to David — Promise.

2 David to the Captivity — Declension.

3 The Captivity to Christ — Darkness.

3. FOUR WOMEN are introduced, and show God working out His purposes of grace in spite of man's wickedness and folly.

1 Thamar — The Sin of Man.

2 Rahab — The faith of the Gentile laying hold of the promise of God.

3 Ruth — The grace that can set aside the claims of Law.

4 Bathsheba — The blessing God can bring out of even the failures of His people.

2. Matthew 2:1-23.

THREE Companies found in this chapter.

THREE Effects produced by the presence of the Lord Jesus.

1. HEROD HEARD AND WAS TROUBLED.

Herod was an Idumean, and therefore a usurper. He had no legal right to the throne of David. He was the type of man's King — Satan, the usurper.

2. SCRIBES HEARD AND WERE INDIFFERENT. The Scribes were the doctors of the Law, and knew the sacred writings so well that they could tell the king at once where the Lord was to be

born, but they did not trouble to go and see.

1 They had the Scriptures, but believed them not.

2 They had a measure of light, but loved the darkness.

3 They had the "key of knowledge" (Luke 11:52), but were ignorant of the ways of God.

3. THE WISE MEN HEARD AND REJOICED.

1. They found the "One born King of the Jews," worshipped Him, and presented their gifts.

2. Three things mentioned: 1, gold; 2, frankincense; 3, myrrh. Gold — their tribute to His essential Divinity. Frankincense — offered to Him as God manifest in flesh. Myrrh — emblematic of the suffering and death into which love led the Holy One of God. In a future day they will bring "gold and incense" but no myrrh. Compare Isaiah 60:1-22.

3. Matthew 3:1-17.

1. THE WARNING OF JOHN. A new dispensation is beginning; therefore repent in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. No time to lose: it is near.

1 Repent because men are sinners.

Repent because sinners cannot enter without a change of heart.

Repent because the kingdom is at hand.

2 Repent "because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge" (Acts 17:31).

Just now He wants to bless. The goodness of God produces Repentance. This goodness is expressed in the Gospel.

2. THE WORK OF CHRIST.

1 A Converting work. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" — Laid hold of by the Spirit for blessing NOW.

2 A Separating work. If blessed now, separated from the world and saved from its doom. If Christ is rejected now, then, when "He baptizes with fire," the sinner will be separated from God for ever.

3. THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER.

1 As to His Relationship — "My Beloved Son." The Believer, through the wonderful grace of God, is brought into the same relationship (1 John "Now are we the Sons of God.")

2 As to His perfect life below — "In whom I am well pleased." See 1 Peter 2:21, and compare 1 Timothy 4:12, "Be thou an example."

4. Matthew 4:1-25.

SEVEN MARKS OF CHRIST'S GLORY AND POWER.

1 The Voice of the Father.

- 2 The Descent of the Spirit.
- 3 The Ministry of Angels.
- 4 His Power over Satan.
- 5 His Authority over Disease.
- 6 The Light to them that sat in Darkness.
- 7 The attraction for the hearts of men.

1. THE POWER OF CHRIST to Defeat the Devil.

Satan presented Three great Temptations — "all that is in the world."

Before these our first parents and every other son of Adam's race had failed. But Christ was tempted and emerged victorious. Compare 1 John 2:1-29, "The Lust of the Flesh" — what can I get? "The Lust of the Eye" — what can I see? "The Pride of Life" — what can others see in me 2. THE POWER OF CHRIST to Attract the Heart.

Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John FOLLOWED JESUS.

- 1 The secret of the attraction — LOVE.
- 2 The object of the attraction — HIMSELF.
- 3. THE POWER OF CHRIST to introduce Blessing and a new order on Earth.

1 By the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom which was at hand. Men to repent and get ready to enter.

2 By undoing the evil Satan had done. Annuling the power of the devil, and delivering his lawful captives.

5. Matthew 5:1-48.

1. The Lord describes the characteristics of those who enter the Kingdom coupled with the Blessings they will enjoy in the day of EARTHLY DISPLAY.

Characteristics.

- 1 Poor — Entrance to the Kingdom.
- 2 Mourners — Comfort.
- 3 Meek — Inheritance.
- 4 Hungerers after righteousness Satisfaction.
- 5 Merciful — Mercy.
- 6 Pure — See God.
- 7 Persecuted — Joy.

2. Contrast the last of the "Blesseds" with the first, where the pronoun is "they." Here it is "YE," and great is your reward IN HEAVEN. When Persecuted for CHRIST'S SAKE, Three things follow: —

1 We are drawn nearer the Lord.

2 We get a deeper sense of His love and power.

3 We shine more brightly before the world.

3. Vv. 13 and 14 show what the True Believer is In the world and To the world.

1 SALT — That which Preserves. So the disciples were to stand for the rights of God.

2 LIGHT — That which Reveals, Guides, or Warns. So Grace was to go out from disciples to a lost world, heedless of its danger and doom. The Warning. — The salt may lose its savour. The light may be put under a bushel.

6. Matthew 6:1-34. THE PRAYER THAT TEACHES TO PRAY.

Contains Six Petitions following the Invocation. Three of the Petitions are Godward; three are Manward. The last three deal with the Present, Past, and Future. THE INVOCATION: OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

Teaches us To Whom to pray. The thought of FATHER implies Relationship, and so we are reminded of the Cost of making this possible, through Death and Resurrection. With this before us we say "OUR FATHER," and we ought to say it HUMBLY because it is God who is our Father, LOVINGLY because God is our FATHER, WITH ASSURANCE because GOD IS our Father, HOPEFULLY because All POWER is His, REVERENTLY because Hebrews 1:1-14 S in HEAVEN.

1. HALLOWED BE THY NAME. The NAME declares the measure of the Revelation. To ADAM — THE LORD GOD Creator Relationship. To ABRAHAM — GOD ALMIGHTY Power For Him. To MOSES — JEHOVAH — The Eternal, Self-existing, unchanging, Covenant-Keeping One. To CHRISTIANS — FATHER — Relationship and Love.

2. THY KINGDOM COME.

Three things in every well-governed Kingdom.

1 SECURITY — Compare Believers Present Position — "They shall never Perish."

2 LIBERTY — Compare Believers Present Position — "Ye shall be free indeed."

3 PLENTY — Compare Believers Present Position — "ALL Spiritual Blessings."

3. THY WILL BE DONE.

Seen in perfection in the Lord Jesus. Should be seen in Believers. Will be seen in the Coming day of display When, all usurpers put down, THE RIGHTFUL KING Will reign in RIGHTEOUSNESS.

7. Matthew 6:1-34. THE PRAYER THAT TEACHES TO PRAY (continued).

4. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD." — Present. The Rich who are able to buy, or the Poor who must condescend to beg, equally need to pray this petition. God has provided once for

all, all the minerals men may need but for our Daily Bread we depend on the Daily Faithfulness of a Covenant-Keeping God (Genesis 9:9) in giving annually seedtime and harvest with unfailing grace.

1 So we ask with the knowledge of His Power to supply.

2 And we ask with a Sense of our need. The object. — Continue us in life to glorify Thee.

5. "FORGIVE US." — Past. The sense here is Restoration: in order that we may continue in Communion with a Father who always acts in grace. So we too must act in grace to others — "as we forgive." Forgiveness means to "Let off." The Sinner should be "detained" and "punished," but God is ready to forgive.

1 Christ died to make Forgiveness Possible.

2 All need Forgiveness.

3 We are commanded to Preach Forgiveness in His Name.

6. DELIVER US. — Future.

Expresses the need of being kept from Satan's Power. Not to be tried as Job or Peter, lest we may become more like Peter than Job.

Paul's beautiful and Confident testimony.

He Hath delivered (Colossians 1:13).

He Will deliver (2 Timothy 4:18).

See also He Doth deliver (Psalms 97:10).

8. Matthew 6:1-34.

"SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD" (Matthew 6:33).

1. "SEEK" a Divine Command.

Because by nature men are astray and lost. This lost condition shows itself in two ways: —

1 Opposition to God (Illustrate, Pharaoh).

2 Indifference to God (Illustrate, Gallio).

2. "FIRST" a Definite Time.

Remember now . . . in the days of thy youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1). In the morning of life.

Because seeking "other things" first 1 Grieves the Spirit.

2 Hardens the heart.

3 Sears the Conscience.

3. THE KINGDOM OF GOD — a Particular thing.

"The Kingdom of God" is opposed to the "world of Satan." The World is going on to Judgment. The Believer is going on to glory.

Each one is either in God's Kingdom or in Satan's World.

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world And lose his own soul?"

4. OTHER THINGS shall he added — a Sure Promise. Be not anxious for to-morrow. Your Father knoweth your need.

"My God shall supply all your need" (Php 4:19).

9. Matthew 7:1-29. In Matthew 6:1-34 we learn "How to give." In Matthew 7:1-29 we learn "How to get." Men say "get to give." God says "give to get." The Grace of God enables the Believer to do so.

He manifests the Grace by practising the "Golden Rule." This can only be done in the 1 Power of the New Life, by those who have 2 Entered in at the STRAIT GATE. THE LORD SAYS THERE ARE

Two GATES.

1. The Strait Gate. ENTERED by Conversion "Strive." Only those in earnest, The Few, find it.

Two WAYS.

"The Way of life."

"The Way of the Lord."

"The Way of Good Men (Proverbs 2:20).

"The Way of Wisdom" (Proverbs 4:11).

"The Way of Truth" (Psalms 119:30).

"The Way of thy Testimonies" (Psalms 119:14).

"I am the Way" (John 14:6).

Two ENDS. The END of your faith. The SALVATION of your Souls.

LIFE ETERNAL.

9. Matthew 7:1-29. — continued.

Two GATES.

2. The Wide Gate. Entered by Rejecting the Saviour and Turning away from the Cross. Held in it by —

1 Chains of Sin.

2 Fear of Men.

3 Power of Satan.

Two WAYS.

"The Way of Death" (Proverbs 14:12).

"The Way of Sinners" (Psalms 1:1-6) .

"The Way of a Fool" (Proverbs 12:15).

"The Way of the Evil Men" (Proverbs 2:12).

"The Way of Darkness" (Proverbs 13:1-25).

"The Way of the Wicked" (Proverbs 15:9).

"The Way of Destruction" (Romans 3:16) .

Two ENDS. The Great White Throne. The Judgment.

Condemnation. The Second Death.

10. Matthew 8:1-34. THE DIGNITY OF HIS PERSON.

1. THE LEPER: Picture of the DEFILEMENT and HOPELESSNESS produced by Sin.

1 He knew he was a leper. "All have sinned."

2 He heard of a Saviour. Good news to him: The Gospel is good news to sinners.

3 He believed in His Power.

4 He received the Blessing.

2. THE PALSIED MAN: Picture of the HELPLESSNESS Produced by Sin.

1 We CAN do nothing. The Work to be done completely beyond our power. Satan to be defeated — Death overcome — Judgment borne.

2 We NEED to do nothing, for the work is done. The hatred of man brought out the love of God. "I will come and heal him." "He came to seek and to save."

3. THE WOMAN SICK OF A FEVER: Picture of the UNREST produced by Sin.

"No Peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21).

"The Way of Peace have they not known" (Romans 3:17). BUT Christ Made Peace (Colossians 1:20).

Christ Brings Peace (John 20:19).

Christ Preaches Peace (Ephesians 2:17).

Christ Is our Peace (Ephesians 2:14).

Illustrate A Purchased Peace (2 Kings 15:1-38). A National Peace (1 Kings 5:1-18). A Universal Peace (Isaiah 9:1-21).

11. Matthew 8:1-34. THE DIGNITY OF HIS PERSON.

"Man's Day" sets in darkness and sorrow (verse 16). When earth's sun was sinking, suffering humanity came to Christ and experienced all the grace and power of God. That power which works through the "night" and in the "morning" will display all the divine and glorious completion of His purposes of love and mercy.

Man's day — "Morning and Evening."

God's day — "Evening and Morning" (Genesis 1:1-31).

1. THE LORD PURPOSES TO CROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE and two men are tested.

1 The first is hindered by the world.

2 The second is hindered by his relations. The foxes had holes. The birds had nests.

Christ had nowhere to lay His head. A man's foes shall be they of his own household.

He that loveth father or mother more than ME is not worthy of Me.

2. DISCIPLESHIP — "His disciples followed Him" (Matthew 8:23). The beginning of discipleship is obedience produced in the heart by the power of love.

We "obey from the heart" because we love. So we have a chain of four links: — A heart full of Love is a heart full of joy. A heart full of Joy is a life full of power. A Life full of Power is a mouth full of praise. A mouth full of Praise is a Life full of FRUIT.

12. Matthew 9:1-38. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS MISSION.

1. THE FORGIVER OF SINS (Matthew 9:2). The sin question must be faced first, when Men are brought to God.

Sins either put away or punished.

Sinners either forgiven or judged.

2. THE RECEIVER OF SINNERS (Matthew 9:10). God hates sin but loves sinners. Satan loves sin but hates sinners. Christ died to save sinners. Holy Spirit pleads with sinners.

3. THE BRINGER OF JOY (Matthew 9:15).

Joy the normal condition of Christianity. A Man who is Forgiven, Justified, Delivered from Satan's Power and on his way to Heaven OUGHT to be happy.

Illustrate: Matthew; Great Feast; Great Company; Great Joy (Luke 5:1-39).

4. IN THE BRIDEGROOM'S ABSENCE (Matthew 9:15). The disciples will "fast." Our attitude to the world now.

We go through it, being "Not of it" and taking nothing from it. BUT "I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

13. Matthew 9:1-38.

1. THE GIVER OF LIFE (Janus' Daughter raised from the dead, Matthew 9:23-25).

Sinners are "Dead in sins" (Ephesians 2:5).

Believers are "Dead to Sin" (Romans 6:2).

Believers are Dead to the Law (Galatians 2:19).

Believers are Dead to the World (Colossians 3:3). BUT Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:12).

2. THE GIVER OF LIGHT.

Sin Blinds the mind to the things of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Men are blind to their danger, to their need, and to the beauty of the Lord Jesus. The Gospel of God is sent to "open their eyes" (Acts 26:18).

Christ is the "True Light" (John 1:9).

Believers should walk in the Light (1 John 1:7). And be the Light of the World (Matthew 5:14).

3. THE GIVER OF SPEECH.

Unloosed Tongues Confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9).

Show forth His Praise (Psalms 51:15).

Talk of all His Wondrous Works (Psalms 105:2).

Speak of His Majesty (Psalms 145:5).

Worship God (Revelation 4:10).

14. Matthew 10:1-42. In Matthew 10:1-42. The King sends forth His Messengers to announce the Coming Kingdom. The Lord is presented in a threefold way —

1. As Son of David; 2. Son of God; 3. Son of Man.

1. THE LORD JESUS as Son of David and David's rights.

Messiah come and the Kingdom announced. The defeat of Death, Disease, and the Devil, will mark the Kingdom when established in power. Righteousness will Reign, and there will be world-wide Blessing.

2. THE OPPOSITION to both Messiah and His Kingdom (1) By the Rulers;

(2) By the Men of that Age. This opposition was manifested in a threefold way.

1 Against the Person of Christ.

2 Against the People of Christ.

3 Against the Word of Christ.

3. THE REVELATION OF THE FATHER'S CARE.

1 Raises the Believer above the fear of men.

2 Makes him a Confessor.

3 Makes him a Cross-Bearer.

15. Matthew 11:1-30.

Matthew 10:1-42 is the King in long-suffering grace sending forth the twelve apostles to all the cities of Israel to work miracles, while He continues to teach, so that there is blessing for both the souls and bodies of men. In Matthew 10:1-42 — The Kingdom is announced with signs of Power. In Matthew 11:1-30 — The nation rejects the King. In Matthew 12:1-50 — The King rejects the nation.

1. JOHN'S QUESTION "Art Thou He?"

1 The Lord bears testimony to John.

2 The Lord's works bear testimony to Himself.

3 John, a faithful witness suffering for Righteousness sake.

2. THE NATION'S ATTITUDE.

1 Indifferent to the Call of Grace (The Lord's Ministry).

2 Careless as to the warnings of danger (John's ministry).

3. THE NATION'S FUTURE.

Judgment greater than that visited —

1 Upon the sensuality of Sodom, or the Pride and Worldliness of Tyre and Sidon.

2 Because the Jews had rejected the ministry of the Lord Himself.

4. THE CALL OF GRACE — "Come unto Me. To Me the Rejected One, but 1 The One to whom ALL THINGS are delivered.

2 The Revealer of the Father.

3 The Giver of True Rest.

16. Matthew 11:1-30.

Two Invitations — "Come" — "Take." The Rest given is the result of Coming to Christ as a lost sinner and getting forgiveness. The Rest found is the result of "taking the yoke of Christ" — that is, accepting the place on earth which He took in grace — "the lowly subject One."

1. ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN. A universal Invitation. Sin is like a heavy burden.

1 It burdens the Conscience with Guilt.

2 It burdens the Heart with Grief.

3 It burdens the Mind with Regret.

4 It burdens the Body with Disease.

2. I WILL GIVE YOU REST. A Definite Promise.

1 Rest from Sin, from Doubt, from Fear.

2 Rest of Conscience because 3 Peace with God.

3. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN OF ME.

Yoke — picture of Fellowship.

Grace calls believers to have fellowship with Him.

"Learn of Me" — a Divine Teacher.

"Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Words."

4. YE SHALL FIND REST to your souls.

"I have learned" — Paul (Php 4:11).

17. Matthew 12:1-50. The Pharisees raise the Sabbath question, and thereby only expose their own pretentious hypocrisy, because, while professing to keep the Sabbath day, they condemned the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath rest was a sign of the Law of God perfectly kept; but in rejecting Christ they had broken every link with God.

1. This gives occasion for the Lord to announce the only principle upon which men can be blessed.
"I will have mercy."

Mercy for Sinners. Grace for the Unworthy. Pardon for the Guilty. Salvation for the Lost.

— Through a Crucified Saviour.

2. The man with the withered hand is an illustration of a man who got blessing on this ground. Also of Israel as a nation — withered and fruitless. Only the Power of God could restore.

3. The Pharisees first Counsel to destroy Him. His Enemies plot His destruction.

He continues His works of blessing.

BUT, for the nation, the day of Grace was over.

He charged them "not to make Him known."

18. Matthew 13:1-58.

Seven Parables setting forth the

(1) Origin;

(2) Progress;

(3) Declension; and (4) Consummation of the "Kingdom of Heaven" in the absence of the King.

1. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE WORD OF TRUTH by the Lord Himself, but giving no final results. These are developed in the six following parables. "The Word" divides the hearers into Four Classes: Hard-hearted, Faint-hearted, Halfhearted, Honest-hearted.

2. THE TARES: Evil men and evil teaching introduced by the devil. Nearly all false teaching spring from two sources: —

1 Denying that Christ was really God. — Ebionism.

2 Denying that Christ was really man. — Gnosticism. Both had their origin in the first century. They are with us still.

3. THE MUSTARD TREE. An abnormal growth. Christendom has become a great world power with root in the earth; instead of maintaining the separate heavenly calling.

Roman Catholicism aims at becoming a great temporal power.

Protestantism aims at becoming a great political power.

4. THE LEAVEN. Every reference in Scripture to leaven shows that it is always a type of evil. Here it indicates the evil and unscriptural teaching which has been introduced, and is permeating the whole of professing Christendom.

5. THE TREASURE. Something valuable, to be sought, purchased, and guarded.

6. THE PEARL. Something beautiful and precious, to be displayed.

7. THE NET. The solemn events which take place at the end of this age. The Church wrapt to glory: the net drawn, and the mystery finished.

19. Matthew 13:1-58. The chapter opens with a parable introducing the Lord Himself as the "Sower," and goes on to give six similitudes of the Kingdom. These show the new aspect the Kingdom would assume in the absence of the King. Christ, come in grace to establish it, is rejected. The word of the Kingdom is sown in the hearts of men, and they are left with it in Responsibility. The First parable gives Four Results in Four Classes of Hearers.

1. THE WAYSIDE, or THE HARD-HEARTED.

Hearts are what we make them. Pharaoh hardened his heart before God hardened it.

Word not even retained in the heart.

Birds, type of Satan, catch away that which was sown.

Here the power of the devil prevails.

2. THE STONY GROUND, or THE FAINT-HEARTED.

Mere profession without conscience work. Eager to be in the forefront when Christianity is popular. When Persecution comes, eager to be somewhere else. In this case the world prevails, and it is manifest that there has been no reality.

3. THE THORNY GROUND, or THE HALF-HEARTED. The importance of definite decision. In this case it is absent. The Word is entertained, but other things come in, in greater place. "The cares" or "the deceitfulness of riches," and so the flesh prevails, and the word is "choked."

4. THE GOOD GROUND, or THE HONEST-HEARTED.

Understanding hearts understand the meaning of the Gospel and its relation to themselves.

"Keep" the Word — Faith.

Bring forth Fruit — Works.

20. Matthew 13:1-58. The Second Parable is that of The Tares among the wheat. The Lord sows the Good Seed of the Gospel.

Satan sows Error. He introduces the Imitation among the real.

1. The Unwatchfulness of Christians allowed it. "While men slept." First mentioned is "Simon the Sorcerer" (Acts 8:1-40).

2. Both are to grow together until "the harvest." To "The Servants" is committed the precious ministry of blessing through the Gospel. To the Angels (Matthew 13:49) is committed the dread service of being executors of judgment. The Beginning, Course, and End of the Two Classes may be traced as follows: —

Those Represented by "The Good Seed."

1 Receive the Gospel — God's good news.

2 Believe the Truth —

About God.

About themselves.

3 Live for Christ — A new object. A new centre.

4 End in the Kingdom. Their place there will be according to their faithfulness here.

Those Represented by "The Tares."

1 Ignore the Gospel — Unbelief.

2 Believe Error —

Minds must believe something.

3 Live for self, the world, or Satan.

Every life lived for something.

4 End in the "burning," solemn reality — and He who knew declared it.

21. Matthew 13:1-58. The Son of Man sows the "Good Seed" — That which was capable of Reproducing itself. The Evil One sows "Tares" — That which is fit only for the fire. The Third

Parable is that of The Mustard Seed. The Smallest of Seeds: The beginning of the Gospel.

Became a tree: an abnormal growth.

Birds of the Air: picture of the powers of Evil.

Lodge in its Branches: Evil men no longer outside, but within the sphere of profession. The Fourth Parable is that of The Leaven.

Evil principles at work, morally corrupting the whole mass. Of the Pharisees — Hypocrisy (Matthew 16:6). Of the Sadducees — Infidelity (Matthew 16:6). Of Herod Worldliness (Mark 8:15). The Old Leaven — Sensuality (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Fifth Parable is that of The Treasure Hid in a Field.

"The Field is the world" (Matthew 13:38).

Treasure hid in the field.

Only One knew of its Presence.

Something valuable and precious.

Picture of Believers as Christ sees them. To possess them, He buys the "field" — the world. The day is coming when He will take possession.

22. Matthew 13:1-58. The Sixth Parable is that of The one Pearl of Great Price.

If the "Treasure" conveys the thought of something valuable, the one Pearl conveys the thought of something beautiful. His love in seeking Believers looked at in their oneness as the Church (Ephesians 5:25). The Price He Paid (Php 2:5-8).

What He Purchased (Ephesians 5:25). His object in purchasing (Ephesians 5:26). The day of display (Revelation 19:7). The Seventh Parable is that of The Net cast into the Sea. The point of the Parable is the Drawing of the net.

Attention is directed to events at the end of this age.

Then "good gathered into vessels." God calling out a people for His name now (Acts 15:14).

Three things mark the end of the age— The Midnight Cry. The development of the Apostacy. The gathering of the Jew to Palestine in unbelief.

23. Matthew 14:1-36. In Matthew 14:1-36 we have the Two KINGS —

Herod in his sin. Christ in His grace. The actions of Man and the actions of the Lord.

What marked Herod's dance (Mark 6:1-56) was the "lust of the eye" and the "lust of the flesh." BUT the Lord Jesus on the mountain top illustrates the present position of the Saviour in relation to His Own.

1. HE IS PRAYING FOR US. Because we have an enemy, and we need to realise that he is sleepless, alert, cunning, relentless, cruel.

1 He tempts us (1 Thessalonians 3:5).

2 He accuses us (Revelation 10:10).

3 He assaults us (1 Peter 5:8). But the Lord said, "I have prayed for thee."

2. HE IS WATCHING OVER US.

"He saw them toiling and rowing."

"Light and Truth" go before (Psalms 43:3).

Goodness and Mercy follow (Psalms 23:6). The Lord is thy Keeper (Psalms 121:5). The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil (Psalms 121:7).

3. HE IS COMING FOR US. In the "Fourth" Watch He Came.

Compare Matthew 24:1-51. The faithful and wise Servant was "ready to open" immediately.

Note three things about Peter's Prayer (Matthew 14:30) —

It was an urgent need — Save.

It was a personal need — Me.

Only the Lord Jesus could meet it — Lord.

24. Matthew 15:1-39. In Matthew 12:1-50 (verse 54) we find the Lord renouncing all earthly ties. In Matthew 13:1-58 He opens to His disciples the form the Kingdom would assume in His absence. In Matthew 14:1-36 the opposition develops into open hostility, and we see man's King taking away men's lives — the Forerunner is slain — but God's King saving men's lives.

Matthew 14:1-36 shows men's works to be evil. Matthew 15:1-39 shows WHY they are evil. The reason is — the HEART IS WRONG.

Matthew 14:1-36 shows the two Kings. Matthew 15:1-39 shows THE Two HEARTS. The heart of man with its Seven Streams of Evil (Matthew 15:19). The heart of the Lord Jesus in bringing blessing to all.

Note FOUR Points —

1. THE FORMALISM OF THE PHARISEES. A mistake all men make.

Thinking a correct exterior will do for God.

Satan can use even a religious system as a power of Evil. But the Lord brings home to the conscience.

2. THE FACT OF SIN.

"Out of the heart proceed." Hearts produce Evil because hearts are Evil.

Men think lightly of Sin. They deplore its fruits.

God speaks solemnly of Sin. He exposes its roots.

Sin separates from God, now, and produces unhappiness.

Sin fills the heart with selfishness and produces oppression.

Sin separates from God eternally and produces eternal misery.

Before it could be put away Christ must die. When men cover their sins, God uncovers them. When men uncover their sins, God covers them.

3. THE FAITH OF THE GENTILE. She felt her need. Her need brought her to Jesus. She owned she deserved nothing.

She would be thankful for anything. She got everything.

4. THE FAVOUR OF CHRIST. The Lord returns to Galilee and shows His grace in Feeding Four thousand with Seven Loaves.

Feeding Five thousand (Matthew 14:1-36) was a proof that Jehovah-Messiah was present. This Miracle was a proof that, though He was rejected by the nation, He still continued His works of mercy in their midst.

25. Matthew 16:1-28.

Matthew 15:1-39 closes with Grace to one who had no hope but in Grace. The Central thought of Matthew 16:1-28 is the revelation of the person of Christ.

1. WHAT OTHERS THOUGHT ABOUT HIM (Matthew 16:13). The Pharisees and Sadducees, blinded by the devil, reject Him. Of such, beware. The men of the age with their opinions and speculations — John, Elijah, or Jeremiah, but consciences unreached and hearts unattracted.

2. WHAT GOD-GIVEN FAITH SAW IN HIM.

Peter's personal confession — Thou art THE CHRIST — the official glory of His Person — the Promised One — Seed of the Woman — Seed of Abraham — Son of David — Sun of Righteousness — Fulfiller of every Promise of God. THE SON of the LIVING GOD — His personal glory The Divine, Eternal, and Lifegiving Word (Php 2:1-30), (Colossians 1:1-29), (Hebrews 1:1-14), (1 John 1:1-10).

3. WHAT HE WAS ABOUT TO DO.

"I will build" — My Church. Its Foundation "upon this Rock" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Its materials (1 Peter 2:5). But before this could take place the presentation of the Kingdom had to be set aside and the Cross brought in.

4. WHAT WOULD MARK THOSE WHO FOLLOWED HIM.

Self denied. The Cross taken.

Christ confessed.

Eternal reward in the Coming Kingdom. The Man with the Cross on his back has finished with the World. The Man with the World on his back has evaded the Cross.

26. Matthew 17:1-27.

Matthew 16:1-28 is the Revelation of the Church; Matthew 17:1-27 is a glimpse of the glory of the Coming Kingdom. At the four lowest points of our Lord's humiliation we get confirming proofs of His Divinity.

1. His Birth.
2. His Baptism.
3. His Temptation.
4. His Death.

Having been rejected by the nation, and confessed by Peter, God manifests Him in the Centre of the Shekinah glory cloud as the "Beloved Son."

1. MOSES — The Law Giver. But the result was a broken law and a condemned people. No hope for sinners under law.

2. ELIJAH — The Reformer. But Reformation cannot help sinners.

Because the past exists.

There must be Regeneration.

"My Beloved Son" is The "Transformer."

Men say "John," or "Jeremiah," or one of "the prophets."

God says, "My beloved Son, hear Him."

He brought the best news that ever came to earth. He now takes the supreme place.

4. "BE NOT AFRAID."

Men by nature are "afar" and "afraid."

Before Peace of Conscience, the Question of Sin has to be settled.

Before there can be peace of heart, the Question of Circumstances has to be settled.

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of."

27. Matthew 18:1-35.

"IN THE MIDST" (Matthew 18:20).

1. "IN THE MIDST" for Atonement (John 19:18).

1 The Cross brings out —

2 The Love of God.

3 The Devotedness of Christ.

4 The Malice of Satan.

5 The Hatred of Man.

6 The Righteousness of God.

7 The Awful Nature of Sin. The Guilt of the World.

2. "IN THE MIDST" for Peace and Power (John 20:19-23).

1 The first thing a believer wants to know is peace.

2 The first thing a believer wants to experience is power.

3 Christ made peace.

4 The Blood Cleanses. The Holy Spirit brings Power.

3. IN THE MIDST FOR GUIDANCE (Matthew 18:20).

One Condition on which He vouchsafes His presence, "Gathered in MY NAME."

1 The work of Christ brings us all our Blessings.

2 The Person of Christ brings us all our Reproach. But — "If reproached for the Name of Christ, Happy are ye" (1 Peter 4:9).

4. "IN THE MIDST" for Judgment (Revelation 5:1-14).

Christ on the throne. The Rejected One of Earth Exalted in Heaven.

"Seven Horns" — Divine Power.

"Seven Eyes" — Divine Discrimination.

"Seven Spirits" — Divine Intelligence.

Note the Various Thrones: —

1. The Throne of Holiness (Ezekiel 10:1-22);

2. The Throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:1-16);

3. The Throne of Glory (Matthew 25:1-46);

4. The Throne of Judgment (Revelation 20:1-15).

28. Matthew 18:1-35.

FORGIVENESS IN THREE ASPECTS.

1. FORGIVENESS for Sinners — Eternal Forgiveness.

Many not clear on this elementary doctrine.

Some hope for: some think once forgiven.

Some suppose partly forgiven.

God says: "Whosoever believeth shall receive" — "Your sins are Forgiven for His Name's sake."

Grace provides: The Blood secures. The Spirit proclaims: Faith appropriates.

Because God has spoken, we are SURE.

Because we are sure, we are HAPPY.

THREE THINGS FOLLOW.

It produces Happiness — "Blessed" (Psalms 32:1-11).

It produces Love — "Loveth much" (Luke 7:47).

It produces Holy Fear — "That Thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 30:1-12).

2. FORGIVENESS FOR BELIEVERS, or Restorative Forgiveness.

Confession as sinners brings Eternal Forgiveness, and we become children. When our walk breaks down daily Confession keeps us happy children.

"He is faithful and just to forgive."

More often than Peter's "seven times."

Though Eternally forgiven, yet we may suffer Governmentally if we do not forgive others.

Therefore "Be kind one towards another . . . forgiving one another." The "unmerciful servant" failed in the spirit of forgiveness because he "went out" from the presence of the Master.

29. Matthew 19:1-30. In Matthew 19:1-30 the Lord recognises and owns all that is lovely in Nature, but goes on to show that the best of Nature will not do for God. "ONE is good."

1 Marriage God's own institution from the beginning, but abused by the lusts of men.

2 The little children — an illustration of the spirit which characterises the Kingdom.

3 The Young Ruler — not far "from," but not in the Kingdom.

1. THE INVITATION OF LOVE.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me." The Invitation, designed to rebuke the pride of the disciples, expresses the love of Christ.

2. THE RECEPTION OF GRACE.

"He took them up in His arms" — The place of safety.

Divine shelter from every foe.

"He blessed them" (Mark 10:1-52). The Condition of Happiness and Eternal Joy.

3. THE CONDITION OF ENTRANCE.

Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:1-52). The little child is simple — we must believe God. The little child is trustful — we must rest

on His Word. The little child is humble — we must come down.

30. Matthew 19:1-30. THE YOUNG RULER. The most interesting of all the Gospel stories — also the saddest. He was really in earnest to KNOW. But not really in earnest to DO. No common man.

Looked up to as a leader of morals.

If he was not right, who was?

Yet he felt he was not right. He was not sure about Eternal life — therefore unhappy. And all he WAS, HAD, or DID, failed to bring happiness.

1. (1) He was a religious man — A Teacher, a Ruler, a Judge.

(2) He had youth, money, friends, Position, influence.

(3) He did all the second table of the law required. But all failed to bring happiness. The reason was, he was making two mistakes.

2. (1) He did not know himself. Did not believe he was a lost sinner. Did not realise that he needed a Saviour.

Looked to the Lord only as a Teacher.

(2) He did not know God. Was trying to establish his own righteousness.

Desired to know what to do.

3. PETER'S QUESTION.

Peter, anxious to know, whether what the young man went back to, or what they were going forward to, was best, asks —

"What shall we have?" That which the young ruler missed and one hundredfold more.

31. Matthew 20:1-34. The Son of Man Betrayed: The close and reward of three years of devoted, self-denying, gracious ministry. That grace had been SEEN IN WHAT HE WAS. The Divine Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:16). The Word made Flesh (John 1:14). The True Light (John 1:9). The Revealer of the Father (John 1:18).

SEEN IN WHAT HE SAID.

"Never man spake like this man."

"The gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

SEEN IN WHAT HE DID.

Feeding the Hungry.

Healing the Sick.

Raising the Dead.

All His miracles were "grace" miracles.

JAMES AND JOHN desire High Places in the Kingdom. But learn that it is better to suffer here, and Leave Results and Rewards — to God.

CHRISTIANS suffer Because Satan is prince of this world.

Early Christians rejoiced in suffering.

WHAT enables the Christian to suffer?

They "See Him who is invisible."

They have the Holy Spirit's power within.

Illustrate — Peter, before and after the Cross.

32. Matthew 21:1-46. This chapter begins with the presentation of the King to the nation. Their responsibility for His rejection is established, and the measure of their guilt filled up.

1. THE KING PROMISED.

1 The Men of Faith (Genesis 3:1-24; Jude 1:14) looked forward to Him.

2 The Men after the flesh persecuted them that were after the Spirit (Galatians 4:29).

2. THE KING PROPHESED OF (Genesis 49:1-33).

Three thousand five hundred years pass and God announced —

1 How He would come (Zechariah 9:9).

2 How He would be received (Zechariah 13:6-7).

3. THE KING PRESENTED (Matthew 21:1-46).

1 The nation "at a place where two ways met" (Mark 11:4).

2 Every hearer of the word at the parting of the ways.

4. THE KING PERSECUTED.

1 The Nation reject and Crucify their King.

2 God rejects and scatters the nation.

5. THE KING PROCLAIMED (Psalms 2:1-12).

1 Crowned with many Crowns.

2 Ruler over every nation.

Four Crowns for Believers — For those who LIVE for Christ: The Incorruptible Crown (1 Corinthians 9:25). For those who DIE for Christ: The Crown of Life (Revelation 2:10). For those who WATCH for Christ: The Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8). For those who CARE for the people of Christ: The Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4).

33. Matthew 21:1-46. A Short Synopsis of the Section, Matthew 21:1-46; Matthew 22:1-46; Matthew 23:1-39; Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-46.

Matthew 21:1-46; Matthew 22:1-46. — His Enemies morally judged and silenced.

Matthew 23:1-39. — The Eight Woes that would fall on the guilty Leaders.

Matthew 24:1-51, Matthew 25:1-46. — Instruction for the disciples into the truths of the Kingdom.

Matthew 21:1-46. — Begins with the Fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9. But the Leaders can only ask, "Who is this?" The Three Parables following, with that of the "Barren Fig Tree" in Luke 13:1-35, teach the definite setting aside of Israel.

1. The Fig Tree: The Nation in Profession: No Fruit. Compare Exodus 19:8, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," with 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16. What they did.

2. The Two Sons: No reality — Lip service only. The Leaders proved worse than the publicans (Luke 7:29).

3. The Wicked Husbandmen:

Open opposition.

Refused to bring anything to God. In Matthew 22:1-46, Refuse to receive anything from God.

4. The Sure Foundation Stone:

1 Falling over the stone: Christ in Humiliation.

2 Falling under the stone: Christ in Glory and Power (Daniel 2:1-49).

Refer to Genesis 49:1-33, Psalms 118:1-29, Isaiah 28:1-29, Matthew 21:1-46, Ephesians 2:1-22, 1 Peter 2:1-25 :

34. Matthew 22:1-46.

Note the intimate connection between Matthew 21:1-46 and Matthew 22:1-46, though teaching different truths —

Matthew 21:1-46 — "The Vineyard" is Judaism to the Cross.

Matthew 22:1-46. — "The Marriage Feast" is the Announcement of the Kingdom. The First gives the Attitude of Men to God. The Second gives the Attitude of God to Men. The First is God dealing with men in Responsibility. The Second is God dealing with men in Grace. Not now God requiring in Righteousness, but God displaying the riches of His grace. No longer man's ways to God, but God's ways to man.

1. THE MARRIAGE. The central thought.

Honour for the King's Son.

"Far above . . . every name that is named" (Ephesians 1:21).

2. THE INVITATION.

First Announcement — by the Apostles before the Cross.

Second Announcement — to Israel at Pentecost. Third Announcement — world wide — "Bad and good."

3. THE CONDITIONS. The Gospel produces what suits God. The fitness for the feast was not their best, But the Robe of the King's providing.

4. THE JUDGMENT fell because there was — Indifference to the King's Provision, and thus Dishonour to the King's Son.

35. Matthew, Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-46. THE GREAT PROPHETIC SECTION OF THE GOSPEL.

Scripture speaks to men in many ways. To the unconverted, it brings a warning of coming wrath and an offer of present mercy. To the Believer, it brings instruction and guidance for the way. To the Disciple, it comes as a revelation of the mind of God as to His present and future purposes.

These two chapters are divided into THREE SECTIONS Matthew 24:1-51, Matthew 24:1-44 — THE JEW. His Temptations: Trials: Deliverance.

Matthew 24:45-51, Matthew 25:1-30 — THE CHRISTIAN. As Ministering: Waiting: or Working For his absent Lord.

Matthew 25:16-21 — THE GENTILES. As Receiving, or Rejecting The Kingdom Messengers. THE JEW.

1. HIS TEMPTATIONS. The True Messiah having come and been rejected, False Christs arise to deceive many.

Note. — The Jew is warned against false Christs. Christendom is warned against false Spirits (1 John 4:3).

2. HIS TRIALS.

Wars and Rumours of Wars.

Danger for their land. Personal tribulation, the Jew is to escape from: The Christian is to glory in.

3. HIS DELIVERANCE. By the Judgment of Antichrist, the reign of Christ, and the wicked taken out of the earth for Judgment. The Christian looks to be taken out of the earth for blessing.

36. Matthew, Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-46.

THREE PARABLES REFERRING TO CHRISTENDOM.

1 The Good and Evil Servants illustrate what should, and should not, be our attitude towards each other.

2 The Virgins illustrate what should, and should not, be our attitude towards the Lord Jesus.

3 The Talents illustrate what should, and should not, be our attitude towards the world.

1. THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT.

- 1 Honoured by his Master (Matthew 24:45).
- 2 Loves his Master's interests (Matthew 24:45-46).
- 3 Cares for his Master's Household (Matthew 24:45-46).
- 4 Rewarded by his Master at His Coming (Matthew 24:47).

2. THE EVIL SERVANT.

- 1 Has no love for his Master. His heart wrong.
- 2 Oppresses his fellow-servants. His actions wrong.
- 3 Associates himself with the world. And thus renounces his heavenly calling.
- 4 Shares the doom of the hypocrites To which class he belonged.

37. Matthew 25:1-46. THE PARABLE OF "THE VIRGINS" In the Parable of the "Ten Virgins" there are Seven important points.

1. CHRIST'S COMING AS THE BRIDEGROOM.

Some deny it — Opposition to the truth. Some ignore it — Indifference to the truth. Some "love His appearing" — True affection. In the 260 Chapters of the New Testament the Coming is mentioned about 300 times.

Some expect Him, and because they expect Him, they trim their lamps and go out to meet Him.

2. THE TARRYING. Its effect upon the Church (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10), and upon the world (2 Peter 3:3). The reason for it (2 Peter 3:9).
3. THE MIDNIGHT CRY. The "cry" goes forth at darkest period. World grows dark in proportion as divine truth (light) is rejected.
4. THE COMING REALISED. Not the "end of the world."

5. THE MARRIAGE.

Picture of complete happiness (Revelation 19:7). The Christian will be happy hereafter, and should be happy here.

6. THE SHUT DOOR.

Inside — Life: Light: Joy Salvation.

Outside — Death: Darkness: Sorrow: Despair.

7. THE VAIN APPEAL. The Result of Opportunities Neglected.

Warnings Slighted.

38. Matthew 25:1-46. THE PARABLE OF "THE TALENTS" — SERVICE. The Holy Spirit, Who is the power of the new life, enables the believer to enjoy the presence of God, and TELL OF CHRIST to others.

Judaism only produced one man (Jonah) who became a missionary. In Christianity every man should be a missionary.

Every Servant has some talent. This Parable illustrates its use, or its abuse.

1. THE IMAGERY EMPLOYED, and its meaning.

1 "A Man" — The Lord Jesus.

2 "Travelling" — His departure from this world and present period while He is in Heaven.

3 "Talents" — Gifts given by the Lord.

4 "Servants" — All who make a profession of Christianity.

2. THE GOOD SERVANT is marked by 1 The Sense of Responsibility "Thou deliveredst to me."

2 His Faithfulness.

3 His Devotedness.

3. THE EVIL SERVANT is marked by 1 What he thought of his Master.

Wrong thoughts, which led to Foolish Actions.

2 What he did with his Money.

Used for Earth what should have been Devoted to the things of Heaven.

39. Matthew 25:1-46. THE SEVEN JUDGMENTS OF SCRIPTURE.

1 The Lord Judges (1 Corinthians 11:32) — Correction.

2 The Assembly Judges (1 Corinthians 5:12) — Discipline.

3 We Judge Ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28-31) — Self-Examination.

4 The Judgment of the Cross — Atonement.

5 The Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) — Reward for Faithfulness.

6 The Judgment of the Living Nations (Matthew 25:1-46.) — Preparation for the Kingdom.

7 The Judgment of the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11) — Condemnation. Our Chapter deals with No. 6.

It is the fulfilment of Psalms 2:1-12, Acts 1:11, etc. When the Lord came the first time, He was cut off and had nothing (Daniel 9:26). When He comes the second time He will vindicate His rights and Judge in Righteousness.

Historically these events take place immediately after the "Warrior Judgment" of Revelation 19:1-21.

THREE COMPANIES are manifested —

1 "THE SHEEP": Those who received, believed, and befriended the Kingdom Messengers.

2 "THE GOATS": Those who refused the Messengers, Ignored their sufferings, and Rejected their testimony.

3 "THE BRETHREN": Jewish Messengers of the Coming Kingdom, who complete the testimony of Matthew 10:23.

40. Matthew 26:1-75. THE LAST PASSOVER (Refer to Exodus 12:1-51). In Egypt God took in hand to settle the Sin question. But before executing Judgment, He made Provision for righteously delivering His own. This was done through THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB. Notice six things: —

1. THE LAMB SLAIN: Death must enter every house. But for the Israelite, a substitute was provided.

2. THE BLOOD SPRINKLED: It was not enough that the Lamb was slain. There must also be the obedience of faith, and personal identification with the shed blood, which was put outside for the eye of God to see.

3. THE PEOPLE SAVED: No question of what they were. The Blood on the lintel was their Security. The Word of the Lord was their Assurance.

4. THE FEAST INSTITUTED: A Feast speaks of Joy.

Egyptian bondage was past for ever.

They were going OUT of Egypt saved by the LORD.

Outside, death and Judgment.

Inside, a saved and happy people.

"Unleavened Bread" — Holy separation from Evil.

"Bitter herbs" — The memory of what they had been redeemed from.

5. HOW IT WAS TO BE OBSERVED: With Girded Loins: Redeemed for Service.

Shod feet: Ready to march.

Staff in Hand: Outside support. Pilgrims here.

6. WHY IT WAS TO BE REPEATED: To keep in memory the LOVE, POWER, and GRACE of their Deliverer.

They were a Redeemed, Separated, Dependent, and Expectant People.

41. Matthew 26:1-75. THE FIRST "SUPPER OF THE LORD." The Central point of Christianity is the Lord's Supper, because it has its origin in the love of the Lord for His own, and His desire that their love to Him might never grow cold.

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

1 His OWN by Gift of the Father.

2 His OWN by Purchase of Blood.

These He gathers around Him on the dark night of betrayal.

They knew of the foe without.

Now they hear of a traitor within.

Suspicion of each other, uncertainty, and unrest fill every heart.

HE SPEAKS OF PEACE, for He was about to LAY DOWN HIS LIFE to procure it.

Now He institutes the Supper in Remembrance of His dying love.

It speaks of THREE things: —

1. THE WORK OF CHRIST: His body broken. His blood shed.

He died for our Sins. He gave Himself for us. In the presence of God, angels, demons, and a hostile world, WE SHEW THE LORD'S DEATH, by which He glorified God, Defeated Satan, and Put away Sin.

2. THE PERSON OF CHRIST. The Work of Christ meets the Conscience. The Person of Christ meets the Heart. His Work brings us all our blessings. His Person brings us all our Joy.

3. THE COMING OF CHRIST (1 Corinthians 11:26). To take us out of the place of testimony. To take us into the place of glory.

42. Matthew 27:1-66.

1. THE SELF-CONFIDENCE OF PETER: Ignorant of what he was.

Matthew 27:58. Wrong Position: "Followed afar off."

58. Wrong Company: "Sat with the Servants."

74. Wrong Testimony: "I know not the man."

2. THE GUILT AND FATE OF JUDAS. The Greatest Sin ever Committed. The Greater the privilege, if neglected, the Greater the Condemnation. The traitor's reward purchased a Field of Blood. The Death of Christ made a City of Blood, and a Land of Blood, and a World of Blood.

3. THE LORD BEFORE CAIAPHAS. The False witness and the "Faithful Witness." The Criminal on the Bench, and The Judge at the Bar.

Christ given up to Death, and The Nation of the Jews given up to Blindness.

4. THE LORD BEFORE PILATE.

Jew and Gentile agree to condemn the Just One.

Three times Pilate declares —

"I find no fault in Him" (John 19:1-42).

Pilate's wife's advice: "Have nothing to do with that Just Man." No Man goes to hell unwarned.

Pilate rejected the warning, and Condemned the Just.

43. Matthew 28:1-20. THE RESURRECTION AND ITS RESULTS.

FOUR THINGS worthy of note: — An Open Grave: Christ Risen (Matthew 28:6). An Open Heaven: Christ on the throne (Acts 7:56). An Open Heart: Christ Believed on (Acts 16:14). An Open Mouth: Christ Confessed (Romans 10:9).

1. TERRIFIED KEEPERS. The Folly of Men. The Failure of Men. The Fear of Men.

2. REJOICING BELIEVERS.

1 The Foundation of Christian Joy is the Finished Work, and the Resurrection of the One who did it.

2 The Secret of Christian Joy is The love of Christ, Realised by "continuing" in His love (John 15:9-11).

3. THE VICTORIOUS LORD.

God glorified, and the basis laid in righteousness for all the Counsels of God to be fulfilled. The Power and love of God Vindicated.

Satan defeated.

Sin Put away. The Power of death Broken. The Resurrection is a matter of the fullest joy to the believer, but it should be a matter of the greatest dread to the unbeliever —

Because "God hath appointed a day in which He will Judge the world," and the Judgment is committed to the One who has been raised from the dead.

02.0.1. Outlines of the Story of Christianity in Britian

Outlines of the Story of Christianity in Britain.

L. Laursen. (Editor of "Loving Words.")

Second Edition Edinburgh: J.K. Souter & Colossians 2:1-23; Colossians 3:1-25, Bristo Place.

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02.01. Chapter 1. The Faith In Early Days.

Chapter 1. The Faith In Early Days. The first authentic records we have of ancient Britain come to us from Commentaries of Julius Caesar. This ambitious conqueror, not content with his successes over the fierce and warlike tribes on the continent of Europe, sought to add a new province to the Roman Empire in the neighbouring island of "Britannia." When Caesar landed in Britain he found that the only religion of our forefathers — if religion it could be called — was that taught by the Druid Priests, who had much influence over the people. The places where they practised their superstitious rites were usually enclosures of vast unhewn stones arranged in a circle, situated in the centre of dark forests where human victims bled under the sacrificial knife of the priest. Some fragments of these enclosures may still be seen on Salisbury Plain, and at Stennis in Orkney. So cruel and bloody were their rites, that even the merciless Roman conquerors speak of them with horror.

Soon Caesar had to withdraw his legions to take part in the great struggle with Pompey, which convulsed the Roman world; and nearly a hundred years passed away before the Imperial power again succeeded in establishing a footing in our island. It was only after many battles and much hard fighting that some of the tribes were subdued, and even then they were ready to break out into insurrection at the first opportunity.

Following their usual custom, the Roman generals sent some of the principal men as hostages to Rome for the good behaviour of the rest of the nation, and we read of a Welsh chieftain, named Brian, who was in Rome during the time the Apostle Paul was in the Imperial City.

We know from Scripture that there were many Christians in Rome at that time, and it is very possible that in his enforced sojourn in a strange land, the heart of this chief might be turned from his idol gods to know and love the true God.

We hear of this same Brian some time afterwards preaching Christ in his own country, and of the conversion of a native prince named Lucius. But whoever the servant was that braved the dangers of this primitive missionary journey to the ultima thule of the Roman empire, we know that there were many little companies of believers in Britain as early as the second century. The tidings of Christ crucified had spread more quickly over the country than the arms of the Roman Emperors, and many followers of Christ were found beyond the walls of Adrian, where the ancient and mystical Druid worship, with its cruel and bloody ceremonies, was rapidly giving place to the knowledge of the Prince of Peace. But in every age "they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and these early saints were to be no exception. The Roman Emperors, tolerant to nearly all other religions, made special efforts to rid the world of Christianity. In the first century Nero put many Christians to death under circumstances of the greatest cruelty and insult. At the close of the century, under Domitian, we find that persecution had extended to Spain. The humane Nerva, who succeeded to the purple in 96, issued a pardon for those who had never been guilty, and Christians enjoyed a short respite till the beginning of the second century when the warlike Trajan meditated the extinction of the name. With such edicts in force we can hardly

expect that the British Christians would escape, but when the relentless and prolonged persecution under Diocletian commenced, no part of the Empire was unvisited. The most ingenious and fiendish devices were used to torture as well as to slay all who refused to sacrifice to the gods. At no time previously had so determined and systematic an attempt been made to root out Christianity, and so complete was supposed to be the destruction of believers in Christ that coins were struck and inscriptions set up to declare that "the Christian superstitions had been rooted out, and the worship of the gods restored by Diocletian."

Some idea of the rapid increase of the Christian faith and also of the awful barbarity of pagan Rome may be gathered from the fact that during these persecutions over 750,000 Christians in one province alone perished by various kinds of cruel deaths. In Britain many Christians in the South fled from the cruelty of civilised Rome to the uncivilised and unconquered part of the island, and among the rude tribes then inhabiting Scotland they lived and taught the faith of Jesus. The lives of virtue and holiness led by these pious men, who came to be known as Culdees, led many of the pagans to forsake their sacred oaks and bloodstained altars to become disciples of the gospel. In France where the mild Constantius Chlorus ruled, the followers of Jesus found some respite. Several Christians were found among his own household, and when the persecuting edict arrived, to test them, he ordered all who would not retract to quit his service. But the result was contrary to all expectation. He retained all who held fast to their faith, and dismissed the apostates, remarking that men who were unfaithful to God would also be so to their Prince. Constantius Chlorus dying at York in 306, Constantine, his son, succeeded him, and in the war that ensued was finally successful in putting down all his enemies, and became sole Emperor both of the East and West. The Empire, which had previously been divided among two Emperors and two Caesars, was now firmly united in one hand. Constantine was prudent enough to see that in Rome at least, paganism was getting obsolete, and that by patronising Christianity he would forward his own political designs. The result of this we shall soon see. Outwardly it seemed a great thing that the Emperor should favour the Christians, but the Christians forgot that "the friendship of this world is enmity with God," and leaving the simple teaching of the Word of God, which says, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant," (see Matthew 23:11), individuals sought after place and power, exalting themselves to bear rule over their brethren.

One has said, "There was no plainer proof how completely the Church had fallen through forgetfulness of the Lord's name than when it accepted the Emperor's terms and the patronage of the world. The Church had been called out to be the standing witness of these two things — first, of the world's ruin; and secondly, of God's love. But when we see the Church shaking hands with the world all is gone, and the Church slips down into the mind of the age."

Constantine next proceeded to arrange the affairs of the Church after the pattern of the State, nominating the bishops of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople, Patriarchs with revenues to support their new dignities. Sumptuous buildings were erected as Churches after the pattern of Solomon's temple. Honours and emoluments were heaped upon the pastors. Henceforth, pride and ambition in the hearts of the bishops led them to occupy themselves with the world, anxious to procure advancement, forgetting the Divine command, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The doctrine of real conversion was also being lost sight of, while the mere external rite of baptism was taking the place of the inward work of the Holy Spirit.

We have digressed for a moment to tell of this sad degeneracy in the East in Italy, that the position of the Church of Rome may be better understood when she appears at a later period in our story. But as yet the Christians in Britain enjoyed little benefit from this State leniency. Their rulers when not employed in settling civil dissensions, were called upon to repel the fierce inroads of the savage tribes on their borders. The Picts from the Highlands of Scotland, and the Scots from Ireland, devastated the more settled part of the country wherever they came, putting the inhabitants to the sword or carrying them away into slavery. One of the captives thus enslaved was at a future day, to become a useful missionary, and so interesting is the story that we give it in detail. On the wooded banks of the Clyde, not far from where the City of Glasgow now stands, there was born in the year 377 — or as some say 387 — a little boy named Succath. His father Calpurnius was a farmer, and also a deacon of the Church at Bonavern, where his farm was, and seems to have been a simple-hearted, pious, Christian man. As the little boy grew up, his father, and especially his mother Conchessa, diligently taught him the truths of Christianity, and sought to instil into his mind the knowledge of the true faith, warning him to beware of the idolatrous rites which prevailed in many places around them; Scotland, at this time, like Athens of old, being almost "wholly given to idolatry." Succath, like many other little boys, often paid little heed to the earnest teachings of his parents, and liked better to be the leader in the fun and mischief of his companions, than listen to the story of the Saviour's love. The time was coming, however, when he was to remember and profit by these lessons. In due season the good seed so prayerfully sown would spring up and bear fruit an hundredfold. How important to learn the truths of Scripture while young! Timothy was commended because from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation. "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

One day when Succath was about sixteen years of age, he and his two sisters were playing near the shore, when an Irish pirate chieftain, named O' Neale, made a descent on the coast near Bonavern, and carried them off, along with a number of others, to be sold for slaves. You can imagine how sad his kind parents would be to lose all their children in one day, but these were common occurrences in those lawless times.

Succath was carried to Ireland, sold to the chief of a pagan clan, and like the prodigal of old, he was sent into the fields to feed swine. It was now in his solitude and sorrow that the lessons his pious mother Conchessa had taught him came back to his mind, and as he thought thereon he wept.

"I was sixteen years old," he says, "and knew not the true God, but in that strange land the Lord opened mine eyes, and although late I called my sins to mind and was converted to the Lord my God, who regarded my low estate, had pity on my youth and ignorance, and consoled me as a father consoles his children. During the night in the forests and on mountains where I kept my flocks, the rain and snow and frost which I endured led me to seek after God."

After six years' captivity Succath succeeded in effecting his escape and rejoining his parents in France whither they had removed after the loss of their children. But his mind was often occupied with the cruel and bloody rites he had witnessed with abhorrence among the pagan Irish, and he now felt the desire to go back to Ireland and tell them the story of the love of Jesus which he had learned whilst a captive in their midst. His parents and friends tried to dissuade him, but with his

heart full of the grace of Christ, he tore himself away. As he says, "It was not done in mine own strength; it was God who overcame all."

Soon afterwards he set out for Ireland, and among his other possessions he carried a big drum. A strange thing for a missionary to have, you will think; but with his big drum he collected the people of a district into the fields and preached to them Jesus. Among his converts was a chieftain named Benignus who became a faithful helper and a powerful protector to his teacher. In a large barn belonging to this chief, meetings were held every day, to which the people came in crowds, and at which many were converted. The gospel story of the love of God was indeed good news to those poor people, whose only idea of religion was to propitiate their gods, whom they believed to be as fierce, cruel, and vindictive as they were themselves, and to whom human sacrifices were often offered up in the endeavour to appease their wrath or procure their favour. Truly "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

Succath — or as he was afterwards called, Patrick, and to whose name, like that of other servants of Christ, many foolish and superstitious stories have been attached — travelled over a great part of Ireland, and many little companies were brought to the knowledge of the true faith. After labouring for thirty years he died near Downpatrick, and we shall see in another chapter how Ireland repaid her debt by sending missionaries to Scotland when the light of truth in that country had waxed dim indeed.

About the time that Patrick was labouring in Ireland another devoted missionary named Ninian was evangelising among the Picts and the lowland tribes in Scotland. Ninian was a Briton of noble birth, who had been educated in Rome, and returning to his native land gave up the ease and luxury of his position and went forth to preach the Gospel. His labours appear to have begun in Cumbria — then a large province embracing Cumberland, in England, and several shires in the south of Scotland — and to have extended as far north as the Grampian Hills. At Whithorn, in Galloway, he built a little church of "wood and earth," believed to have been the first building of the kind in Scotland. Making this his head-quarters, he made missionary tours through his extensive "parish," preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants wherever he came. He died in Wigtownshire about 430.

We know little of either the successes or failures of these ancient missionaries. Great difficulties they must have had to encounter and much opposition to overcome, but He who was for them was greater than he who was against them, and, their labours done, they have passed hence to their reward.

02.02. Chapter 2. Pioneer Missionaries.

Chapter 2.

Pioneer Missionaries. When the Romans came to Britain faithful servants of Jesus Christ were to be found in many of the legions, but with the Roman power came also the state religion of ancient Rome, which was paganism. A stately temple to Diana was erected on the spot where St. Paul's Cathedral now stands, another to Apollo on the site now occupied by Westminster Abbey. We hear little of Christianity during this period, save that the followers of Jesus were often confronted with the choice — "Christ or Diana?" and that many loved not their lives unto death, we learn from Bede, who tells us that "about this time suffered Aron and Julius, citizens of Chester, and many more of both sexes in several places, who after enduring sundry torments, and having their limbs torn after an unheard-of manner, sent their souls to the joys of the heavenly city."

After Constantine's profession of Christianity legalised persecution ceased for a time. Under Julian the Apostate, pagan Rome put forth its last efforts to attain that supremacy it had previously enjoyed.

Julian set himself to uproot Christianity and reform paganism. He attempted the impossible task of destroying Christian principles, and yet maintaining Christian practice. So great was his hatred of the Christian religion that he tried to make the words which the Lord Jesus uttered concerning Jerusalem false, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Julian determined to rebuild it. He had three objects to live for: the restoration of idolatry the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the conquest of Persia. After a short reign of one year and eight months he lay dying on the sands of Persia with all his schemes unaccomplished. As his life ebbed away through the wound inflicted by a Persian lance, he filled his hand with the blood and casting it into the air, exclaimed, "O GALILEAN, THOU HAST CONQUERED." The temple is still unbuilt; the cause of God still survives. Julian died a solemn illustration of Isaiah 45:9, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." The Roman power was now on the decline. In 420 the last of the legions were withdrawn from Britain to defend the more central parts of the Empire frequently assailed by the barbarous hordes ever on its borders. The inhabitants under the Roman rule had become weak and servile, and thus easily fell a prey to the next invaders, the "Franks" and "Saxons," who, with their pirate galleys, made frequent descents on the sea coasts, and even carried their inroads far inland. In 446 an appeal, called "The Groans of the Britons," was sent to the "Great Patrician" Aetius, desiring "ayde and comferte from the daungier of strange enemies," but Aetius needed all his legionaries to conquer the fierce Attila and his savage Huns, and could give them no assistance. Vortigern, one of the British kings, made an alliance with the Angles and Saxons to assist him against the inroads of the Picts and Scots; but instead of allies the Anglo-Saxons soon became masters, and their successors tempted other bodies of German invaders to follow. These newcomers were more barbarous than Imperial Rome. They drove out the inhabitants wherever they came, compelling them either to become their slaves, or else retire to more remote parts of the country. Pagans themselves, they treated everything pertaining to

Christ or Christianity with special ferocity. Preachers and people were slain with indiscriminate cruelty, and churches were razed to the ground.

These savage wars gave little opportunity for the early British Church to extend its influence over these fierce marauders, even if the conquerors had not treated with contempt everything belonging to the conquered. Thus we find that during the fifth century the Christians in the south were gradually driven back into the mountains of Wales and the wild moors of Northumberland, and, although isolated Christian families could be found here and there, paganism again overspread the land, and idol temples arose to the heathen gods in many places, where previously the true God had been known and worshipped. Our names for the days of the week still preserve a remembrance of these idol gods. Sunday is from the sun, Monday from the moon, Tuesday from their hero-god Tuisco, Wednesday from Wodin or Odin, the god of war, Thursday from their chief god Thor, the thunderer, and so on. For many years after the withdrawal of the Romans little is known of the religious history of Britain.

Civil wars among the various petty chiefs were the principle events. Christianity existed, but oftentimes it was swept back by the tide of paganism, as in some predatory excursion the "priests" of one tribe were murdered by the soldiers of another, who, ascribing their victory to their idol gods, reared again their fallen altars and deserted shrines. Afterwards, when peace had been restored, some Christian missionary would be found brave and zealous enough to rear again the banner of the cross, and go forth with his life in his hand preaching the gospel. Thus the contest went on, but the light was slowly penetrating the darkness; the truth was the stronger, and would triumph in the end.

One of the missionaries who went forth as a light-bearer in these dark days was called Kentigern. He was born about 514 in Culross, and the scene of his first labours was at Cathures (now Glasgow). But on the accession of a new king to the throne of Cumbria, Kentigern had to flee for his life, and take refuge in Wales. When the Christian king Ryderech ascended the throne, Kentigern was invited to return, and the old writer goes on to tell us that he abode in "a town called Glesgu, now called Glasgu, where he united himself to a family of servants of God who lived after the fashion of the primitive Church in holy discipline and Divine service."

While Kentigern was labouring in the south, another missionary, named Columba, in Ireland, was preparing to visit the western shores of Scotland. Several fellow-Christians, imbued with his zeal, volunteered to accompany him, and setting sail in their currach of osiers and skins, they reached the island of Iona in 565. Here they erected their humble settlement of wattles, and from thence set forth to evangelise the rude Picts in their vicinity. Columba's efforts were directed towards the northern Picts, beyond the Grampians, where, as far as we know, the Gospel had not as yet penetrated. The brethren led lives of the greatest simplicity, and Columba, like Jacob of old, is said to have slept on the bare ground, with a stone for his pillow. A man of remarkable activity, he sought to use every moment for the glory of God. He read, wrote, and taught; he preached, prayed and visited from house to house, and from tribe to tribe, and soon fruits of his service began to appear. The king of the Picts was converted and many of his people. A school was established in Iona, where the Word of God was studied, and through the living Word many were born from above. The young men of Caledonia were taught that "the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith." "Throw aside all merit of works," said he, "and look for salvation to the grace of God alone."

Beware of a religion which consists of outward observances: it is better to keep your heart pure before God than to abstain from meats. One alone is your head, Jesus Christ."

Soon the true instinct of a living Church arose. The young men who had learned the gospel in the school of Iona desired to spread the knowledge of Jesus Christ in other lands. Kneeling in the chapel of Iona, they were set apart by the laying on of the hands of the brethren, and they went forth with their blessings and their prayers: Often in cruel persecutions, often in jeopardy of their lives, these devoted missionaries travelled through the Low Countries, Gaul, Switzerland and Germany, preaching the Word of God to the barbarous and unsettled tribes who at that time inhabited those countries. Nor were they afraid of the wild Atlantic billows, but crossed over in their frail boats to the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and even found their way to Iceland, ever seeking to preach the Gospel in regions beyond. Often "in perils by the heathen, in perils by the wilderness, in weariness, and painfulness," only the love of Christ constraining them could have carried them on, only the power of Christ could have sustained them. They sought not for worldly place and power, for advancement and riches, but were content with little of this world's goods, if only they might induce their hearers to "turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven."

Hardships and adventures were everyday occurrences in the lives of these men. Often their way lay over bleak and rugged mountains, or through dark and pathless forests abounding with wild beasts, and sometimes with men still more fierce and wild. Often they were in danger of suffering and death from the hands of the very men to whom they came with the word of life. At times they were exposed to the fury of the white-robed Druid priest whose pagan rites and worship they condemned or again, driven with scorn from the doors of the proud chieftain, they turned aside to the humble hut of the serf, and there told out in simple language to their rustic audience the old, old story of the love of Jesus.

We cannot but admire the zeal and earnestness of these early pioneers of mission enterprise. Their teaching was derived direct from the Scriptures, and they went forth with the Gospel, because they believed the Gospel to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." But we have come to a period when another system was to usurp their place, and enter into their labours — when popery like a dark cloud was about to overshadow the land with its baneful influence, and eclipse for a time the light of truth. In the fifth century Pope Leo I. had already laid what has been called the foundation stone of the papal supremacy, by introducing private confession to the priests, who were empowered to grant absolution, or impose penances at will, thus blasphemously taking the place of the one Mediator, Christ Jesus, who alone has power on earth to forgive sins.

Men were taught to hand over their consciences to the keeping of the priests. The priests, in their eagerness to multiply converts, lost the true idea of conversion, and, instead of looking for the fruits of righteousness which the Holy Spirit alone can produce, they were willing to accept a mere nominal assent to doctrines and ceremonies of man's making. Thus men had a name to live but were dead, and the whole became merely a worldly organisation, destitute alike of both life and practice.

Succeeding occupants of the papal chair continued this worldly policy, because by it their revenues were increased, and, though living in luxury and sensuality, they were ever on the

outlook for some new field over which they might extend their dominions, and arrogate to themselves both the spiritual and temporal sovereignty whenever they came. In 590 Gregory I. was elected to the pontifical chair, and at once decided on his long intended mission to Britain. Some time previously he had seen some youths exposed for sale in the slave market at Rome, and being pleased with their handsome appearance, he made inquiries and learned that they were Anglo-Saxon prisoners of war whose country was still pagan. Henceforth Gregory's desire was to bring Britain under the power of the Church of Rome. In 596 a monk named Augustine, attended with forty others, set forth on this mission and landed on the Isle of Thanet in Kent.

Augustine is said to have possessed even to a greater degree than Gregory himself "a mixture of ambition and devotedness, superstition and piety, cunning and zeal. He thought that faith and holiness were less essential to the Church than authority and power, and that its prerogative was not so much to save souls as to collect all the human race under the authority of Rome." Even Gregory himself took notice of his spiritual pride and exhorted him to humility.

England at this time was divided into the Saxon Heptarchy, or Seven Kingdoms, and, having landed in the Kingdom of Kent, the monks desired an interview with King Ethelbert, whose wife, Bertha, seems to have been a real Christian. The King decided to receive them in the open air, and took his stand under a large oak tree, while the monks, to make as much show as possible, approached, bearing a huge crucifix at the head of the procession. The King was sufficiently impressed to allow them the use of an ancient British chapel near Canterbury, and not long afterwards was converted — to the Church of Rome at least — by the eloquent appeals of Augustine. This event greatly helped on the work among his people, and ten thousand pagans were baptised in the Swale in one day. But alas what shall we say of such conversions? There was little "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Little of that real work of the Spirit in which, on the day of Pentecost, three thousand were pricked in their hearts, and said, "What shall we do?" The aim of Rome has ever been to make nominal converts to the aggrandisement of the Papal See, and such continues to the present day to be the false and unscriptural practice of Romish missionaries in heathen lands. See to it, my reader, that you are not only a nominal Christian but a real Christian; forgiven, saved, justified, and on your way to heaven — made fit by the blood of Christ, and made sure by the Word of God.

Augustine "converted" the heathen temples by washing the walls with "holy water," erecting "altars," and substituting "holy relics" for the images of the heathen gods. His next object was to win over the original British Churches, and, to this end, he appointed a conference and demanded them to submit to the government of Rome. The British Christians were firm in their refusal. "We desire to love all men," meekly replied Dionoth, a faithful teacher from Bangor, "and what we do for you we will do for him whom you call the Pope, but he is not entitled to call himself father of fathers; we know no master but Christ."

Augustine summoned another conference in 601, and again demanded the British Churches to submit to Rome, but Dionoth again resisted with firmness and success, and was supported by Dagam, one of the Scotch representatives from Iona, who refused even to eat bread with the Romans. But the pretensions of Rome were gaining ground. Much of the truth which had been so faithfully taught from Iona was already lost sight of, and the minds of the British Christians finally became unsettled as to whether they were right in their opposition. They visited a pious Christian

teacher who led a solitary life, and asked him if they should continue to resist Augustine or follow him.

"If he is a man of God, follow him."

"And how shall we know that?" they replied.

"If he is meek and humble of heart, he bears Christ's yoke; but, if he is violent and proud, he is not of God."

"What sign shall we have of his humility?"

"If he rises from his seat to receive you when you enter the room."

They departed for the Council, and entered the hall, but the Romish Archbishop, desirous of showing his superiority, proudly kept his seat. Again the British protested against the papal supremacy — "We will have no master but Christ." Augustine was incensed. "If you will not receive brethren who bring you peace, you shall receive enemies who bring you war," he said. He comes out here in his true character. Argument had failed: now for the sword. The first thing that British Christians receive, either from Pagan Rome or Papal Rome is alike persecution.

Augustine died in 604, but the spirit of persecution survived, and the influence of the priests over even pagan kings was always used against the British. Twelve hundred were murdered near Bangor in one day, in a place where they were gathered together for prayer, by Edelfrid, one of the Anglo-Saxon kings and soon the light of primitive Christianity was almost extinguished in Britain. Only in Iona the Christians still continued to hold fast the truth, and missionaries went forth through the various Saxon kingdoms in England preaching the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Northumberland at this time reigned King Oswy, an ambitious and unprincipled man, who determined to add to his territories at the expense of his neighbours. He first treacherously murdered his relative, Oswin, King of Deira, and also usurped the throne of Mercia after King Peada had been slain in a conspiracy got up by his wife, Oswy's daughter, and thus succeeded by craft and cruelty in uniting nearly all England into one kingdom. He now called a conference, and, professing to be won over by the priests, exclaimed, "Peter is the doorkeeper, I will obey him." Such was the character of the man who became Rome's convert and handed over the liberties of England to the Pope. The priests knew what to make of their victory, and soon all England was under the domination of the Papal See. The Pope wrote to Oswy and sent him, not copies of the Holy Scriptures, alas! but "relics of the saints," and for nearly seven hundred years England, which had refused the light, was given over to darkness, and made to groan under the spiritual despotism of a false Church which made merchandise of the bodies and souls of men. In the East, also, the minds of men were groping in darkness. Mohammed, born in 570, was at this time propagating his dark delusion by fire and sword.

Neither the legions of Rome nor the trained warriors of Persia could withstand the fierce onslaughts of the Moslem hordes, who rushed eagerly to the fight, fondly believing that those who fell in battle went straight to Paradise. Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Persia, and Northern Africa were rapidly overrun. By the Straits of Gibraltar they entered Spain, which was subdued after desperate fighting, in which its king was slain.

Crossing the Pyrenean mountains they invaded France, but were met near Tours in 752 by Charles Martel at the head of the armies of Europe, and defeated after a battle which lasted six days.

It is impossible to enumerate the havoc and slaughter perpetrated by these fanatical warriors. The countries along the shores of Northern Africa contained an immense number of Christian congregations, with many bishops and pastors. These were almost entirely swept away. In the twelve years after the death of Mohammed it is estimated that his successors conquered 36,000 towns and villages; destroyed 4,000 Christian Churches, putting to death all who opposed them or refused to become Mohammedans, and so successfully has this "mission" been carried on since, that there are now about two hundred and six millions of our fellow-men who are followers of the doctrine of that false prophet. But Europe was saved from the ravages of the Moslems only to become the prey of popery, which rapidly developed its anti-Christian principles and practices during the dark ages. How true it is that "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Let us see to it that we value the privileges we enjoy. Living in a professing Christian land and having an open Bible telling us of the love of God to lost sinners in sending His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him; surely if we neglect so great salvation we will indeed be without excuse.

02.03. Chapter 3. The First English Bible.

Chapter 3. The First English Bible. At the close of the seventh century, those British Christians, who had offered so determined an opposition to Rome, were won over, one by one, until, even in the original settlement of Iona, they agreed to recognize the papal supremacy.

Henceforth, instead of the humble preachers of Iona who went forth taking nothing from any man, but preaching the simple gospel of Jesus Christ, Rome brought in her rites and ceremonies, relics and superstitions.. Every effort was used to enslave men's minds and keep them in ignorance, while at the same time everything Rome supplied had to be bought with money. A writer on the subject has said, "Not an article was there in her creed, not a ceremony in her worship, not a department in her government that did not tend to advance her power and increase her gain. Her dogmas, rites, and orders were so many pretexts for exacting money. Images, purgatory, relics, pilgrimages, indulgences, jubilees, canonisations, miracles, and masses were but taxes under another name, . . . so many drains for conveying the substance of the nations to Rome." And another says, "Rome takes your gold and gives you nothing more solid in return than words." How different to all this is "the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord." Without money and without price, He invites sinners to come and take of the water of life freely. How thankful we should be that we have an open Bible that tells us of the free grace of God. But the tyranny of Rome was wearing to a close. Though she knew it not, the time was coming when God would raise up a man to give to Britain that best of all gifts — a Bible in her own language. That man was John Wycliffe, born in 1324 in the North Riding district of Yorkshire. He became a student of Merton College, Oxford, and was converted to God when about twenty-four years of age. He had found the way of life in the Holy Scriptures, and determined to show it to others. In 1365 he was elected warden of Canterbury College, and continued to preach the doctrine of free grace with much power.

Let us now digress for a moment to trace shortly the following events which brought Wycliffe forward as the determined opposer of the Pope in his demands on the State, and led him to take up higher ground and oppose Rome's usurped control over the conscience. In 1213 King John had yielded up "England and Ireland to St. Peter, St. Paul, and Pope Innocent III." He had laid his crown at the feet of Pandulf, the Pope's legate, who is said to have kicked and rolled it in the dust as a worthless bauble, and consented to allow John to resume it on the annual payment of 1,000 marks (£666 13s. 4d.) to Rome and to become the Pope's vassal. This payment had been very irregularly made when in the time of Edward III., after a period of thirty-five years, in which it had never been mentioned, Pope Urban V. summoned Edward to recognize him as King of England and renew the annual tribute. But King Edward III. was no weakling like King John. The conqueror of Crecy was little likely to yield to this insolent demand, and summoned his Parliament to support him. The Parliament agreed with the king and enlightened by the lucid and scriptural arguments of Wycliffe, declared against the Pope. The partisans of Rome were infuriated, and declared that by the canon law of the Church the king ought to be deprived of his fief. "The canon law," said Wycliffe, "has no force when it is opposed to the Word of God." But God had more important work

for Wycliffe than mere worldly politics, and, having been presented by the king with the living of Lutterworth, he set about preaching the gospel in his parish with his usual activity. At Oxford he lectured to the students as one "having authority;" for while others taught from the sentences of Peter Lombard, or the mystical philosophy of Duns Scotus, he opened up the Scriptures and showed that they were indeed spirit and life. He accused the clergy of having banished the Holy Scriptures, and demanded that the authority of the Word of God should be re-established over the conscience.

These things were not looked upon by his enemies with indifference, and he who would dare to attack the papacy in such high-handed fashion must be dealt with. In 1377 the Pope issued a Bull, enjoining the English clergy to crush this formidable heresy — for such the teaching of the Scriptures was called — and take immediate steps to silence the author of it "by arresting the said John Wycliffe and shutting him up in prison." The clergy needed little incentive. Courtney, bishop of London, had begun the prosecution before the Bull arrived, and cited Wycliffe to appear and answer for his teaching. An immense crowd thronged the approaches to St. Paul's Cathedral as Wycliffe appeared to attend the convocation. Hands were raised to do violence to the venerable old man, and loud hootings from the partisans of the priests re-echoed through the building. With Wycliffe, however, came John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and Lord Percy, Earl Marshal of England. Having two such powerful friends, Courtney could do little but show his hatred by railing at the bold preacher, and the assembly broke up in confusion.

Next year the Bull arrived, and Wycliffe was cited to appear before the bishops at Lambeth Palace. This time no John of Gaunt appeared to protect him, and his patron King Edward was dead. The human arm was withdrawn that his faith and hope might be in God. The sitting was scarcely opened when Sir Lewis Clifford entered with a dispatch from the queen-mother to forbid the court, "as the Pope's brief could have no authority in the realm of England without the consent of the king." Thus a second time he was preserved from his enemies to continue his work for God. Before retiring he handed in a protest, setting forth the teaching of Scripture as opposed to the errors of Rome, and, "In the first place," said he, "I am resolved with my whole heart, by the grace of God, to live as a sincere Christian, and, while my life shall last, to profess and defend the truth of Christ as far as I have power." Shortly afterwards, Wycliffe, while still continuing his teaching at Oxford, fell suddenly and dangerously ill. He was now an old man, and his incessant labours, with the persistent and harassing persecutions he was called upon to bear, had told upon a constitution never very strong. The monks, whose vices and ignorance he had so scathingly exposed, were delighted. They would now get rid of their enemy, but greater would be their victory if they could get him to recant. A deputation of four waited upon him and urged him to retract all he had said against them. But Wycliffe had been too much convinced of the truth of what he taught in health to retract it in sickness. Raising himself on his couch, he replied in an emphatic voice, "I shall not die but live, and again declare the evil deeds of the friars." They left the room in confusion, and Wycliffe recovered to continue his work. Not content with his own efforts, he sent forth the most earnest of his disciples to preach the gospel all over the land and "seek to convert souls to Jesus Christ." The missionaries Rome sent forth were the begging friars, who strolled over the country filling their wallets, and, in place of preaching the Word of Life, told stupid and foolish legends about the lives of the "saints," or amused the people by stories of Sinon and the wooden horse, from the Trojan War; afterwards wasting their time in the alehouses or at the gaming tables.

Wycliffe's "poor priests," as they were called, went forth barefoot, staff in hand, taking nothing of any man but sufficient for their daily bread, and visiting the sick, the aged, the poor, and the blind. They became favourites among the people, who gladly listened to them and drank in the good news so long hid, but which, like old wells reopened, gave forth abundant refreshment to all who would come and drink. The clergy had recourse to their usual weapon — persecution, and got a law passed commanding every king's officer to arrest the preachers and commit them and their followers to prison. The monks watched their opportunity, and when the humble evangelist began to preach they set off for assistance, but when the officers appeared, led on by the priests, a body of stout men stood forth, surrounded their preacher, protected him from the violence of the clergy, and carried him off in safety. Thus, day by day, the work went on, and the light was penetrating into every part of the country. When persecuted in one place the devoted missionaries fled to another, and, whether seated by the cottage hearth or preaching to the crowds at the crossways, to the few as to the many, they spoke of full and free salvation by grace alone, not of works, lest any man should boast.

It has ever been the policy of Rome to withhold the Bible from the people. The teaching of the Church of Rome is at utter variance with the teaching of Scripture, and when the light of the truth contained in the Word of God shines out, all the fabric of superstition, built upon a foundation of ignorance, falls to pieces. Accordingly the priests forbade all laymen under pain of death to read the Scriptures, and told the people to "learn to believe in the Church rather than in the Gospel."

John Wycliffe, both in his controversies with the priests, and in his preaching to the people, ever appealed to the Holy Scriptures as the sole source of authority. The ignorant and dissolute priests and monks both hated and feared him, while by the common people he was loved and honoured because he taught them in their own tongue the pure Gospel of the grace of God. Not content with publicly preaching the Word, he determined to give the people a translation of the Bible in their own language, and this great work he completed about the year 1380. Previous attempts at Bible translation had been made, but with only partial success. King Alfred, with the help of learned men, began a translation, but dying soon after, the work was stopped. Bede, in the eighth century, had translated the Gospel of John, and is said to have expired as he finished the last verse. But these copies, even if any now existed, were only fragmentary and out of reach of the common people. In his quiet retreat at Lutterworth, after nearly fifteen years' labour, he succeeded in finishing his translation from the Latin Vulgate into the English tongue. There are still several copies of Wycliffe's Bible in the principal libraries, and one in the British Museum is believed to have been written by Wycliffe himself. Here is a specimen of the language in which the Scriptures were read in the fourteenth century; it is a passage from Luke's Gospel in Wycliffe's translation —

"In the days of Eroude Kyng of Judee ther was a prest Zacarye by name: of the sort of Abia, and his wyfe was of the doughtris of Aaron; and hir name was Elizabeth; an bothe weren juste bifore God: goynge in alle the maundementis and justifyingis of the Lord withouten playnt."

Here is another curious specimen from the time of King Alfred —

"On fruman waes Word, and thaet Word mid Gode, and Gode waes thaet Word. Thaet waes on fruman mid Gode. Elle thing waeron geworht thurh hyne; and nanthing waes geworht buttan him. Thaet waes lif the on him geworht waes, and thaet lif waes manna leoht. And thaet leoth lyht on thystrum; and thystro thaet ne gena-mon."

Wycliffe's translation was completed, but there was then no printing presses and no great publishing houses; however, there was a real desire for the Word of God, and soon many expert hands were engaged in multiplying copies, which were eagerly bought up by the people. They had been taught that there was a graduated series of monks, priests, popes, and "saints," between them and God, but by the Scriptures they learned that there is only "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Rome taught that redemption was to be purchased by paying the priests for masses. The Scriptures declare, "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." That "by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Thus the glorious light of God's Word chased away the errors and darkness of Rome, as the morning mists disappear before the rising sun. The people rejoiced. The clergy mourned. Their gains were in danger. Who would buy worthless masses when they had an open Bible? But they did not long remain inactive; Wycliffe had attacked transubstantiation, which, ever since it had been invented by the monk Radbertus in the ninth century, had been a powerful engine in the hands of the clergy over the people; accordingly he was suspended from teaching at Oxford and expelled from the University, but he appealed to the Parliament, and meantime he retired to his parish of Lutterworth, from which the priests could not as yet expel him, because it was the gift of the king.

Here he spent a few quiet months until Parliament re-opened in November, when, instead of coming forward to defend himself from the priests, he came forward to attack in the face of the whole nation "the corruption, tyranny, and errors of hierarchy." Parliament repealed the persecuting edict, and thus once again God shielded and preserved His servant against the hatred and malice of his enemies.

What Tyler's insurrectionary followers had seized and beheaded Sudbury, the Primate, and Courtney, now Archbishop of Canterbury and "Primate of all England," would see if in that capacity he could not accomplish the destruction of the man he considered his enemy. Assembling a convocation at Oxford, he summoned Wycliffe once more to appear. Would he come? He came. It was to be his last appearance before either kings or councils — his last public testimony for the truth of Christ. The indictment was read and he rose to reply. As of old, he refuted their charges, challenging them to convince him of error before they condemned his teaching. And growing bolder, his words glowing with eloquence and energy, he turned the accusation against themselves. "Ye are the heretics who teach your foolish traditions instead of the truth of Scripture. Why do you propagate such errors? Why because like the priests of Baal, ye want to vend your masses. With whom think ye are ye contending? with an old man on the brink of the grave? No, with truth; truth which is stronger than you, and will overcome you." His enemies were astounded at his bold words, every one of which they knew to be true. He turned to leave the court, and no one attempted to hinder him. They allowed him to pass through their midst and go back to his beloved parish of Lutterworth.

Here he spent the few remaining days of his life in teaching and preaching Jesus Christ. His enemies intended to bring him to the stake, but God, who overruleth all things, frustrated their intentions. On the last Sunday of December, in the year 1384, he was stricken down with paralysis in the midst of his beloved people. They carried him sorrowfully to his home, and tended him night

and day, for they loved him as a father. Here he lingered till the last day of the month, and as the year was dying, he entered into rest.

After his death a petition was got up by those who opposed his work, and presented to the Pope (which, however, he refused) to have his body taken out of the grave and buried in a dunghill — so deep was the hatred of his enemies; and forty years afterwards his bones were actually dug up, burned to ashes, and cast into the river. The priests also excommunicated all who bought his books or tracts, and it was at a terrible risk they could be read.

Many men who were found by the priests with a copy of Wycliffe's Bible were burned to ashes at the stake with the book hung round their necks. Men, and women too, were executed for teaching their children in their mother-tongue the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer. Children were forced to light the death fires around their parents; and the possessors of the Bible were hunted down and slain like wild beasts.

Old John Fox says, and we may well say the same, "Certes the zeal of these Christians seems much superior to this of our day, and to see their faithfulness may well shame our careless times."

Over a hundred years elapse before we come to another version of the Bible in the English tongue, and any copies made during that period were laboriously written out by hand.

Yet, notwithstanding, copies increased and though the price was about forty pounds a volume, and labourers' wages a penny a day, yet men denied themselves other things and bought them. Those who were not able to buy them, and had the opportunity, learned whole epistles off by heart, and recited them to the little gatherings who met in fear and trembling, and yet thirsting for the life-giving Word. The Bible was to them a precious Book. Do we value it as we ought?

Wycliffe died, but the fruit of his great life-work remained. His followers took up the work where he laid it down, and assiduously sought to spread not only the truth of the Scriptures but copies of the Book itself wherever they found opportunity. They traversed the country preaching the Gospel, and many of the nobility, as well as the common people, gladly embraced the truth. Where the preacher could not enter, the Word of God often found a place, and Wycliffe's Testament was seen both in the castles of the nobles and the halls of the gentry. Soon men began to see the difference between the teaching of Rome and the teaching of Scripture, and in proportion as minds were enlightened by the Word of God, so were they set free from the bondage of darkness which had hitherto enthralled them. But the persecuting Arundel was now Primate, and he, seeing the growth of the new opinions, posted off to Ireland, where King Richard II. then was, and entreated him to return and take measures to suppress the Lollards, as Wycliffe's followers now came to be called. Easily persuaded either to one side or the other, the weak king gave Arundel liberty to commence the persecution, and shortly afterwards set out to return to England, but before Richard set foot on his native shores another had arrived there before him who would contend with him both for place and power.

Henry of Lancaster, son of the famous Duke of Lancaster mentioned in a former paragraph, had been banished by Richard, but suddenly sailed from the Continent, landed in Yorkshire, and deposed Richard, who was imprisoned and starved to death in Pontefract Castle. The crafty and cunning Arundel, who had been wise enough to desert the losing side in time, now came forward (1399) and crowned the usurper as Henry IV. with the "Vial of oil which fell down from the Virgin

Mary." The son of Wycliffe's protector was now king, but he had arrived at the throne by the murder of the rightful king and the help of the priests, and to maintain his usurpation he had to bind himself to "protect the Church." To protect the Church meant, in these days, to persecute every humble follower of Jesus who dared to differ from Rome, and Henry was not long in making good his promise to the priests. In his reign was passed the act ordering every heretic to be burned alive — a stain alike on his memory and the Statute Book. The priests, who can only be likened to blood-thirsty animals, were overjoyed. Hitherto their power was limited by the will of the king, now their persecution was legalised, and they hastened to satiate their cruelty on those who set at nought their traditions.

"I will worship Christ who died on the cross," said William Sawtre, "but not the cross on which Christ died." He was condemned to the fire by the primate, and handed over to the secular power, with the hypocritical request to treat him with mercy. A stake was planted at Smithfield, and he was burned alive in 1401 — another martyr for the truth in England. John Badby was burned for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. William Thorpe was murdered in prison for refusing to worship images. Thus Rome has clearly shown how both in doctrine and practice she is at utter variance with the teaching of Jesus Christ. The prisons in the bishops' houses were full to overflowing. Not only were they used as places of confinement, but they became dens of torture: fetters and the rack, thumb-screws and the "boot" were brought into requisition with fiendish ingenuity, and men "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment." Very touching is the testimony of one who carved on the walls of his dungeon, "Jesus amor meus" — Jesus is my love. These words are said to be still seen on the walls of the Lollard's tower in Lambeth Palace. Not only did the priests vent their rage on the humble and lowly, but they proceeded against Lord Cobham, and succeeded in inducing the king to allow him to be brought to trial. Accordingly he was seized and imprisoned in the Tower. Brought before Arundel in 1413 he witnessed a good confession for Jesus Christ.

"We must believe what the Church of Rome teaches, whether Christ says so or not," said the primate.

"I am ready to believe all that God desires, but what is contrary to Scripture I can never believe," said Sir John. But he was before judges who knew no mercy, and he was sentenced to death and sent back to the Tower to prepare for the fire. "It is well," said he, "though you condemn my body, through the mercy of the eternal God you cannot harm my soul."

He escaped from the Tower at this time, but four years afterwards he was retaken and drawn on a hurdle through the streets of London to the place of suffering. With diabolical cruelty he was suspended in chains over the fire and slowly burned to death. Yet the Lord stood by His servant and enabled him to endure this awful torture with constancy and firmness unto the end.

Space forbids any attempt to chronicle even the names of those, who, during this period, were called upon to seal their testimony with their blood, and though the hearts of many failed them before the fiery trial, yet the knowledge of the truth had been widely diffused by means of Wycliffe's New Testament, and the good seed thus sown brought forth fruit at a future day. We are accustomed to look upon Luther as the man whom God raised up to hold forth the lamp of truth in the middle ages, but over a hundred years before, the glorious truth of Salvation by grace was

known in England; and Bohemia at the same period had its martyrs for Jesus Christ. On the Continent at this time was seen the curious spectacle of three "infallible" popes, each striving to assert his supremacy at the expense of the other; as old John Fox says, "There were not three crowns on one pope's head, but three heads in one popish crown." The Council of Constance (1414) had been called to deal with these three rival "infallible" popes which Christendom had found to be very fallible indeed; these three they deposed and elected another "infallible" whom they styled Pope Martin V. Thereupon they cited before them John Huss, who has been called the apostle of Bohemia, and though he came with a safe conduct from the Emperor "to go and return without let or hindrance," yet the Emperor, won over by the priests, broke his most sacred promise and allowed Huss to be arrested and imprisoned. He was commanded to abjure his opinions and submit to the Church. "I would rather," said he, "that a millstone was hanged about my neck, and I was cast into the sea, than offend one of those little ones to whom I have preached the Gospel by abjuring it." He was condemned to the fire, and one of the prelates said, We devote thy soul to the devil." "And I," said Huss, "do commend my soul to Thy hands, O Lord Jesus, for Thou hast redeemed me." Two years afterwards Jerome of Prague suffered and triumphed on the same spot; but Bohemia, through the teaching of these two men had been emancipated from the thralldom of Rome, and a few years afterwards the great majority of the nation embraced the faith for which these noble martyrs died. A day of retribution came when the Government threw off its vassalage, and arraying its armies in the field under the leadership of the famous John Ziska and the no less famed Procopius, repulsed, again and again, with tremendous slaughter, the numerous and well appointed armies Rome brought into the field to exterminate alike the truth and the nation.

Procopius was a theologian as well as a warrior. "Can you show," said he to the priests, "that the order of friars was instituted by either the prophets of the Old Testament, or the apostles of the New? If, not, by whom were they instituted?" To this the priests did not reply. Their argument was force. But better by far, would it have been, had the Bohemians, instead of resorting to the sword, endeavoured to spread the knowledge of the truth so fully taught by Huss and Jerome. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds."

02.04, Chapter 4. Scotland's Confessors And Martyrs.

Chapter 4.

Scotland's Confessors And Martyrs. In a previous chapter we have seen how Columba had visited Scotland in the sixth century and founded a settlement in Iona, from which the light of truth for some time shone out amidst the surrounding darkness. However, as Columba's successors began to lose the clear views of truth which he had taught, the light grew dim, and soon Romish superstition took the place of the Gospel of Christ. The heathen Norsemen too, often harassed the settlement. In 795 they plundered and burned it; in 875 it was again attacked and sixty-eight persons murdered. King David I., in the twelfth century, in his zeal for the "Church," finally drove out the settlers and planted a colony of French monks instead; and now truly was Scotland at the feet of Rome. But no country owned the sway of the Pope for a shorter period. Its brave and warlike inhabitants, who had so often hurled back the Southern chivalry, could ill brook the domination of a foreign priest, and the country, as a whole, could never be said to be very devoted to Rome. Even in the time of King Robert the Bruce we find Pope John XXII. complaining that "the land had never been thoroughly purged from heresy." These "heretics" were, no doubt, some who had remained faithful to the teaching of the early evangelists, and amidst all the corruptions of that profligate age were endeavouring to keep themselves unspotted from the world. By and by Wycliffe's Testament found its way northwards, and we read of one, Murdoch of Hardhill, who had a copy which he kept concealed in a vault, and read to his family at midnight. Another, named Gordon, also had a copy, and used to read portions to a little company gathered in a lonely wood near his house. How dark and unhappy these times must have been! The people were in utter ignorance of the Word of God. Only a manuscript copy of the Testament was to be found here and there, and those who possessed it had to hide it with the greatest secrecy, as it meant death to be found reading the Scriptures in the common tongue. And Scotland, too, had its confessors and martyrs for Jesus Christ. In 1406 James Riscby, who had learned the truth from John Wycliffe, was committed to the flames at Perth. In 1420 we find Scotland possessed a Heretical Inquisitor in the person of the Abbot of Scone. In 1431 Paul Cramer was burned at St. Andrews. His tormentors forced a ball of brass into his mouth to prevent him addressing the people gathered round the stake. But all the efforts of the Prince of Darkness could not keep out the light which by the grace of God was rising over the nations.

Nearly a hundred years pass away, and we stand by the stake of one of Scotland's greatest sons — Patrick Hamilton, who was burned in 1528.

Born of a noble family in 1504, Hamilton received his education at St. Andrews, and afterwards proceeded to the Continent. Seeking after light, the learned disputations of the Doctors of the Sorbonne did not satisfy him, and he went on to the College of Marburg, which had been newly founded by the Landgrave Philip of Hesse. Here he met Francis Lambert, the friend of Zwingli, who said of him, "I have scarcely ever met a man who expressed himself with so much spirituality and truth on the word of the Lord." Soon his one object was to return to his native land and preach

the gospel of full and free salvation. But Scotland had never been more under the power of the priests than at the present moment. The rash King James IV., with all his principal nobility, had fallen on the dark and bloody field of Flodden, and the profligate Bishop Beaton grasped the power of Government during the feeble minority of James V. Nevertheless, Hamilton, who had fully counted the cost, returned home to his family near Linlithgow. He was first used in being the means of the conversion of several in his own home. He also visited in the houses of the gentry, where he was known and respected, and sought to win souls for Christ. He preached in the fields, and in the highways and by-ways spoke to individuals, ever seeking to sow the good seed of the Word of God.

Beaton grew alarmed. If this continued, the priests were undone; but Hamilton was of the blood royal, and the Archbishop had to act with caution. His first object was to get the young king out of the way for the time. This he accomplished by inducing him to go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Duthac, in Ross-shire, there to pray for his soul's health. Afterwards, cloaking his dark designs under a plea of Church reformation, he invited Hamilton to visit him at St. Andrews. Here, after a few weeks of freedom, he was arrested in his lodgings at the dead of night, and conveyed through the silent streets to the dungeons of the Bishop's Castle. A few days afterwards he appeared before Beaton, who was attended by a numerous body of the principal bishops and abbots of Scotland. Prior Campbell, having read the indictment, burst out into a torrent of invective. "Heretic," said he, "thou sayest it is lawful for all men to read the New Testament." "Heretic, thou sayest it is lost labour to call on the Virgin Mary as a mediator." "Heretic, thou sayest it is vain to say masses for the release of souls from purgatory;" and much more in the same strain. Beaton pronounced sentence of death, and every voice on the tribunal said, "Away with him to the fire." At noon he was chained to the stake, the faggots heaped round, and a bag of gunpowder placed at his feet. The powder exploded, wounding the martyr in the face, but the wood was green and would not burn. Another supply was got with like result; his limbs were scorched, but the fire did not reach his body. Six hours has the martyr stood on the pile of suffering, but now the end has come, the glory is near. One standing by said, "If thou still holdest true to thy doctrine, give us a sign." The iron band round his waist was red hot, his whole body was burning in the fire, but raising his hand he held it in the flame till the fingers dropped into the fire. His last words were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and so he entered into the joy of his Lord. Surely great grace was given to him in his great need, for it is said that no impatient word escaped his lips, as through such protracted sufferings he patiently waited for the end. But the death of Patrick Hamilton did more for the cause of truth than his life could have done, as one said, "The reik (smoke) of Hamilton infected every one it blew upon." Numbers came forward to fill the ranks of those who had fallen. The priests were furious, but despite their utmost vigilance there was now that to contend with which defied all their efforts. Copies of Tyndale's New Testament, printed at Worms in 1526, were being brought into Scotland, concealed in packages of goods and even bags of flour, till they could be distributed over the country. A mandate was issued that "The Scriptures, or any book that contained a quotation from them, were not to be read by the people," yet the people bought them and read them, and believed unto everlasting life. The priests resorted to their favourite plan of burning all whom they could lay hands on. Straiton and Gourlay were burned at Greenside, Edinburgh. Russel and Kennedy were burned at Glasgow. Forrest, with four other confessors, were burned on the Castle Hill. Of Forrest, we read that he was in the habit of beginning at six o'clock in the morning to read the Scriptures, and that he committed to memory

three chapters every day, which he repeated to his servant at night. But the murder of individuals was too slow a process for the cruel and vindictive David Beaton, who was now at the head of the Roman hierarchy. He meditated a Scotch Bartholomew, and compiled a list of over a hundred Protestants to be assassinated at one time. This list contained the names of Lord Hamilton, the first peer in Scotland, and many of the nobility who had been led to see the errors of Rome. But James V. dying of grief after the battle of Solway Moss, this list was found on his person, and the nobles, aghast at the diabolical plot thus revealed, elected the man the priest intended to slay, as Regent of the kingdom during the minority of the infant Queen, Mary Stuart. Thus God, who maketh even the wrath of man to praise Him, overruled the evil designs of the priests for the good of His people, and though the Cardinal forged a will appointing himself Regent, yet the nation knew the profligate priest too well either to believe him or entrust him with a power he would have wielded for his own selfish ends.

Next year, 1543, by Act of Parliament, it became lawful for every subject in the realm to read the Bible in his mother tongue, and then might be seen "the Bible lying upon every gentleman's table, the New Testament openly borne about in men's hands, and thereby did the knowledge of God wondrously increase." The same year George Wishart returned from the Continent, and now God had given to Scotland an open Bible and a faithful preacher.

Wishart was born in 1512. For some years he was connected with an academy in Montrose, and is said to have been the first who taught Greek in Scotland. While here he became suspected of heresy, and not yet fully established in the truth he retired to the Continent to escape the coming storm. In Switzerland he met Bullinger and others of the Swiss Evangelists, and became strongly imbued with the earnest evangelistic spirit which marked these pious men.

Returning to Scotland, as we have said, at the close of 1543, he found that the Regent Arran's zeal for the truth had been short lived. Self-interest and worldly policy had led him for a time to favour those who were contending for the faith, but his heart was in the world, and he shaped his conduct accordingly. Let us look for a moment into the Franciscan Convent at Stirling, and there humbly kneeling before a shaven priest we shall see the man who swayed the sovereign power of Scotland. He is solemnly recanting his opinions, and receiving "absolution" for departing from the "true Church." And now the weak tool is ready for the work of the scheming prelate. A marriage had been proposed between the young queen Mary and the heir of Henry VIII., but the priests saw an end to their power if an alliance was formed with protestant England, and the crafty and strong-willed Beaton having got the Regent into his power, the treaty with England was abandoned, and one with popish France put in its stead. Bluff King Henry was indignant at the breach of faith, and one day an English fleet sailed up the Forth and cast anchor in Leith Roads. There was no one to oppose them, and Hereford's soldiers disembarked next morning, pillaged Leith, and fired Edinburgh, which they left burning for three days, returning to their own country after putting to death every man, woman and child they met with.

We can easily understand something of the opposition that George Wishart was likely to meet with at a time when the priests held so much political power, as he began, in spite of their edict forbidding "discussion on the doctrines of Scriptures," to expound the Epistle to the Romans to the large audiences who everywhere hung upon his words. He was the greatest orator Scotland had listened to for centuries. In Dundee crowds were drawn together wherever he preached. With

convincing eloquence he showed that "all had sinned and come short of the glory of God." Then he spoke of the "one man" by whom sin entered, and passed on to the "One Man" by whom came the "free gift," showing that justification was not to be obtained by works or penance, but "being justified by faith we have peace with God." This good work was suddenly interrupted by the Regent and the Cardinal, who with a train of siege artillery, sought to capture both the town and the preacher; but the citizens retiring took their preacher with them till the danger was over, when they quietly returned, and the meetings went on for some months as before. But Beaton was on the alert, and got a summons delivered to him in the Queen's name, "to depart and trouble the town no more with his presence."

Wishart deemed it wise to obey, and, persecuted in one city, he went to another. Every Church door was now closed to the faithful evangelist, but like his Master of old, on the hillsides and in the fields he preached the word of life to the listening thousands who surrounded him.

It was a time of real revival wrought by the Holy Spirit of God. Profligate sinners were seen with tears of repentance rolling down their faces, and change of life gave evidence to the reality of their conversion. Men were led to see not, only the errors of Rome — that could be understood by mere intellect — but their own state as sinners before a Holy God, and their need of a Divine Substitute in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This could only be wrought by the Spirit, who alone can convince of sin and produce true repentance by taking the eye away from self, to rest on Christ, "Who bore our sins in His own body on the tree," "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for Our justification." The plague broke out in Dundee a short time after Wishart left, and he hastened back to minister to the sick and the dying. "They need comfort," said he, "and perchance the hand of God will make them magnify and reverence that Word which before, for fear of men, they set at light part." By his advice and help, food and medicine were distributed among the sick. Mounted on the top of the battlements at the "East port" he preached from the text, "He sent His Word and healed them" — a fitting text for such an audience. Outside were the plague-stricken from the Lazar houses that stood near the gate. Inside were the terrified citizens haunted by the fear that they too might be the next victims. The Cardinal took care to keep away from Dundee while the plague was raging, but hearing Wishart had returned he hired a priest to assassinate him. The would-be murderer waited at the foot of the stairs with a naked dagger concealed under his cloak till the preacher should descend. Something in the man's manner betrayed him, and Wishart going up to him said, "Friend, what would you?" at the same time taking hold of his right arm and revealing the concealed knife. The crowd rushed in and would have torn him to pieces, but Wishart shielded him from their fury and allowed him to escape.

Among the sick he was unsparing in his labours for the benefit both of soul and body. He carried food to those who were still able to partake of it, and ministered the comfort of the Gospel to those who were dying. He sometimes referred to an incident that happened to him when abroad which stirred him up to more devoted charity. Meeting a Jew one day while sailing on the Rhine, he laboured to convince him that Jesus was the Messiah. "I can never believe," said the Jew, "that you Christians are the followers of the Messiah, because ye abrogate the holy law which was given to our fathers. Ye see the poor perishing among you, yet ye are not moved to pity. Secondly, it is forbidden by the law of God to make any imagery of things in Heaven or things on earth, yet your chambers are full of idols. A piece of bread baken upon the ashes ye adore and worship, and say it is your God."

Wishart never forgot these true censures which became a lesson, not only to himself but to others.

Leaving Dundee at the close of 1545, Wishart passed on to Edinburgh, preaching in the different towns and villages till he came to East Lothian. He had already experienced the Cardinal's hatred, and he had a presentiment that his work was almost accomplished — that his end was near. A few weeks before he was arrested, he preached at Inveresk. Gentle, winning, and persuasive as his usual manner was, yet he could be stern and unsparing when he came to attack the vices of Rome, and in this address he gave a scathing, vehement denunciation of the practices of the false and idolatrous church. At the same time he told the people of "the shortness of the time he had to travail among them, and of his death which now approached nearer than any one there would believe." The last time he preached was at Haddington, and before he left the town he took an affectionate farewell of all his friends. The man they loved was going from them, and their hearts were sad because he had told them that they should see his face no more. John Knox, whom we shall meet again, earnestly desired to accompany him, but he, fully persuaded that martyrdom awaited him, would not consent, saying "Go back to your duties; one is enough for a sacrifice." Accompanied by a few friends he set out on foot for the house of John Cockburn of Ormiston. When supper was over he gave a short address, seeking to encourage the few friends still around him, and closed by singing the 51st Psalm in old Scotch metre — Have mercy on me now, good Lord, After Thy great mercy — and dismissing the company with the parting words, "Now, may God grant quiet rest," he went off to bed. But there was to be no more rest on earth for this devoted servant. The few days left are to be spent in captivity and suffering; the martyr crown is to be won, and then, "faithful unto death," he shall receive the "crown of life." A band of men from the Cardinal, led by Earl Bothwell, had been searching for him; at midnight they surrounded the house and took the evangelist prisoner. He was instantly carried off to St. Andrews and thrown into prison. Wishart was well assured of the fate which lay before him, but he "knew Whom he believed," and his mind was in perfect peace. On February 28th, he was brought out to a mock trial before the Cardinal, and condemned to the flames, to be burned to death on the following day.

Early next morning the preparations began. The stake was erected before the Bishop's palace. Chains, fire and faggots were prepared for the martyr. Cushions and drapery lined the palace windows, that Beaton and his friends might luxuriously repose thereon while they feasted their eyes on the sufferer's dying agonies. The guns of the castle were loaded and turned on the scaffold to prevent any chance of rescue. Wishart's friends received permission to see him for the last time. They found him in the dungeon, full of triumphant grace. "Consider and behold my visage," said he, "ye shall not see me change my colour. The grim fire I fear not, for I know surely that I shall sup with my Saviour this night." At noon he was led forth surrounded by soldiers. His hands had been tied behind his back like a common criminal; a chain was round his waist and a rope round his neck. At the stake he fell upon his knees, and said, "Oh, Thou Saviour of the world, have mercy upon me; Father in Heaven, I commend my spirit into Thy hands." Then he prayed for his accusers and enemies, also for his brethren in the faith, when, the fire being lighted, he was quickly surrounded by the flames, and his body burned to ashes. The murder of Wishart was not sanctioned by the Estates. Many of the nobles cared little for the cause of Christ, but a great deal for worldly power, and they could ill abide the proud priest usurping the highest prerogative in the state without their consent. A conspiracy was formed against him; three short months pass, and sixteen daring men succeed in surprising him in his strong castle, on which he had spent vast

sums, and which he believed to be impregnable. Roused by the noise, the wretched man is met on the stairs, and James Melville exhorts him to repent of his wicked life, as he "passes his short sword once and again through his bosom." A few short years and the magnificent buildings on which the murdered prelate had spent so much labour, that he might be safe to plot and carry out his wicked deeds, but in which he met his just doom, are swept away, and all that remains are a few heaps of ruins. Truly, even "the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought." The priests filled up the vacant see by the nomination of Hamilton, brother to the Regent, and immediately proceeded to besiege the castle in which many of the Reformed party had taken refuge. After holding out for sixteen months it was taken by the assistance of a French fleet; and among the prisoners shipped off to the galleys was John Knox, destined to be the leader in the final emancipation of Scotland from the yoke of Rome. Once again it seemed as if the priests had triumphed, and they prepared as usual to celebrate their victory in fresh persecution of the humble followers of Jesus. Walter Mill, an old man, of eighty-two years, was arrested and brought before Hamilton. At his trial he had to be assisted into court, but his faith was strong and his voice gave no uncertain sound. "I will not recant," said he, "for I am corn, and not chaff, and will not be blown away with the wind." He was condemned. A rope was wanted to bind the old man to the stake, but not a merchant in St. Andrews would sell one for the purpose, so greatly was the action of the Archbishop detested. As he stood by the stake he said, "I trust I shall be the last to suffer death in Scotland for this cause," and his words have proved true. He died on the 28th August, 1558. During the night the people raised a great heap of stones on the ashes of the martyr, and, though the priests removed them day after day, yet this "heap of witness" duly rose again in the morning.

02.05. Chapter 5. John Knox and His Times.

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John Knox and His Times. The faithful preaching and martyr death of George Wishart had not been in vain. The Gospel of the grace of God, so zealously proclaimed by that devoted evangelist, had produced a real and lasting revival among the common people, which was to have deep and far-reaching results. This had its effect in opening the way for more widespread instruction in divine truth; and those who were desirous of being thus taught, had soon the privilege of such teaching, for God, who of old sent Peter to Cornelius, was preparing the man He was about to use to further the cause of Christ in Scotland, at a time when wickedness seemed to come in like a flood. That man was John Knox. He had taken refuge, as we have seen, in the castle of St. Andrews, to be safe from the plots of Archbishop Hamilton, who had put a price upon his head, and when the castle fell before the combined efforts of the Regent's army and the French fleet, Knox, in direct violation of the terms of capitulation, had been shipped off to the galleys.

We can have little idea of all the suffering and misery entailed upon the wretched men who were sent to this worse than penal servitude, but the following description by a writer on the subject will enable us to realize something of what Knox endured during the space of nearly two years before he was released. "The galleys were long craft, rowed by forty or fifty oars a-piece. Able-bodied vagrants, convicts, and the worst off-scourings of France were swept into these floating prisons. The long, low undecked waist of the ship was packed full of rowers, five or six of them chained to each oar. The labour of rowing was terrible. From the great length of the oars, the rowers had to rise to their feet at every stroke. They wrought stripped to the loins, and along the centre of the galley ran a gangway, on which the 'forcers' walked up and down with a long whip in hand which they mercilessly applied to the naked backs of the rowers, whenever they thought that any oar did not keep touch with the rest. In the hold there was a low dark room, entered by a scuttle about two feet square. This was the hospital; it was so low that the deck above was only three feet from the sick men's faces as they lay on the bare boards. The stench was so horrible in this dismal hole that slaves stricken with disease often chose to keep at their oar till they dropped and died rather than enter it."

Such was the place, and such were the masters under whom Knox acquired part of his education, but in the midst of it all we see his unflinching faith and trust in God, calmly waiting for the time when He would deliver him and send him forth into His service. Here he learned meekness in the endurance of wrong, self-control, patience, and also that resolute resistance to everything evil which comes out time after time in his after-life. He would tolerate no shams, neither in men nor things; what he insisted on was reality. One day a gorgeously painted lady, a figure of the Virgin Mary, was brought aboard to be kissed, but when presented to Knox, he gently said, "Trouble me not, such an idol is accursed, and I will not touch it." "Thou shalt handle it," said the officer, and violently thrust it into his face. Knox, seeing no other alternative, promptly used the opportunity and cast it into the sea, saying, "Let our lady save herself; she is light enough let her swim." The galley

in which Knox was confined returned to Scotland in 1548 accompanied by the French fleet sent to repair the damages wrought by Protector Somerset, at the Battle of Pinkie. Anchored off the Fife coast, a fellow-prisoner pointed out to him the steeple of St. Andrews, and asked him if he knew the place. Knox was worn down by fever and thought to be dying, but raising himself, he said, "Yea, I know it well, for I see the place where God first opened my mouth for His glory, and I am fully persuaded that I shall not depart this life till my tongue shall again glorify His holy name in the same place."

Knox was liberated in 1549, and went to England. Here he and others were employed by Cranmer, then in power, to go into the various districts where the Romish clergy were most opposed to the Reformation and preach the Gospel. Knox was appointed to Berwick. This work he entered into with much zeal and fervour, with a deep sense of the love of Christ to lost sinners, and of the grace of God in providing salvation without money and without price. He was not content with the district allotted to him, but travelled round the surrounding country as far as Newcastle, "in season and out of season preaching the Word." In December 1553 we find him in London. King Edward had died in July. Lady Jane Grey, after a reign of ten days had passed from the throne to the prison; from the prison to the block, and Mary Tudor is queen. Night is settling down upon England to be lighted only by lurid gleams from the stakes of the confessors and martyrs of Jesus Christ. Protestants were allowed till the 20th of December to "change their opinions," after that it was to be "turn or burn." Knox knowing that the time was short, preached on. "I have no time to answer your letter," he wrote to a friend, "for I must preach every day as long as this poor, weak body will allow." At last at the urgent entreaties of his friends he returned from London and arrived at Dieppe in January 1554. The same year Mary of Guise was appointed Regent of Scotland; at heart a bigoted papist, yet she had won the affections of the protestant party of befriending them from the severity of Arran after his apostacy, and it was by this means she had succeeded in procuring his resignation.

Now that she was in power, she courted their influence by promising to support them against the clergy. Thus the policy of the Regent gave liberty to Christians to meet in private for the preaching of the Word and exhortation, though at heart she cared for none of these things. The bitter persecution in England under Queen Mary led many to flee into Scotland where they became a help to their brethren by their zeal for the truth and their desire to further the Gospel among the common people. But the favour of the Queen Regent had a very different effect on the Lords of the Congregation (as the nobles who favoured the Reformation came to be called); they sought to please her by going to mass, and attending the outward services of the papists. This conduct brought out a strongly-worded warning from Knox. "Arme yourselves," said he, "to stand with Christ in this shorte batell; for avoyding ydolatrie your substance salbe spoillit; but for obeying ydolatrie heavenlie ryches shalbe lost; for avoyding of ydolatrie ye may fall into the handis of earthly tirantis, but obeyeris, manteaneris, and consentaris to ydolatrie sall not eschape the hands of the liveing God. Hes not the maist part of the sanctis of God from the beginning entered into rest be torment and troubillis. Did God comferte theme and sail He despyse us, gif in fichting aganis iniquitie we follow thair footstepis? He will not." But when the Regent found her power firmly established, she threw off the mask and gave them a rude awakening by summoning four of the protestant preachers to appear at Stirling and answer to a charge of heresy and rebellion. The nobles remonstrated, and reminded Mary of her promises. She replied like a true Jesuit, that

"princes are not to be expected to keep their promises unless it suits their own convenience," and that she would "drive every preacher from Scotland, though they preached as soundly as St. Paul." Nevertheless, at this time she yielded, departed from the diet, and forbade the preachers to appear; but when the day arrived she ordered the summons to be called, and the prescribed to be outlawed for not appearing. At this time Knox returned from the continent and arrived in Scotland in 1555. He was invited to Ayrshire, and preached every day wherever he found an open door. But the Roman clergy hearing of his arrival, cited him to appear before them in the Blackfriar's Church at Edinburgh. Knox feared God too much to fear man, and set out to be present at the diet; but the priests were afraid to bring the matter to an issue.

Knox arrived, but found that his enemies had departed, and, finding no accusers, he quietly went up into the pulpit and preached the gospel to the multitude who were gathered together to see how the matter would end. For the following ten days in succession, he preached to large audiences from the same place. Next year we find him back in Geneva. In 1558 he finally returned to Scotland. The clergy immediately proclaimed him an outlaw and a rebel, and put a price upon his head, but the nobles protected him from their violence, and arranged a meeting at St. Andrews. Knox preached in the villages along the Fife coast by the way, and arrived in St. Andrews on the 9th of June. The Archbishop, hearing of the gathering of the nobles, dashed after them with two hundred horse; but, finding them stronger than he expected, fled again for his life, leaving a message for Knox "that if he dared to preach from his pulpit, a dozen bullets should light upon his nose." The nobles were intimidated, but Knox said, "As for the fear of danger that may come to me, let no man be anxious, for my life is in the hands of Him whose glory I seek. I desire the hand or weapon of no man to defend me; I only crave audience." Next Sunday he preached without interruption, and continued to do so for some days longer. In July we find him in Edinburgh, and, when the army of the nobles had to retire to Stirling before the combined forces of the Queen Regent and the French auxiliaries, we find him with them, telling them in blunt, plain language that they had failed because they had forsaken the Lord and put their confidence in man. "When we were few in number we called upon God, but since our strength has increased there has been nothing heard but 'This lord will bring us so many hundred spears,' and ' If this earl be on our side, no man in that district will trouble.' Let us unfeignedly return unto the Lord, for it is the Eternal Truth of the Eternal God for which we contend, and it shall finally prevail, though it be resisted for a season." Next year help arrived from England. The French troops in Leith were forced to sue for terms of peace. A treaty was signed in Edinburgh whereby the foreign soldiers were withdrawn, and the Queen Regent, wearied out and heartsick of the struggle, died in Edinburgh Castle on the 10th of June. Feeling the end to be near, she sent for Lord James Stuart and told him she was sorry for Scotland and for her own share in Scotland's sufferings, and asked forgiveness of all whom she had wronged. Lord James advised her to see the preacher Willocks. She did so, and listened to him with much attention, but afterwards sent for a popish priest and died a "good Catholic." Her bigotry was supreme, — a determined opposer of Christ; an oppressor and persecutor of His people, and a hater of His Word. She became the patron of a party whose members were unscrupulously wicked, whose actions were relentlessly cruel, whose system of fraud and falsehood were a disgrace to intelligent humanity. She lived to see her power broken, her hopes blasted, and her schemes defeated, and died in darkness and despair. Verily "the way of the wicked He turneth upside down." The man of God is called upon to stand for the truth, not only in the face of open opposition and persecution, but more so when Satan appears as an angel

of light, when evil is called good, and when the love of many is waxing cold. Then, indeed, is the faithful servant called upon to show that he is not ignorant of the doings of the enemy of souls, that, living by faith, he is ready to fight the good fight of faith, and witness a good confession for Christ Jesus. Under the regency of Mary of Guise, Knox had been persecuted, banished, outlawed, a price set upon his head, and assassins hired to slay him. Under the government of Mary Stuart, he had the grief of seeing many who walked uprightly in time of persecution turning aside in time of peace, to make servile courtiers, for worldly advancement, to a vain and dissembling woman. He, himself, by turns was threatened and fawned upon, publicly accused and privately slandered, but nevertheless the great Reformer went steadfastly on, doing the work put into his hands, and ever seeking to advance the cause of Christ in Scotland.

Mary Stuart arrived in Scotland on the 19th of August 1561. She had been brought up in France — the most polluted court in Europe; a place where every vice was cultivated, where every virtue was ridiculed, and for the brief period of eighteen months she had been partner of the throne. Her uncles, the Duke of Guise and Cardinal of Lorraine, had engaged her to devote herself heart and hand to the extirpation of the "new opinions" with fire and sword, if need be; and with this purpose she came to Scotland. She refused to condescend to examine the subject of difference between papist and protestant. She scorned to hear the preachers, and so wilfully did she shut her eyes to the truth that she would not even allow them to lay before her in writing the ground of their faith. But the protestant party was now in power, and she had to conceal her real designs until a time came more favourable for their execution.

Nevertheless, the people were captivated by the charms of their young queen, and the first night she slept in Holyrood she was awakened by a serenade under her windows — not very successful as music, and all the more distasteful to Mary because the people were singing psalms. Next Sunday she ordered mass to be said in her chapel, upon which Knox said "he was more afraid of one mass than of ten thousand armed enemies." There was just cause for fear. In the Netherlands, multitudes had been put to death under Charles V. and his more wicked son Philip II. In France, the followers of Jesus were being persecuted by the Guises. In Spain, the martyr piles still continued to blaze, and in the sister kingdom of England they had newly gone out with the death of Mary Tudor. Knowing the knowledge of the truth to be the only safeguard from error, Knox continued to preach with increased energy twice every Sunday and three times during the week in the great building of St. Giles, which was crowded by interested listeners. From some of his writings which have come down to us, we learn that in his preaching he gave forth no uncertain sound. Heaven and Hell, salvation and judgment, justification by faith, or condemnation through unbelief, were to him solemn realities. Death by sin, and life by Christ alone, were the cardinal points of his doctrine. No mere set of opinions, whether protestant or otherwise, were sufficient. There must be regeneration through the work of the Spirit, producing new life in the soul, and from this new life Knox looked for new conduct — the "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." Knox had settled in Edinburgh in 1560, and the house he inhabited may still be seen in the High Street. Over the west front is the inscription, "Lufe God above al and your nichbour as yourself." A stair leads up from the street to the audience hall, in which is a window, called the "preaching window," because from it Knox was in the habit of addressing the people assembled in the street below. Underneath this window are the words, "DEUS THEOS, GOD."

Mary having set her mind upon subduing Knox and bending him to her will, summoned him to the palace. In one of their many interviews, after a long conference, she charged him with teaching the people a different religion from that allowed by their princes. He replied that true religion derived its origin from the eternal God, and that if subjects were bound to frame their religion according to the will of their rulers, the Hebrews would have been of the same religion as Pharaoh. The papists feared that Knox's appeals would shake the Queen's constancy; the protestants hoped she would be won over to attend the preaching at least, but Knox thought differently. He says, "Her whole proceedings declare that the Cardinal's lessons are so deeply printed in her heart that the substance and the quality are like to perish together." The news of the massacre of Vassy, which took place in France at this time, brought much joy to the papists. One Sunday morning the Duke of Guise had surrounded their meeting house, where about 1200 Huguenots — as the French Christians were called — were gathered together, and the troops bursting open the doors, with cries of "Kill, kill," the work of butchery began. When it was over the soldiers gathered together the Bibles and hymn books and burned them. About eighty persons — men, women, and children — were slain, and several hundreds wounded. When tidings of this exploit of her uncle reached Scotland, Mary gave a grand ball in the palace, and this unseemly mirth called forth the stern rebuke of Knox, who said that "princes were more exercised in dancing and music than in hearing or reading the Word of God; and that they delighted more in fiddlers and flatterers than in the company of wise men, capable of giving them wholesome counsel." As to dancing, he said it was "a gesture more becoming to mad, than to sober men, and that those who danced for joy at the misfortunes of God's people would soon have their mirth converted into mourning." Next day he was summoned to the palace, ushered into the royal chamber where the Queen sat with her ladies and counsellors, and accused of having spoken irreverently of Her Majesty. Knox bluntly told her that if she refused to hear the preacher herself, she must depend on the false reports of flatterers, but that for her benefit he would repeat the substance of what he had said. Thereupon she was compelled for once to listen to a sermon, though much against her will. Mary could find nothing faulty in his discourse, and was reluctantly compelled to let the bold preacher go free.

We next find Knox in the West, visiting with untiring energy the different Churches, and seeking to confirm the Christians in the faith of Christ. In 1566 France and Spain concluded a peace with the object of "rooting out the new heresy." Just as Herod and Pilate were made friends together over the condemnation of the Lord Jesus, so Catharine de Medici — one of the most wicked women that ever lived — patched up a peace with the cruel, vindictive, and bigoted Philip of Spain, who was responsible for the unjust murder of nearly 100,000 of his subjects — the followers of Christ — in the Netherlands. The object of this agreement was that they might use their joint powers against the Protestants, and exterminate every man, woman, and child who refused to worship the Roman idol. The massacre of St. Bartholomew, six years afterwards, was the outcome of this atrocious compact, when a beginning was made in Paris with the slaughter of Admiral Coligny and the principal leaders, who had been decoyed to the city by fair words and false promises of security, made, only to be broken. The work of death proceeded through the provinces till over 50,000 of the best citizens of France had been destroyed; their only crime being that they dared to differ from the teaching of Rome and sought to worship God in sincerity and truth.

Influenced by her uncles, the Guises, Mary readily became a partner to the scheme. The intentions of the papists were to reduce Scotland to obedience to the pope; next, to depose

Elizabeth and seat Mary on the throne of England instead. The dagger of the assassin and the art of the poisoner were considered legitimate weapons, and the pope promised "pardon for all his sins," to the man who would succeed in assassinating Elizabeth. But all those deep-laid plots came to nought, and the misguided Scottish Queen, in place of sitting upon an English throne, laid her head upon an English block, and her better qualities were lost sight of in the vices which she allowed to govern her life and conduct.

Meanwhile, she temporised. Smiles, caresses, and hypocritical promises were the weapons she used, until the majority of the nobles should be won over. With these weapons Mary was an adept. She made a show of favouring the Reformed party till the plot was ripe for the stake and the faggot, and her arts were largely successful. Many zealous professors grew cold to the cause of Christ in proportion as they courted Mary's favour, and the more they reverted from Christ, the more they grew in the queen's good graces. But there was one man who would neither be won by flattery nor silenced by threats. That man was Knox, and Mary having already measured herself against him, and found that neither her tears nor her frowns had the slightest effect upon his massive sense of righteousness, and that to win her smile or escape her anger, he would not deviate one hair-breadth from the straight line of what he considered duty, she determined to bring him to the block. Events which took place shortly afterwards placed her enemy in her power. In 1563 she had taken a journey to Stirling, and while the queen was away, mass was openly celebrated at Holyrood, and some of the turbulent spirits among the protestants, offended at these proceedings, burst into the chapel and asked the priest how he dared to be so malapert in the queen's absence. Mary, when she heard of this, was indignant, and ordered two of the protestants to be brought to trial. Fearing this was only a beginning to measures still more hostile, some of the nobles induced Knox to write to the principal gentlemen interested in the case, to be present at the trial. Knox did so, and one of the circular letters came into the hands of the queen. This she laid before the Privy Council, who, to her great delight, pronounced it treasonable. Knox himself was now brought to trial, and great was the anxiety on the part of the people as to the result. The queen took her place at the head of the counsel with much dignity, but seeing Knox standing uncovered at the foot of the table, she forgot herself and burst into loud and unbecoming laughter. "That man," she said, "has made me weep, and shed never a tear himself; now I will see if I can make him weep." But Knox, however, was made of sterner stuff. The proceedings began, and Knox was asked if he was sorry for what he had done. He replied that before he could be sorry he must first be taught his offence. "You shall not escape me," said the queen; "is it not treason to accuse a prince of cruelty?" "Is it lawful, madam, for me to answer for myself, or shall I be condemned unheard?" "Say what you can, for I think you will have enough to do," said the queen exultingly. "I desire then," said Knox, "of your grace and of this honourable audience, whether you do not know that the obstinate papists are deadly enemies of all such as profess the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that they most earnestly desire the extermination of them, and of the true doctrine taught in this realm." The queen was silent; her conscience told her that the words of the fearless confessor were true, but the lords answered with one voice, God forbid that ever the lives of the faithful stood in the power of the papists, for sad experience has taught us what cruelty lies in their hearts." Knox proceeded and told the queen that the papists who had her ear were dangerous counsellors, and such her mother had found them to be before her. "But," said he, "cast up the acts of your parliament; I have offended nothing against them, but I affirm that those who have inflamed your grace against the protestants are the children of the devil, and therefore must

obey the desire of their father, who was a liar and a manslayer from the beginning." This plainness of speech the queen and counsel were not in the habit of hearing. They liked not this rugged man's rugged way of calling things by rugged names, and the chancellor interrupting, informed him that he was not in the pulpit. "I am in the place where conscience demands me to speak the truth, and therefore the truth I speak impugn it whoso list," was his reply. After some further discussion he was told he might return home. "I thank God and the queen's majesty," said he, and withdrew. The votes were then taken as to his conduct, and he was pronounced Not Guilty by a large majority. Secretary Maitland was enraged, for he had assured the queen of his condemnation, and Mary was mortified and displeased at his acquittal, and "That nicht," says Knox, "was nyther dancing nor fiddeling in the court, for madam was disappointed of her purpose, quhilk was to have Johne Knox to her will by vote of her nobility."

Two years afterwards, the queen was married to Darnley. The Earl of Murray and many of the principal nobility objected to a man who could be "either papist or protestant as it suited him," and Mary, finding that nothing would bring them over to her party, dismissed them from her presence with taunts and reproaches. At the age of twenty-three, on a mid-summer day in 1565, she was married; and from that moment the steps of the misguided queen led rapidly downwards through a series of follies and crimes, each of which brought greater troubles in its train than those it was intended to cure. After six months of married life she found that "she hated Darnley as much as before she had loved him." He, in turn, became jealous of the Vatican agent, Rizzio, and one Saturday night a dark tragedy took place in Holyrood. Rizzio was slain in the queen's apartments. He who had plotted the death of thousands meets with a bloody death himself.

Henceforth Mary lived only for revenge. Outwardly she masked her hatred until everything was ready for another tragedy, and then, one Sunday night in February 1567, we find her seated by the bedside of her sick husband, promising that "all should be forgotten and forgiven," and that they should live together — as in the happy days of old. About midnight she left him to "attend a ball in the palace." When she arrived at Holyrood, Bothwell left on his dark mission, and next morning the dead body of the king was found in the garden. Three months afterwards she was married to the murderer of her lawful husband. Another month, and at Carberry Hill the guilty pair met the nation in open rebellion against such high-handed wickedness. Bothwell escaped, but Mary was made prisoner and confined in Lochleven Castle. Truly "the way of transgressors is hard." The Earl of Murray, called "the Good Regent," was now elected to govern for the young king, and by his prudence and ability the country was again reduced to quietness. When Mary escaped from captivity, she met the Regent's forces at Langside, and being once more defeated was forced to flee. This time she took refuge in England, where after a lingering imprisonment of nineteen years she was finally brought to the block.

Mary Stuart had often been warned by the faithful, if stern Knox, of the danger of her course. She lived in a day when the truths of Scripture were faithfully preached by many of her protestant subjects, but she slighted the warnings, scorned the preachers, refused to read the Scriptures for herself, lived only for pleasure, and circumstances alone hindered her from being a bitter persecutor of God's people. The Regent Murray was an earnest, God-fearing man who sought to do that which was true and right in the high position he had been called to fill; and Knox now seeing the popish idolatry, as bethought, rooted out, and Christianity the professed religion of the nation, felt that his work was done. He was now an old man, and his life of incessant labour had

told heavily on a constitution never very strong. But the papists soon found means to murder the Regent at Linlithgow, and this awakened Knox from his dreams of ease. The body was brought to Edinburgh, and Knox preached the funeral sermon from the text, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Three thousand persons sat before him dissolved in tears as he described the Regent's virtues and bewailed his loss. Knox's grief at this event brought on a stroke of palsy, and his enemies hoped he would preach no more, but he recovered, and during the civil wars which followed between the king's party and the queen's party, he continued to preach in St. Giles as often as his strength would permit. Obnoxious to both parties by his fearless denunciation of evil, his life was often in danger, and one evening a musket ball was fired through the window at which he was in the habit of sitting. It happened that he was in a different part of the room at the time and so escaped the assassin's bullet.

After a short visit to St. Andrews we find him back in Edinburgh in 1572. Here he learned with deep distress of the murder of many of his acquaintances and friends in France during the massacre of Bartholomew. But his grief speedily gave way to indignation, and he caused himself to be conveyed to the pulpit, where he summoned up his strength to thunder forth, like some Hebrew prophet of old, the vengeance of Heaven against "that cruel murderer, the King of France." The French Ambassador, Le Croc, resented Knox's plain speech, and requested the Regent Morton to silence him. But Morton, believing that Knox had spoken only the truth, refused to interfere. Thereupon Le Croc, in much umbrage, took his departure. When tidings of the massacre reached Rome it was received in a different manner. The Pope ordered a day of solemn thanksgiving and proclaimed a year of jubilee. On the 9th of November he preached for the last time, and afterwards, "leaning upon his staff, he crept down the street to his house," from which he never came out again alive. A few days afterwards, feeling the end to be near, he sent for some of his elders and deacons, and the words with which he addressed them give us the keynote to the man's character — the object of his life. "The day now approaches," said he, "when I shall be released from my great labours, and shall be with Christ. And now God is my witness, whom I have served in spirit, in the gospel of His Son, that I have taught nothing but the true and solid doctrine of the gospel of the Son of God." On Monday, November 24th, he fell asleep. His body was buried in the Old Greyfriar's Churchyard, and the Regent Morton, standing at the head of the open grave, said, "There lies he who never feared the face of man." By the side of Morton's wreath, we place another of modern manufacture. Pope Pius IX. in 1877, bewailing the loss of Scotland, says, "That savage apostate Knox, perverted Scotland by the protestant heresy, and won it over to a sect which repudiates all hierarchy, and admits only simple presbyters all equal among each other." A small plate of metal, with the initials "J.K.," let into the pavement of Parliament Square, now marks the last resting place of John Knox.

02.06. Chapter 6. Tyndale's New Testament.

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Tyndale's New Testament.

Wycliffe's life and teaching, but more especially his translation of the Bible into the English language had been the means of making the Gospel known to many, but as we have seen in a previous chapter, a Bible written out by hand was a very expensive book. Few people were able to purchase even a portion of it, and fewer still, the whole book. The priests also devoted themselves to seize and destroy every copy they could find, so that in a short time there was a danger of the Bible becoming as unknown to the people as if a translation had never been made. But Wycliffe's work had not been in vain. Like the sower he had gone forth with the good seed which is the Word of God, and though some had fallen on the wayside hearts of the adherents of Rome, and some on the thorny ground of intellectual and political life, yet much of it had taken root in the hearts of the common people who "heard him gladly." One hundred years afterwards, when Tyndale's New Testament appeared, we see, in the eagerness with which it was welcomed, a proof of the lasting character of the work of that faithful old contender for the truth — John Wycliffe. But during that period persecution raged with unabated violence against suspected Lollards. Parliament enacted, among other acts already in force, that all "judges, justices, and magistrates shall take oath to make inquisition for Lollards, and that they shall issue warrants for their apprehension and delivery to the ecclesiastical judges, that they may be acquit or convict by the laws of holy church." All found with English books, or suspected of "Wycliffe's learning," were apprehended. The priests could pardon any sin but the sin of heresy. That must be purged by fire. Soon the new act brought forth fresh victims to the insatiable cruelty of the false church. Among the many who were counted worthy to suffer for His name, we read of John Claydon who was found in possession of a book called the *Lanthorn of Light*. Light the priests could not tolerate. It exposed their dark deeds. In 1415 they burned both John and his book. William Taylor, a priest, who had learned better knowledge than Rome could teach him, was burned in 1422. Another priest, named William White, was converted, and went about the country preaching the truths he had learned from Wycliffe's writings. He was arrested and tried at Canterbury, but his courage failed when he saw before him the fiery death, and he confessed and abjured his heresy. However, instead of peace, his recantation only brought him remorse [sorrow and] because of his failure, and we are not surprised, to find the ex-priest in a short time preaching Jesus Christ with more zeal and diligence than before. Arrested and brought before the Bishop of Norwich he was condemned, and this time went joyfully to the fire. Even amidst the flames he exhorted the people, and told them to remain steadfast in the doctrine he had taught them, but as he continued to speak, a servant of the bishops smote him a cruel blow on the mouth, and forced him to remain silent; thus he meekly yielded up his spirit. By and by the fierce and bloody Wars of the Roses began, and those in high places got other work to do than persecuting Lollards. During a period of the war when the White Rose of York was in the ascendancy, a Lancastrian family under the assumed name of Hutchins, came to reside near Berkley Castle, in Gloucestershire. When the Lancastrian party was in power

they resumed their original name, and a son born to them in 1484 was named William Tyndale. The accession of Henry VII. to the throne of England in 1485 put an end to the thirty years of civil war which had wasted the kingdom, and men had time to think of other things than mere brute fighting. Accordingly when young Tyndale grew up he was sent at an early age to the University of Oxford. How men were trained for priests in these days Tyndale himself records. He says, "In the Universities they have ordained that no man shall look at the Scriptures until they be trained in heathen learning eight or nine years, and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scriptures. And when he taketh his first degree he is sworn that he shall hold none opinions condemned by the Church." Tyndale found nothing to satisfy him in all this "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth," but his time was not entirely spent in this vain pursuit. Here he became acquainted with the Greek and Latin New Testament, published by Erasmus, at Basle, in 1516. Erasmus had for some time been professor of Greek at Oxford, and had published a book called the Praise of Folly, exposing the evils of the monastic orders; but, timid as he was learned, he had retired to the Continent dismayed at the storm he had raised. Tyndale's acquaintance with the New Testament marked the turning-point in his career. In it he found that which could meet his conscience and satisfy his heart. It was the means of his conversion; through the living Word he was born again. Having learned the truth himself, he began to lecture in public on the book which had been means of his own salvation, that others too might know the Saviour of whom it spoke. But Oxford would have none of that, so he retired to Cambridge. Here he met Thomas Bilney, soon to become a fervent preacher of the Gospel and a martyr for Jesus Christ. For years Bilney had been seeking salvation, and as he knew of no other way he regularly went to the priests — but how shall the blind lead the blind? His confessor prescribed fasts, vigils, masses, and indulgences which cost poor Bilney a great deal of money but gave him no rest. His purse got empty and his conscience knew no peace. At last he began to doubt whether it was not for their own interests that the priests denounced the Greek Testament as the "source of all heresy." Romish doctrines were losing their hold on Bilney; he went to the house where the Testaments were secretly sold, bought one, and with fear and trembling shut himself up in his room to read — "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Bilney thought over the words he had read, and as he meditated, the Holy Spirit opened his eyes to the only way of salvation. "Jesus saves. Jesus Christ saves sinners. Jesus saves me," exclaimed Bilney. Now he saw that his fasts and vigils were "destroying instead of saving him," and born from above by the power of the Spirit of God, Bilney had turned from the study of law to study the New Testament and learn of Jesus. In 1521 we find Tyndale back in Gloucestershire. He had completed his studies, and was now engaged as tutor to the sons of Sir John Walsh, at Sodbury Hall. Perhaps in few other places could he have been brought into more direct contact with the evil practices of Rome, than in this retired spot which was much frequented by priests and friars. For fifty years four Italian bishops placed in succession over the diocese had surrendered it "to the pope, to the monks, and to immorality." A resident collector from Rome had power from the pope to pardon the sins of murder and theft on condition that the criminal shared half his profits with the pontifical commissioner. Rome cared not how she got money, provided only she got it. We narrate these details only to show how debased and darkened the minds of men may become when unenlightened by the Word of God; and when the light shines in what fierce opposition is raised in the human heart, because its evils deeds are exposed. "This is the condemnation that light is

come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

Sir John Walsh was a man of considerable importance, kept a hospitable table, and the priests and idle monks, ever fond of good cheer, took full advantage of his generosity. The church dignitaries cared little for their duties, but a great deal for their revenues, and they soon saw that if Master Tyndale's "opinions" were received, the illegitimate gains would be gone. The learned doctors and lordly abbots warmly disputed with him as to his presumption in daring to differ from "Holy Church," but Tyndale, with his Greek Testament ever by his side, had a way of testing their arguments by what was written in "The Book," so as to leave him master of the field. "That is the Book that makes heretics," said they. "The source of all heresy is pride," replied Tyndale. Not content with merely exposing that which was false, he busied himself in making known that which was true, and devoted himself to preaching the Gospel in the villages near by. Extending his journeys as he had opportunity, he visited Bristol and preached to large audiences which gathered to hear him on the college green. His teaching had its effect too on his patron Sir John, and the priests and monks soon began to find that their welcome at the manor house was not so hearty as heretofore. This they ascribed to Tyndale's influence, and having been defeated in the argument they resorted to force. The Chancellor of the diocese cited him to appear and answer to certain charges which had been made against him. Tyndale went, and knowing what was before him, "prayed heartily to God to strengthen him to stand fast in the truth of His Word." We get a glimpse of the judicial procedure of these days from what he tells us of this court. "When I came before the Chancellor," he says, "he threatened me grievously and reviled me, and rated me as though I had been a dog; and laid to my charge things whereof there could be none accuser brought forth, as their manner is." To this invective Tyndale made a calm reply which only exasperated the Chancellor all the more, but as they could not produce one witness to substantiate their charges, he escaped out of their hands and returned home to Sodbury. The priests next tried to "convert" Tyndale, and engaged a learned schoolman to visit him and convince him of his errors.

We know little of what took place at this interesting interview, except that the evangelist's Testament was more than a match for all the churchman's logic, and when he saw that the Word of God only exposed the evil of his own doctrine, he exclaimed, "We had better be without God's laws than the pope's." Tyndale, shocked at such irreverence, warmly replied, "I defy the pope and all his laws, and if God spares my life I will cause the boy that drives the plough to know more of the Scriptures than all the priests in England." He had decided on his great work, the translation of the Bible into the language of the people, and devoted all his spare time to this one object. But when the priests got knowledge of his design, their opposition, smouldering before, broke out into so fierce a flame that he was forced to leave Sodbury. "You cannot save me from the priests," he said to Sir John, "and I should be sorry to bring you into trouble; permit me to leave you." Taking with him his papers and his precious Testament, he bade good-bye for ever to the place where two years of his life had been pleasantly and profitably spent, and became an exile and a wanderer, that he might give to England the Bible — the knowledge of the Word of God. Tyndale went to London. He vainly hoped that the learned Bishop Tunstal would accord him patronage and encourage him in his design, but he had yet to learn not to put his faith in princes. Tunstal received

him coldly and listened to his plans, but told him that his house was full, and dismissed him. "Alas" said he, "I have been deceived: there is nothing to be looked for from the bishops: Christ was smitten on the cheek before the bishop: Paul was buffeted before a bishop, and a bishop has turned me away; but I hunger for the Word of God, and I will translate it whether they say so or no: God will not suffer me to perish." Repulsed by the Bishop, he found a home with a Christian merchant named Humphrey Monmouth, who received him into his house and provided him with the opportunity of prosecuting his labours. Here he met John Fryth, whom he speaks of as "his dear son in the faith," and who at a future day, was to die a martyr for the truth of Jesus. Meantime he rendered valuable assistance to the translator, and daily the two shut themselves up in a small room in Monmouth's house to render the Greek Testament into English. They were making rapid progress, and Tyndale hoped soon to see his sheets printed, when events took place which showed him that there was "no room, not only in the bishop's palace to translate the New Testament, but that there was no place to do it in all England."

Two years before Tyndale arrived in London, Luther's books were beginning to be introduced into England, and in such numbers too that the clergy took alarm, and condemned every copy they could lay hands upon to be seized and burned. Aleander, the papal nuncio in Germany, had prohibited the printers from publishing any of Luther's works in the Empire. "Very well," said the printers, "we shall send them to England then." And to England they came. The Theses of 1517, the Explanation of the Lord's Prayer, the Epistle to the Galatians, the Babylonish Captivity of the Church, and others were translated into English, imported by the enterprising merchants, who found it a profitable, if a risky trade, and circulated through the country by an elaborate system of colportage. The clergy did everything in their power to stop the growing evil. Even King Henry himself entered the lists, and wrote a book against "that arch-heretic and child of the devil, Martin Luther, who had ventured to resist the authority of the Pope. Writing to Louis of Bavaria, he exhorts him to "seize and exterminate this Luther, and unless he repents, to deliver him and his books to the flames." A copy of the King's book, beautifully bound, was sent to Rome, and the Pope, to show his gratitude to the messenger who brought it, gave him his toe to kiss. To Henry too something must be given, and a bull was issued bestowing upon him the sounding title of Defender of the Faith." Henry was in raptures. A sumptuous entertainment was given. The heralds proclaimed the King's new title, and Wolsey said mass. The Court jester, entering in the midst of these proceedings, asked the cause of his joy. "The Pope has just named me Defender of the Faith," said the King. "Ho! ho good Harry," replied the fool, "let you and me defend one another, but let faith alone to defend itself." The "fool" was the wisest man in the company. Henry, to show his zeal, immediately began to persecute all who differed from Rome — to destroy the faith instead of defending it. In Lincolnshire was found a small community of Christians who were wont to meet together on Sundays and at other times, as they had opportunity, to read a portion of the Gospels, or spend the time in prayer and exhortation. Books were few, and those who possessed a copy of the Gospels or one of the Epistles would secretly lend them to their friends that they might commit portions to memory, and in turn pass them on to others. One, John Scrivener, a faithful colporteur, was entrusted with this task, and carefully conveyed the precious volumes to those who thirsted for the life-giving word. Here was a field for Henry. Officers suddenly appeared in the district, and many arrests were made. Some recanted: some were tied to a post in the market-place, while the executioner branded them on the cheek with a red-hot iron. Others were considered worthy of death, and among them the colporteur Scrivener. When the pile was ready his weeping children

were dragged forward, the torch forced into their unwilling hands, and they were compelled to light the faggots of their own father's death pile. The priests also made inquisition in London for all who should possess Luther's books and tracts, and Tyndale thereupon fearing that the stake might put an end to his life before his translation was completed, determined to leave London and retire to the Continent. The generous Monmouth gave him ten pounds, equal to nearly fifty pounds in our day. Other friends of the gospel made up a like sum, and taking his unfinished sheets and his Greek Testament he went on board a vessel and sailed to Hamburg in 1524. He knew what fierce opposition his work would raise, but he was determined that England should have the New Testament in spite of the Clergy. "The priests," he said, "when they had slain Christ set poleaxes to keep Him in His sepulchre, that He should not rise again: even so have our priests buried the Testament of God, and all their study is to keep it down that it rise not again." From Hamburg Tyndale proceeded to Wittenberg where he spent some time in the society of Luther and Melancthon. Afterwards he went to Cologne where he hoped to get his translation printed. Taking lodgings in an obscure part of the town to avoid observation, he placed his manuscripts in the hands of the printer, Peter Quental, and soon had the joy of seeing the first sheets of the first printed English New Testament. But his joy was of short duration. Dean Cochloeus found out his secret and procured an order from the Senate forbidding the printer to continue the work, but Tyndale learning of this interruption succeeded in procuring the printed sheets, and hastily leaving Cologne proceeded up the Rhine to Worms. When Cochloeus and the officers arrived at the printing house they found that the "apostate had taken the abominable papers and escaped." The dean took care to apprise Henry VIII. and warn him of the danger England was exposed to. "The New Testament in English is about to be sent to your people," said he. "Give orders at every seaport to prevent the introduction of this most baneful merchandise." Such was the way the priests of Rome spoke about the Word of God. The Scriptures must not be read by the people. This was the dogma of the false church then, and she is the same to-day. Generations have succeeded each other, yet in each there has been manifested that implacable, untiring opposition to God which was began by Satan in the Garden of Eden, and in every age since he had found men willing to be his instruments for evil in the world. Civilisation and so-called progress have not in the least modified the policy of Rome to the Word of God. Writing to his bishops and clergy in 1824, some time after the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Pope Leo XII. says "Ye are not ignorant that a society commonly called a Bible Society, is audaciously spreading through the earth: and that . . . it endeavours with all its might, and by every means, to translate, or rather corrupt the Holy Scriptures into the vulgar tongues of all nations . . . We exhort you to remove your flocks with care and earnestness from this fatal pasture." In 1870 Pope Pius IX. after the loss of his temporal power, was forced to be the unwilling witness of the "audacious" Bible Society, upon which his predecessor had poured his unqualified condemnation; but his power was now limited, and he could only express his hatred to the Word of God by warning all "good catholics" to beware of the "pernicious literature" issued therefrom. In 1890 a Christian lady in Edinburgh offered to give a Bible to an Italian who lay in the Calton Jail, charged with murder, but the Roman Catholic Canon who visited the jail would not allow him to accept it. Many more particular instances might be cited, but these three are enough to prove our point. The opposition to the truth in the nineteenth century is not one whit less than it was in the sixteenth.

After a voyage of four or five days, Tyndale arrived in Worms. Four years previously, Luther, in the same town, had stood before the Emperor and the Diet, and single-handed had said, "I cannot

recant; here stand I; I can do no other; God help me." God had indeed helped him, and delivered him from those who sought his life, and God was watching over and protecting His servant Tyndale, from all his enemies until his work was done. At Worms he found a printer in Peter Schoeffer who was interested in his work, and soon six thousand copies — three thousand in octavo, and three thousand in quarto — of the New Testament were on the way to England. Notwithstanding the warning of Dean Cochloeus, the opposition of King Henry, and the hatred of the priests, the books arrived and were distributed all over the country. Then the partisans of Rome took counsel together and issued an edict with the concurrence of the king that "all these books, containing most pernicious poison, were to be burned." The Bishop of London enjoined all in his diocese who possessed English Testaments to deliver them up under pain of excommunication, and Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, did likewise. But as Testaments did not come in fast enough to make fires with, they tried a new plan. Large sums of money were expended in buying up all the copies they could lay hands on, and on one occasion nearly a thousand Testaments were burned at St. Paul's Cross. Such was the way the Word of God was treated by the men who called themselves the spiritual guides of the people. Only one complete octavo copy of the first edition of Tyndale's Testament is now known to exist; it is treasured in the Baptist College of Bristol. A fragment of the quarto edition, printed at Cologne, is also to be seen in the British Museum. But the bishops had over-reached themselves; the money, that had been spent in buying up the books, only provided the translator with means for printing another and more carefully revised edition. The Dutch printers also, finding it a profitable undertaking issued several editions on their own account, all of which were successfully shipped to England and Scotland, and eagerly bought up by the people. In 1534, Tyndale issued a new and revised edition, correcting the various errors which had crept into the text through the ignorance or carelessness of the foreign printers, and this is substantially the same translation as we now possess in our Authorised Version. To this edition was appended a number of expository marginal glosses or comments; but in some of these he made more direct application to the abuses of the times, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:11, "That ye study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands," he says, "A good lesson for monks and idle friars." But Tyndale's work was done. Eight years before, he had written, "In burning the New Testament they did none other thing than that I looked for: no more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall be so." His enemies, who had long been endeavouring to get him into their power, were now about to be successful. Under the sanguinary Henry VIII. his friends Bilney and Fryth had been cruelly martyred in London. Others, also, had suffered death for being found in possession of a New Testament. But still the books came pouring in. The priests were unable to cope with the evil. The printing press defied them all. So it was decided to bring the translator to the stake, and thus, as they thought, strike at the root of the evil. Needless for us to enter into all the details of the pretended friendship which masked the treachery and cunning employed for this end. Needless to add that Romanism, injustice, and fraud always go together. Suffice it to say, that under the guise of friendship and goodwill, he was decoyed from the house of his friend Poynitz, with whom he was residing in Antwerp, and so skilfully was the treacherous design carried out, that before his friends knew of his arrest, he was securely lodged in the gloomy dungeons of the Castle of Vilvorde. The laws of Charles V. against "heretics" in the Low Countries were very concise. "Men were to be beheaded, women buried alive, and the relapsed burned." Before a Romish tribunal, with such a code of laws to enforce, there was little hope for so illustrious a prisoner as Tyndale.

And besides the Emperor's edict, Pierre Dufief, the Procureur-General, was specially anxious to get a conviction against his prisoners, because he got a share of their confiscated goods. One who had good reason to know him describes him as a man "whose cruelty was equal to his wickedness." But there was to be some respite. For sixteen months he lingered out a dreary captivity, and during that time we learn that "the power of his doctrine and the sincerity of his life were such that his keeper, the keeper's daughter, and others of his household were converted." Like the Phillippian jailor of old, we can imagine Tyndale's keeper alone with his prisoner asking that all-important question, "What must I do to be saved;" and then his eyes opened to the truth of justification, through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Another — rejoicing in full and free salvation.

Winter was coming on, and Tyndale, sitting alone in darkness and cold, wrote to the Governor of the Castle, "I entreat your Lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here during the winter, you will request the Procureur to be kind enough to send me, from my goods which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head . . . a warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin; also a "piece of cloth to patch my leggings; my overcoat too is worn out. I wish also his permission to have a candle in the evenings, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. But above all I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procureur that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study; and in return may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always it be consistent with the salvation of your soul." Our sympathies go out to this devoted servant of Christ, in loneliness, darkness, and cold, yet anxious to spend every moment to advance the glory of God. He had previously translated and published the five books of Moses, with the book of Jonah, and now in his prison he set himself with a brave heart to finish the translation of the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, and had proceeded as far as the end of the Books of Chronicles when his trial came on. His manuscripts are then said to have been secretly sent to his friend John Rogers, in Antwerp, who finished the books of the Old Testament, and printed a complete edition of the Scriptures, known as "Matthew's Bible."

Tyndale's trial took place in 1537. His chief accuser was a Dr. Tapper, a determined enemy of Tyndale, and for his share in this judicial murder he was rewarded with the sum of about fifty pounds, and afterwards appointed by the Pope, Chief Inquisitor in the Low Countries. But what will his reward be when "He maketh inquisition for blood, who remembereth them, and forgetteth not the cry of the afflicted? "

Among a number of similar charges, Tyndale was accused of having maintained, That faith alone justifies. That to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and embrace the mercy of God offered in the Gospel, is sufficient for salvation. That he denied the existence of purgatory. That men should neither pray to the Virgin nor the Saints.

Every one of his assertions traversed the traditions of Rome, and for the man who dared to differ there was no toleration. "Confess your errors or die," were the terms of Rome. But Tyndale was little likely to confess. His life had been spent in the cause of Truth, which he loved far better than life itself, and he looked forward to his martyrdom with a calm and steadfast trust in God, knowing it to be the door through which he would pass from earth's troubles to Heaven's rest, and be henceforth at home in "the Father's House." On Friday, 6th of October, 1536, he was bound to the

stake. A rope was passed round his neck, he was first strangled, and then his body burned to ashes. "Lord, open the King of England's eyes," were his last words, and he passed home to his reward.

It is no part of our purpose to enter into the details of the domestic history of the Court of Henry VIII., or of the causes which led to the political breach with Rome. Suffice it to say that two years after Tyndale's death the man who had been the most bigoted and abject worshipper of the pope to further his own ends, had become the most determined opposer of the pope and his claims, still to further his own ends; and the Bible which Tyndale had devoted his life to give to the people of England, and which the servants of the devil had so earnestly endeavoured to keep from them, was placed by Act of Parliament, and by will of the king, in every Parish Church, and "raised upon a desk so that all might come and read." England was now nominally a protestant country.

Immediately the prohibition was withdrawn, several editions of the Bible were printed in England, and now, all over the wide world, wherever the English tongue is spoken, may be found the result of Tyndale's life-work, that inestimable treasure, that Holy Bible. But there are still "dark places" in the earth, and many of our fellowmen have never even heard of the Bible. Let us then be stimulated, by what these faithful martyrs of the sixteenth century did and suffered, to do more ourselves to spread the knowledge of the Grace of God as revealed in the Scriptures. And there are still "dark places" and dark hearts in our own land, for Protestantism is not necessarily Christianity. A man may be a protestant without being a Christian. To protest against evil is merely negative. It is not enough to "abhor that which is evil," we must also "cleave to that which is good."

Christianity does not consist in a series of rites and ceremonies, however Scriptural, but in a real love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Where the Bible is known and loved, there is Christianity, for the Bible makes known the love of God revealed in the death of His Son. But how is the Bible treated in this protestant country of ours to-day? It is instructive to notice the character of the opposition of the sixteenth century as compared with that of the nineteenth. Then the opponents of the Bible burned the Book, knowing it to be the Word of God, and determined at all costs to keep it from the people. Now the opposition to the truth has assumed a more subtle form. The doctrines of the Bible are ignored. The foundation truths of the Atonement, the necessity of the New Birth, and Justification by faith alone, are lost sight of, or disbelieved altogether; while reformation and morality are preached, instead of regeneration and faith. The Romish dogma of "human merit," against which the Christians of the sixteenth century so strenuously fought, has been resurrected in protestant England in the form of a gospel of "doing your best" as a means to merit God's favour, forgetting that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). We are told by those who profess to be spiritual guides that the facts of creation as related in the Bible are only poetic fancies; that the books of Moses are only a myth: that many of the prophetic books were not written till after their fulfilment. Thus Satan, working behind the vain imaginations of men's minds, is seeking to undermine the authority of the inspired Word of the living God. "But we are not ignorant of his devices." All these things have been foretold by the Spirit, and to the child of God they only indicate that we are living in the "last days," when "men will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from truth, and shall be turned to fables." Amidst all this confusion, Christians are called upon to be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, and to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life.

03.0.1. Wycliffe's Work for England

Wycliffe's Work for England

L. Laursen

03.0.2. Table of Contents

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03.01. Chapter 01 - The Most Interesting Book in the World

Chapter 01 The Most Interesting Book in the World

What is the most interesting book in all the world? Perhaps different people would give different answers to this question. Boys might think of books describing the lives and actions of great men in history: the battles they fought, the brave deeds they did, and the wonderful things they accomplished. And girls might think of the life-story of some noble woman, less prominent on the world's stage but equally brave, and perhaps more useful and helpful to those with whom she came in contact. But while such books are both interesting and helpful, yet there is ONE BOOK that far surpasses all others, not only as a book of history and narrative, but in every other way. That book is THE BIBLE. In it are found stories of the very earliest times. The first of all stories and the most wonderful of all stories is found in the first Chapter of Genesis. There we read how God, in six days, prepared this world to be the habitation of men, providing for their use, with gracious care, every tree pleasant to the sight and good for food. Then, when our first parents had sinned and brought ruin and death into the fair scene, God in wonderful grace gave them the promise of a SAVIOUR.

Moreover, we know from the Bible that God will again prepare a new Heaven and a NEW EARTH wherein righteousness will dwell and into which sin cannot enter. Between the accounts of these two most wonderful events we find other stories of great and good men, brave and strong men, wise and noble men; of gentle and loving women, faithful and true women, kind and useful women.

All these stories of men and women who have lived for God are recorded for our example, for only those who are really good can ever be truly great. But that which makes the Bible the book of supreme interest is that in it we find the wonderful STORY OF LOVE — the story of the Life and Death, the Resurrection, and Ascension to Heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ. All who know the Saviour love the Bible, for everything in it, in some way or other, speaks of Him. The Bible thus becomes to them a very precious possession. H. M. Stanley, the great explorer, when he set out to find Livingstone, took with him one hundred books to read while on his journey. As the difficulties of the march increased, and the loads of the carriers had to be lightened, everything not strictly necessary had to be thrown away. One by one the books followed, until ninety-nine out of the hundred had been left in the swamps of Central Africa, and only ONE remained. Which book do you think that was? It was the Bible. Stanley had selected the hundred most interesting books, but he found that the most interesting of all the hundred was the Word of God. In our days Bibles are so common and so easily procured that we are apt to think that they have always been so. And while we are deeply thankful for an open Bible in our Protestant land, yet we do well to remember that England has not always been a Protestant country, and the following pages are an endeavour to trace how the Scriptures came to us, and what a noble Englishman did and suffered in order that we might be able to read the Scriptures in our own language.

We shall have much to say in the following pages about the "Church of Rome"; therefore it will be well to remember that the Papacy was only a sect which broke off from the early Church, and

introduced a great many unscriptural doctrines and practices in total contradiction to the teaching of the Lord Jesus and His Apostles. The early centuries of the Christian dispensation were ages of marked intellectual ability. The great names that are mentioned in history confirm this. Tertullian in the second century wrote his famous Apology. Origen manifested his zeal and learning by editing the celebrated Hexapla edition of the Holy Scriptures. Jerome translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew, and the New Testament from the Greek originals into the Latin, then the language of the West. John, called Chrysostom, or the "golden mouthed," was the greatest preacher of his time. Augustine was the greatest teacher. Many others might be mentioned who were not only familiar with the Scriptures but did everything they could to make their contents known to others. But when the bishop of Rome adopted the blasphemous title of Vicar of Christ and became a temporal sovereign, all this was changed. Rome's motto then became, "We do not want learned men, we want submissive subjects," and of course the more ignorant the subjects were, the more submissive they became.

Private confession to the priests of Rome has been called the foundation stone of popery, and this "stone" was laid as early as the fifth century by Leo I. With audacious blasphemy, priests of Rome, sinful men themselves, and oftentimes both ignorant and wicked, were supposed to be able to "forgive sins." Succeeding popes followed this policy because it increased their revenues, and these men, though living always in luxury, and oftentimes in idleness and vice, were ever on the outlook for fresh fields over which to extend both their temporal and spiritual sovereignty.

Cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and all the multifarious hierarchy of popedom were appointed by the Pope on condition that he was well paid for doing so. These men were under his power, and, even among the sovereigns of the nations, few were found that dared to disobey him.

Every effort was made to keep the people in ignorance and darkness, and at the same time everything that Rome supplied had to be bought with money. One has well said, "Not an article was there in her creed, not a ceremony in her worship, not a department in her government that did not tend to advance her power and increase her gains. Her dogmas, rites, and orders were so many pretexts for extorting money. Images, purgatory, relics, indulgences, pilgrimages, jubilees, canonisations, miracles, and masses were but taxes under another name, so many drains for conveying the substance of the nations to Rome." A "pall for an archbishop" cost from 1,000 to £10,000, and every new "saint" that was canonised cost the country of his birth 10,000 crowns. "Truly," says another, "Rome takes your gold and gives you nothing in return but words." In short, nothing could be got from Rome without money, and nearly everything for it

These years are known in history as the "Dark Ages," and one reason among others for this prevailing darkness was the fact that the settled policy of Rome was then, and is yet, to keep the Bible from the people. And we can well understand why she did so, for in the Scriptures there is the light of Truth which exposes and condemns all the false pretences of the Apostate Church. The people had been taught that there was a series of priests, popes, and "saints" between them and God. From the Bible they would learn that there is One Mediator — the Man Christ Jesus. Rome taught that pardon was to be purchased by paying her priests to say "masses." The Scriptures declare that "we have redemption THROUGH HIS BLOOD, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7), and that "BY HIM all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39).

Rome may well fear an open Bible. The power of the priest is at an end when we learn the pardoning love of a Saviour God through virtue of the finished work of Christ at Calvary. For about nine hundred years from the time that the monk Augustine, in 597, landed with his forty followers, England was more or less under the power of the Pope. Augustine thought that "faith and holiness were less essential to the Church than authority and power, and that its work was not so much to save souls as to collect all the human race under the authority of Rome." This man's character has been summed up as a mixture of ambition, superstition, and zeal. As soon as he got a footing for himself and his attendant monks he began his work of aggression against the British Christians, and he and his successors did not rest until the papal supremacy was established all over the land. And this is just the attitude of Rome to-day. Her age-long motto is "Semper eadem" (ever the same), and she is working harder to-day than ever before to recapture England. Monasteries and nunneries are more numerous in our land to-day than they were before the Reformation. Priests and Jesuits enter in ever-increasing numbers, and each and all are doing their utmost to overthrow the good work of the Reformation. Romanists are active and awake; Protestants are in many cases half-hearted and asleep.

03.02. Chapter 02 - "Rome": Medieval and Modern

Chapter 02 "Rome": Medieval and Modern

Carry your mind back for just over six hundred years. It is the year 1324, and at that time was born a man who in the good providence of God did much to deliver England from the thralldom into which she had fallen, both socially and religiously. That man was John Wycliffe. And the England of the fourteenth century was a very different country from what it is to-day. The population numbered only about three millions, and fully one-third of these were slaves or serfs (villeins), who cultivated the ground for the lords of the manor, and were bought and sold with the land whenever it changed owners.

Edward II. was reigning, but his feeble career was drawing to a close. During his reign the nation had lost much of the power and prestige it had acquired under his warlike father. He had applied to the Pope for at the Pope's "shop" you could purchase anything — for "a box of ointment to make him brave" before he set out to conquer Scotland. But in spite of, or because of his "box of ointment," his Scottish wars ended disastrously. He lost both his battles and his courage, and perhaps his "box" as well, and fled back to England to save his life. Then his struggles with the barons further added to his unpopularity. We read of misery and sickness caused by poor harvests. "The dead bodies of the peasants were found by the roadsides. The dead in cities were buried in trenches; the gaols were full of thieves; people were driven to eat the flesh of dogs and horses and even of children."

Amidst all this misery we get a glimpse of some wise men who could make good laws. It was enacted that "less grain be made into beer and more into bread." Our land would be all the better were this ancient policy in force to-day. But as usual, while the common people suffered so sorely the upper classes were living in luxury, and most of all the monks and friars who were "at no period so splendid in their equipages and households." Again, we read of a "dole" of bread being given out at a rich man's funeral in London, and so great was the need of the starving poor that over fifty people, old and young, were crushed to death in their efforts to secure a portion.

London had already become the headquarters of all the colours of the begging friars. Whatever the good intentions of their founders may have been, corruption and decay soon set in among their followers. They rapidly fell into the besetting sin of everything connected with Rome, and began to "add house to house and field to field." The Dominicans reached England about 1220 and settled in Holborn. Though vowed to poverty, they soon were able to put up a convent, the most splendid in London. The Franciscans followed a few years later and settled at Cornhill. Within twenty years their brotherhood numbered eighty friars, and a church and convent was built by them far surpassing in splendour those of their rivals.

Following hard upon the Franciscans came the Carmelites in 1240, and still another of the begging orders — the Austin friars — arrived in 1253. Like a cloud of locusts they covered the land, licking up every green thing, so that it was reckoned that in the time of Wycliffe nearly one-third of the

nation's wealth belonged to the Church of Rome. These men were directly responsible to the Pope, and were known as the regular clergy in distinction to the parish priests, who were the secular clergy and were under the rule of the bishops.

It is interesting to hear Wycliffe's opinion of these "holy beggars" in his own times, when they had further increased both their wealth and their begging effrontery. From the initials of their names he formed a word which we should call an acrostic — "CAIM." The Carmelites supplied the first letter, the Austins, the Jacobins (or Dominicans), and the Minorites (or Franciscans) completed the fanciful idea. This word he connected with Cain who slew his brother, and he found many analogies wherewith to make vigorous and trenchant exposures of their hypocrisy, greed, and evil deeds. Their so-called poverty, he says, is nothing but a lie, for it is based on the lust for wealth and robbery, and is really an inspiration of the devil.

He shows us also how their practice of entering the parishes of the secular clergy and persuading the people to "confess" to them, led to a fearful increase of licentiousness and sin. "For thus did they whisper to one another, 'Let us follow our pleasures: some friar whom we never saw before and may never see again may come this way. When we have had our will we can confess to him without trouble.'" Is the system of Rome any better to-day? The poor deluded votary goes to "Confession" and thinks he can procure forgiveness from a "priest," then being "absolved" he is free to go on again in his course of evil.

We can thus see how this unscriptural system sears the conscience, belittles sin, and blinds the mind to the holiness of God who has 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.

Thank God, the Lord Jesus Christ to-day is a SAVIOUR, and this is the Day of Salvation. The day is fast approaching when He will take the place of a Judge and then the Day of Salvation will be over.

03.03. Chapter 03 - Conversion and Conflict

Chapter 03 Conversion and Conflict

Let us now return to the early days of Wycliffe, and see how he was prepared for his great work of reformer before the Reformation. As we have seen, he was born in a Yorkshire village in 1324, where his family had been lords of the manor since the Conquest. No records of his childhood or youth have come down to us; so we cannot tell how his boyhood days were spent, but, as youth is the formative period of life, we may conclude from what we know of his later years that he made the best of whatever opportunities he had.

Character is built up step by step. Single actions repeated, form habits, and habits form character. At an early age his parents sent him to Oxford. In those days boys of fifteen years of age were entered as students, so it is likely that Wycliffe began his career at Oxford about the year 1340. His habits of diligence and application served him well at the University, for even his enemies bear witness to his proficiency and abilities. One of his bitterest opponents says, "He came to be reckoned inferior to none of his time in philosophy, and incomparable in the performance of school exercises, a man of profound wit, and very strong and powerful in disputation, and who was by the common sort of divines esteemed little less than a god." In later years, after he had taken his degree of doctor of divinity, he came to be known as the "Evangelical Doctor," and he required all his "profound wit," learning, and ability to meet the assaults of his enemies. Doubtless, in the providence of God, he was being prepared in those early years for the service he would be called upon to perform in later life. So the early years of his scholastic life passed on, and while he was still a young man an event happened — the most important event in the life of any man — Wycliffe was converted to God. About this time Europe was visited by the dreadful pestilence known in history as the "Black Death." Such an awful scourge may well have brought all thinking men to face seriously the issues of life, death, and eternity. Many were led to true repentance towards God. Many others became callously indifferent to all the sorrow and suffering around, or saw in it only the means of enriching themselves at the expense of others. Crossing from Asia to Constantinople, then to Italy, its ravages swept away half of the population. The filthy condition of European cities in those days provided a fruitful soil for contagion, and all suffered alike. It has been estimated that in Europe 25,000,000 human beings perished, though this number is no doubt greatly exaggerated. London had a comparatively small population, but 100,000 of its citizens died. Huge pits were dug to hold the bodies. Rivers were "consecrated" by the priests for the same purpose. Everywhere death stared men in the face. Even ships at sea were attacked, and when all their crews had died, drifted aimlessly until stranded on some shore to spread still further the infection. In the midst of this convulsion of society the young and learned Oxford student was driven to study the Scriptures, and, like Luther later, in them he found the words of eternal life. At this time he wrote his Commentary on the Apocalypse. With other pious men of his time, he seemed to think that the dreadful woes overspreading the earth, coupled with the moral and spiritual corruption of the Church, pointed to the time of tribulation spoken of in the Apocalypse.

Now we know that this was not so, but Wycliffe used the circumstance as a call to the unconverted, and from this time we can trace his closer application to its study. When in later years he became a professor or lecturer to Oxford students he insisted on the authority of the Scriptures.

It has been said that pagan Greece or Rome never had so many "Gods" and "Goddesses" as had the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. Wycliffe had learned much when he boldly announced that "Whosoever entreats a 'saint' should direct his prayer to Christ as God, not to the saint but to Christ. Nor does the celebration or festival of a saint avail anything, except so far as it may tend to the magnifying of Christ. Hence not a few think that it would be well for the Church if all festivals of that nature were abolished. For the Scriptures assure us that Christ is the mediator between God and man. Hence many are of opinion that when prayer was directed only to Him for spiritual help the Church was more flourishing than it is now, when many new intercessors have been found out and introduced."

Words like these were something new to men of that time, but they were also true, and truth was not wanted by the priestly authorities. When warned of his danger Wycliffe replied: "I have learned from experience the truth of what you say. The chief cause beyond doubt of the existing state of things is our want of faith in Holy Scripture. We do not sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or we should abide by the authority of His word . . . which is of greater weight than any other. . . . It is His pleasure that the books of the Old and New Law (Old and New Testaments) should be both read and studied, and that men should not be taken up with other books, which, true as they may be, and containing even Scripture truth, are not to be confided in without caution and limitation. If we follow this rule the Scriptures will be held in becoming reverence. The papal Bulls will be superseded as they ought to be."

These were bold words to speak in 1372 and were enough if reported to Pope Gregory XI. at Avignon to cause the poor man to gnash his teeth. That Wycliffe recognised what they might entail we learn from another sermon: "For the believer," says he, "in maintaining the law of Christ should be prepared as His soldier to endure all things at the hands of the satraps of this world; declaring boldly to pope and cardinals, to bishops and prelates how unjustly, according to the teaching of the Gospel, they serve God in their offices; subjecting those committed to their care to great injury and peril, such as must bring on them a speedy destruction one way or another. All this applies indeed to temporal lords, but not in so great a degree as to the clergy, for as the abomination begins with a perverted clergy, so the consolation begins with a converted clergy. Hence we Christians need not visit pagans to convert them by enduring martyrdom on their behalf, we have only to declare with constancy the law of God before Caesarian prelates, and straightway the flower of martyrdom will be at hand."

Loving the book with all the depth of his powerful nature and finding in it truth to meet the conscience and satisfy the heart, he determined to translate it into the common language of the people, so that all might hear the word and understand the message. But this, he felt, would be a matter of time, and while it was important to translate the Scriptures, his busy mind formed another plan for spreading the truth until his great work of Bible translation could be accomplished. This plan was no less than to send out men whom we should now call home missionaries, who, travelling from town to town and village to village, would preach to the people in simple language

the Gospel of God's free Salvation through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These men came to be known as Wycliffe's "Poor Priests," and we shall learn more about them in a later chapter.

03.04. Chapter 04 - Wycliffe and the National Opposition

Chapter 04 Wycliffe and the National Opposition So far we have been tracing the history of our Reformer in his work and teaching at Oxford. But events happened about this time which brought him forward in a more public capacity as a champion of national freedom against the usurpation of Rome in the State. Other men had done so before Wycliffe, but he did not stop here; he saw that the Pope's usurped control over the consciences of men was a worse thing than control over their bodies and goods, and so he set himself to oppose both. To trace the course of these events we must turn back in history for over one hundred years to the time of King John, who, as we all know, had yielded up England and Ireland "to St Peter, St Paul, and Pope Innocent III." John abjectly laid his crown at the feet of the haughty Pandulf, the Pope's legate, who is said to have kicked it and rolled it in the dust of the muddy floor as a worthless bauble. However, he very condescendingly allowed the humbled John to resume it on condition that he would pay the Pope £666. 13s. 4d. per annum and also become his vassal. This payment had been very irregularly made, and since the majority of Edward III. it had been entirely discontinued. Suddenly Pope Urban V. in 1365 sent in a claim not only for the annual amount, but also for all the accumulated arrears. The papal Court has been famous at all times for its love of money, but at this time the Pope could not help himself. It was the period of the "Babylonish Captivity," when the papal Court had been transferred from Rome to Avignon, and was therefore under the power of France. Charles the Wise of France hoping to humble Edward the Warrior of England had forced the Pope's hand. This situation gave Wycliffe his opportunity and produced events the benefits of which we are reaping to-day. But Edward III. was no weakling, as was King John. The man who had humbled France at Crecy and Poitiers, and who at that very moment was titular monarch of one-third of its soil was little likely to yield to the insolent demands of Urban, who was but a tool in the hands of Edward's enemy. So Edward wisely said "No," and summoned his Parliament to support him. The Commons complained that the Church drew five times more money from the nation than did the King's exchequer. Moreover, they were not afraid to criticise the morals of "His holiness," and these were certainly open to criticism, for at this time the Papacy had probably reached its lowest stage of corruption, degradation, and debauchery. At Avignon benefices in every part of Europe were openly put up for sale and handed over to the highest bidder. The purchaser in turn squeezed out of his parish not only enough to repay his outlay, but sufficient to allow him to imitate the luxury of his superiors. So the Commons of even Roman Catholic England might well complain of the simony and corruption of Avignon.

All these evils were coming to a head when it pleased God to raise up His servant Wycliffe to oppose them. At this time he was a King's Chaplain, and his principles influenced both King and Parliament. The prelates were in an unfortunate position. They had either to become traitors to the Pope or traitors to the King. If they disobeyed the Pope they risked their spiritual dignities. If they disobeyed the King they risked their worldly possessions. They were wise in their generation, and submitted to the power nearest at hand.

"With the other dukes, earls, barons, and great men" they answered that neither King John nor anybody else could give away his kingdom and his people without their consent. But though the prelates had betrayed the interests of their master the Pope, the friars were not so disposed to yield. They declared that, according to the Canon Law, the King, having defied the Pope, ought to be deposed. Then the question arose, what did the Canon Law say, and the Oxford professor was at once appealed to. But Wycliffe neatly turned the tables on the friars by declaring that the point was not what saith the Canon Law? but WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES? It was language new to the men of that age. "Canon Law," said he, "is of no power when it is opposed to the Word of God." But God had more important work for Wycliffe than worldly politics. His lectures to his students were those of one "having authority." Other masters taught from the Sentences of Peter Lombard, which Sentences, as their name implies, were a collection of aphorisms compiled from the works of Augustine and other of the early "Fathers" on various points of Christian doctrine. But Wycliffe went direct to his Latin Bible and showed his hearers that in the Word of God there was not only the way of life, but the rule of life, and that both flatly contradicted the doctrines of Rome.

It was about this time no doubt that he began to gather around him many of those friends who became light bearers all over England in later years, and who helped to spread the truth and light God was graciously revealing to the people.

How thankful we should be that, although wicked men, led on by Satan, have often attempted to suppress both truth and light, they have never quite succeeded. Such attempts were made later in the time of Henry VIII. who "broke with the Pope" only to set himself in the Pope's place and measure out, if that were possible, equal cruelties against the saints of God. Again, the Queen who has earned the unenviable title of "Bloody Mary," became an abject slave of the Papacy, and by its instructions condemned to the awful death of fire three hundred of the best men and women in England. The haughty prelates of the Church of England, at the Restoration, thought themselves vastly in advance of papal Rome, yet they continued the old persecuting spirit and brought in oppression, both sustained and severe, against the Puritans, who were the most godly people in the nation at that time. On Black Bartholomew's day (24th August 1662) over two thousand ministers were ejected from their parishes for refusing to accept the Act of Uniformity, and were "left without house or bread, their people unable to help them and not daring to do so even where they could." Mr Jeremy White compiled a list of 60,000 persons who between the Restoration in 1660 and the Revolution in 1688 had suffered on account of their religion, 5,000 of whom died in prison. In Scotland during the same period some 28,000 lost their lives under the persecuting monarchs, Charles II. and James II. The same principles are at work to-day, for Rome never changes. In our country she cannot appear in her true colours just yet, but she has been steadily working ever since the Reformation to undo that great work. The way to defeat the works of darkness is to spread truth and light. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed and not to be set on a candlestick? It is the duty and privilege of all who have the light to "let their light shine." From exposing the wicked practices of Rome Wycliffe was led on to denounce her evil doctrines, and while the first offence might be ignored, the second must be dealt with and punished without mercy.

We shall see in our next chapter what means Rome adopted to do so and how far she succeeded.

03.05. Chapter 05 - Wycliffe and the Bishops

Chapter 05 Wycliffe and the Bishops

We noticed in a previous chapter that our Reformer was now devoting himself more and more to the study of Scripture, and it was by this means that he was able to deal those resounding blows to the Papacy, the echoes of which reached to Rome itself. So the Pope issued a Bull enjoining the English clergy to crush "this formidable heresy," for such the plain teaching of Scripture was called. The priests needed little incentive.

Courtney, the Bishop of London, "a proud and fierce man," energetic in all he undertook, and "possessed in full the violent manner and overbearing temper of a great noble," roused up the meek old Archbishop Sudbury to persecute the Reformer. "By the report of persons truly worthy of credit," says the papal missive, "it hath become known to us that John Wycliffe, Professor of Divinity, or more properly, a Master of Error, hath proceeded to a degree of madness so detestable as not to fear to assert . . . and teach propositions, the most false and erroneous, contrary to the faith, and tending to weaken and subvert the whole Church." As every reader may see, Wycliffe is here falsely accused of doing what the popes for nearly one thousand years had been really doing. They were the men who had laboured to teach and enforce by fire and fagot "propositions, the most false and erroneous," and utterly subversive of the truth of the New Testament. But with the true spirit of popery the epistle goes on to say, that "means be taken with the said John Wycliffe to commit him to prison and retain him in sure custody."

Sudbury seems to have been a quiet, peaceable old man, more interested in collecting his revenues than in caring for the good of his people, as the people remembered against him in the day of his extremity. His own friends accused him of allowing the "evils" of Wycliffism to go on till it was too late to arrest them. "Too late the bishops roused up their father the arch-bishop, as one from a deep sleep . . . or rather as a hireling drunk with the poison of avarice, to recall the wandering sheep from feeding on the food of perdition, to give him to the keeper of the sheep for cure, or, if need be, for the knife." The last three words express papal policy in short and forcible language. The "proud and fierce" Courtney cited the "wandering sheep" to appear before "the hireling drunk with the poison of avarice." Poor Sudbury! We could wish that his friends had given him a better character to hand down to posterity, for next time we see him he is deserving of all respect.

Four short years afterwards he had to take refuge in the Tower of London in hopes to escape from the rebels during the Peasants' Revolt. With the mob raging round the doors he calmly celebrated the Lord's Supper, preparing both himself and his fellow-prisoner — the Treasurer Hales — for death. Then, when the ruffian crowd burst in, the brave old man quietly accompanied them across the moat to Tower Hill, there meekly laid down his grey head upon the block, and so finished his course for good or evil.

Meantime Courtney took charge of the proceedings against Wycliffe. He had been cited and he did not fail to appear. "His right hand is raised, clutching his tall white staff. His clothing consists of a dark simple robe, belted about the waist, and dropping in folds to the feet; while above that grey and flowing beard you see a set of features which speak throughout of nobleness, and which a man might do well to travel far even to look upon." With Wycliffe came his serving man carrying his books, and especially THE BOOK, for he knew that the strongest weapon in the battle of truth was the Sword of the Spirit. But with Wycliffe came two powerful friends. The one was John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, and the other was Lord Percy, Earl Marshal of England. An immense crowd thronged the approaches to St Paul's Cathedral. Insults were offered to the old man by some of the ruffian mob, and loud hootings by the partisans of the priests filled the building when he appeared. Courtney ordered that the prisoner should stand to hear his indictment read. Percy ordered him to sit. "You have much to reply to and need a soft seat," said he to Wycliffe. Courtney insisted. The Duke lost his temper and abused the priest, "muttering in his beard that he would drag the bishop out of the church by the hair of his head." Others of the mob now broke in, and a wild melee took place between the citizens and the soldier guards of the noblemen. The assembly broke up in confusion "before nine o'clock," Wycliffe being the most unmoved person in it. What he thought or said we do not know. But next year a new set of papal Bulls arrived from Rome. Three were addressed to the priests, one to the King, and another to the University of Oxford.

It is interesting to look over the shoulders of the writer and see what Gregory XI. thinks of the man about whom he has taken the trouble to write five letters. He is both "surprised and indignant" that the heads of the University, "notwithstanding all the privileges granted to them by the See of Rome, had, through sloth and negligence, allowed tares to spring up among their wheat." Then he seems to have quite forgotten that the Lord Jesus said in the same Scripture from which he quoted (Matthew 13:1-58), "Let both grow together till the harvest," for he goes on to root up the tares by "seizing the person of the said John Wycliffe and delivering him a prisoner to the Archbishop." Sudbury, as we have seen, was a man who was willing to have peace at any price, Courtney was a man of a different stamp, but both had to obey the Pope's behests, and Wycliffe was cited to appear before the bishops at Lambeth. This time no powerful earthly friends appeared on his side. His patron, King Edward III., had just died. His previous protector, John of Gaunt, wrote to him beseeching him not to "ruin a fine political career by an insane love of the truth." Whether the opposite course would ensure a "fine political career" we cannot say, but evidently John of Gaunt thought so. Here the two men part company and Wycliffe had to face his enemies alone, and yet not alone for God was with him and gave him grace to witness a good confession. But the priests had again overreached themselves. No brief from the Pope could have authority in England without the King's consent, and this had not been obtained. In the midst of their proceedings the royal messenger, Sir Henry Clifford, arrived from the Queen Mother to forbid the court. The citizens of London had also veered round from their attitude of the previous year. They were ever jealous of their privileges and would allow no interference with what they considered their rights, and, though papists, they were ready to cry "no popery" when it suited them. So the bishops, as the old writer scornfully says, "became as reeds shaken with the wind. Their words were softer than oil. They made public shipwreck of their dignity. You would have thought that their horns were gone."

Thus a second time Wycliffe was preserved from his enemies to continue his work for God. He produced a paper setting forth his faith in the Word of God, and again protesting against the errors of the Church. In the first place," said he, "I am resolved with my whole heart, by the grace of God, to live as a sincere Christian, and, while my life shall last, to profess and defend the truth of Christ as far as I have power." Sometime shortly after this Wycliffe fell suddenly and dangerously ill. He was now an old man and had lived a life of incessant labour coupled with harassing and persistent persecution which had told seriously upon a constitution never very strong. The priests, and especially the friars, whose vices he had so scathingly exposed, were delighted. They hoped now to get rid of their life-long enemy. But greater far would be their victory if they could induce him to recant. So a deputation was formed. It consisted of a representative from each of the four begging orders of friars and some of the aldermen of Oxford. They proceeded to his lodging and were admitted into his chamber. We can imagine how hypocritically they condoled with him on his illness, and then exhorted him, as a dying man, to do all in his power to atone for the injuries that their society had experienced at his hands. The old man listened in silence, and then ordered his attendant to raise him up in the bed. Looking sternly at his visitors and gathering up his strength he cried, "I shall not die, but live, and again declare the evil deeds of the friars." They left the room disappointed and in confusion, and the Reformer recovered, as he had prophesied, to go on with his work.

It was at this time that the great papal schism occurred (1378) — an event which greatly helped to free men's minds from the foolish belief that creatures so utterly wicked and fallible could ever be "infallible popes."

Gregory XI., the last of the "Babylonish" popes, returned from Avignon to Rome in 1377. Next year he died and Urban VI. was elected; the first time a pope had been elected at Rome for seventy-five years. Urban was a man of mean birth, so "harsh and offensive in his manners" that thirteen of his cardinals forsook him and elected another "infallible pope," who styled himself Clement VII. The northern nations, including England, supported Urban. The southern countries, including France, Spain, Naples, also Scotland, supported Clement. Immediately Urban issued Bulls of excommunication against his rival, calling him a heretic, a liar, and anti-pope, and every other evil thing he could remember. Clement replied with like vituperation, and who was in the right or who was in the wrong no man knoweth till this day. This dual popery continued for nearly forty years, and all that time "two popish heads were inside one popish crown" and little love lost between them. Then in 1407 all the cardinals of the opposing camps got tired of the game at which the two popes had been playing, and, assembling a Council at Pisa, they deposed both and elected another, whom they called Alexander V. But as both the old popes refused to be deposed and there was now a new one elected, the only result of the celebrated Council of Pisa was that there were now three popish heads inside one popish crown, and no love lost among them at all. Alexander died, and John XXIII., who had been a pirate, reigned in his stead. We shall notice only one event in the five years of his history he condemned all the writings of Wycliffe to be publicly burned on the steps of St Peter's. The popes hated each other well: they hated the truth more.

One pope was bad: two popes were worse: three popes were unendurable. At the Council of Constance (1414-15) all three were deposed: John because of his "evil deeds," and the other two because they refused to attend. So, John of the many numbers stole out of the city "on a sorry nag" and fled. But he was caught and put in prison where, it is hoped, he had time to repent of his

"evil deeds." This digression comes into our story only to show the effects all these events had on Wycliffe. Up till the time of the papal schism he had recognised the Pope and tried hard to reform him. Now with the monstrous spectacle of "two heads" to the Church, and both "infallible," he saw that reformation was impossible. Henceforth he banished both of them from his scheme, and lost no opportunity of exposing the unscriptural, worldly, and wicked character of the whole papal system in spite of its pretensions to sanctity.

He continued to preach at Oxford, and we find him getting access to many pulpits even in London. He wrote tracts, both in Latin for the learned and in English for the common people; but the heaviest blow he inflicted upon the Romish Church was his attack upon and denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. This blasphemous doctrine (of which we can use no milder word) was a terrible engine in the hands of Rome, and it was round this doctrine that the battle of the Reformation raged. If this point was gained, the power of the priest over the conscience was gone and he became weak as any other man. So all the armies of the Prince of Darkness were marshalled to defend the citadel. Alas! that in the Church of England to-day so many of her so-called "priests" are going back to the darkness and delusions of Rome, to deliver them from which many of our forefathers suffered imprisonment, torture, and death. A few more years pass. It is 1381, and the "proud and fierce man" Courtney is now Archbishop. He had marched to the archiepiscopal throne over the dead body of Sudbury, murdered, as we have seen, during the Peasants' Revolt. With the proud title of "Primate of all England" he would see if he could not do what he had failed to do as Bishop of London. Assembling a Convocation at Oxford, Wycliffe was again summoned to appear. The indictment was read and he rose to reply. As of old, he repelled their charges and challenged them to convince him of error before they condemned him. "Ye are the heretics," he cried, "who teach your foolish traditions instead of the truth of Scripture. Why do ye propagate such errors? Why? Because, like the priests of Baal, ye want to vend your masses. With whom think ye that ye are contending? With a frail old man on the brink of the grave? No, with truth, which is stronger than you and will overcome you." His judges were astounded at his bold words which they knew to be true. They had no legal power to detain him, so he left the court unmolested. Though now an old man, "on the brink of the grave" as he said, yet the greatest of all his works was yet to be done. We shall see later what that work was and how he accomplished it.

03.06. Chapter 06 - The "Poor Priests".

Chapter 06 The "Poor Priests".

We have already seen that Wycliffe's progress as a Reformer began with his attacks upon the wicked practices of the priests of Rome. From the Pope downward he unsparingly exposed the hypocrisy of men who professed to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, and yet lived in pride, luxury, and sin. But by and by he came to see that not only were the deeds wrong, but that many of her doctrines were wrong also. And as he had now learned, in everything, to refer to the Word of God as the sole authority, he saw the importance not only of denying what was false but of affirming what was true. To do so, he was led to turn to that great plan first practised by the Lord Himself on the green hillsides of Galilee, and enjoined by Him upon His disciples in all ages. Wycliffe's plan was to PREACH THE WORD. But how could one man, and that man advanced in years, hope to reach many with the sound of the Gospel? If he could not do it single-handed he could induce others to help. Sometime, then, between the years 1375 and 1380, that band of men were gathered together who were known as Wycliffe's "Poor Priests." Rome, too, had her preachers, and they were found mostly among the friars. But they were by no means poor priests. They invaded the parishes of the secular clergy, who hated them just as bitterly as both combined hated the Reformer. Under their wide flowing robes they carried large bags into which they put the gold, silver, or provisions they succeeded in begging from hall or hut wherever they went. They well deserved the name of Mendicants, for their principal business was filling their wallets. Their "preaching" consisted in telling stupid, foolish, and fabulous stories of the "lives of the saints," too silly to repeat in our pages, or legends from the Siege of Troy. Afterwards, they spent their time in the alehouses or at the gaming-table. When they came into a town they proclaimed to all that they had power from the Pope to pardon all sin. Relics of wonderful virtue were produced from among their other treasures capable of performing all kinds of cures, either upon man or beast. These relics usually consisted of old sheep's bones or other similar rubbish. But though easily procured and easily carried, they were parted with for one commodity only — money, and still more money. And one of the curious things about them was that if you purchased your old bone for silver your crops increased only twofold, but if you gave the rascal friar gold for his old bone, then, in some way which neither he nor we can explain, your crops increased fourfold. So the wily friar defrauded the poor people, enriched his greedy order, and offended a holy God. In all this we see but a baptized paganism, much worse than even that of heathen Rome. In the "good old days of Rome" the priest believed what he preached. Here we find men who knew that they were deceiving the simple people, yet deliberately continuing to do so in order that they themselves might amass wealth by robbing the poor.

Wycliffe's "Poor Priests" seem to have been friends like-minded with himself who had gathered round him while he was at Oxford. We get a glimpse of them as "men travelling barefoot." Their clothing usually consisted of a "long russet gown reaching down to the heels, without pockets." The last two words remind us of our Lord's instructions to the seventy disciples sent out to preach the Gospel (Luke 10:1-42), "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry

neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house." This seems to have been the model on which the Wycliffe preachers were formed, and it might truly be said that they went forth as "lambs among wolves." The bishops had recourse to their usual weapon persecution, and had a law passed for any King's officer to arrest the preachers and commit them to prison. The parish priests and friars, though they agreed on little else, agreed on this and acted as policemen. When the humble evangelist began to preach, they set off for assistance. But the Gospel was a sweet sound in the ears of the people, and they at least had a welcome for the preacher, so that oftentimes when the King's officer appeared to arrest him, a "body of stout men stood forth, surrounded their preacher, and bore him off in safety." When persecuted in one place the devoted missionaries fled to another, and, whether seated in castle hall or beside cottage hearth, whether preaching to the crowd at the cross-way or to the merchant in the busy mart, they spoke of full and free salvation by grace alone, not of works lest any man should boast.

It was hardly to be expected that seeing all the corruptions both of life and doctrine which Rome had introduced they would abstain from attacking her errors. And here indeed there was scope and matter for all their fiery indignation. There was the hypocrisy of the friars, who pretended to be poor men, but who were bent only on enriching their order. There was the worldliness of the higher clergy, who were more interested in State preferment than in performing their spiritual duties. There was the pollution and degradation of the papal Court itself, which instead of setting a standard of righteousness was at that time sunk in the lowest depth of infamy.

Then it became their duty to warn the ignorant people that payment of money to a priest or friar could not put away sin; and that the worship of images was no part of Christianity, but only a pagan practice introduced by Rome. How very true this charge was can easily be verified. Rome taught then, and teaches now, that without baptism there can be no salvation. She thus makes the way of salvation baptism instead of the Lord Jesus, who alone could say, "I AM THE WAY." So far is this false doctrine pressed that even infants are included, in express denial of the beautiful words, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

Rome's fond deceit is "justification by works," but the Scriptures say, "BY HIM all that BELIEVE ARE JUSTIFIED from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). The heathen nations of old were required by their priests to do works of penance and self-mortification, even cutting their flesh with knives like the priests of Baal, whom we read about in 1 Kings 18:28. So Rome teaches that God is not satisfied without tortures of the body and penances without number. But this is a denial of the value of the FINISHED WORK of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the PRECIOUS BLOOD that alone cleanses from ALL sin.

Again, we read that just as there is One God, so there is "ONE MEDIATOR between God and men, the man CHRIST JESUS" (1 Timothy 2:5); but Rome puts the Virgin Mary in a higher place than the Lord Himself. A well-known Romanist tells his readers that the sinner who ventures to come directly to Christ may come with dread and apprehension of His wrath, but that if he comes through Mary, the wrath of "her Son" will be at once appeased. In the days of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 44:19) the paganism of the heathen nations had invaded Judea, and women were seen offering cakes to the Queen of Heaven. The same Scripture gives us the origin of Rome's blasphemous

"Mass." The "cakes" that were offered to the "Queen of Heaven" were small, round, thin wafers, the pattern of which we have with us to-day in Rome's "wafer god." The doctrine of purgatory and prayers for the dead comes from the same heathen source. Neither the one nor the other is found in the Bible, but both go hand in hand with Rome, for they are two of her best money-making devices. For no prayers are of any value except the priests' prayers, but "no pay no prayer," so that unless the priest be well paid, purgatory holds the victim.

It is difficult to write calmly about this atrocious system of deliberately making merchandise of the tenderest feelings of the human heart sorrowing over departed loved ones. Priests of paganism in Egypt or in Greece, priests of the Jews, or priests of papal Rome have all alike been adepts at "devouring widows' houses."

Again, the idol worship of Rome might well arouse the indignation of men who had learned the truth of Scripture for themselves. A Romish procession, bearing a figure either of the Virgin Mary or some other saint, might well remind us of what Isaiah says: "They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god; they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place he shall not remove."

Pagan idolatry in principle has been deliberately annexed by Rome.

Now, all these things were the recognised order of things in papal England in the fourteenth century, and we have to thank God that we are in some measure delivered from it, and think ourselves too wise to go back to it; yet Rome to-day is making an insidious, determined, and untiring effort to reintroduce the same conditions into this Protestant land.

Alas for men's poor man-made religion in contrast to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God concerning His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. His finished work on Calvary settles every question of sin, both to the glory of God and the blessing of men, and He is to-day the Only Saviour of Sinners. From the glory He is saying to-day, "Come unto ME and I will give you rest."

03.07. Chapter 07 - More about the "Poor Priests"

Chapter 07 More about the "Poor Priests"

It is interesting to trace further what the men of that day, whether friends or enemies, thought of Wycliffe's "Poor Priests," and we will begin with our old acquaintance, the proud, fierce man, Courtney.

He had reached the lofty position of Archbishop, as we have seen, over the headless body of the murdered Sudbury. One of his first efforts to extinguish the new movement was to call a council at the Convent of the Blackfriars in London, which then stood where the offices of The Times newspaper stand to-day. So these great men assembled — eight bishops, twenty doctors, fifteen friars, and four monks — and their object was to put down the new opinions and prosecute all who were suspected of holding them, especially John Wycliffe. Here Wycliffe's doctrines were examined and, of course, condemned by all present. But an event happened on the very day of the council meeting which completely destroyed the effect of the council's decision. "About two o'clock that afternoon, while the Churchmen were sitting round the table at their pious work, a terrible earthquake took place which struck all with panic except the zealous Archbishop."

These things were not looked upon as accidents in those days, and the friends of Wycliffe loudly proclaimed that "their Master had been condemned by the bishops, but that the bishops had been condemned by God."

Courtney was not content with mere councils, however. King Richard II. was no statesman like his grandfather Edward III., and he foolishly allowed Rome more power than was good for either his kingdom, his people, or himself. Courtney saw his opportunity and had an Act passed, in spite of the opposition of the Commons, to make persecution legal. But Englishmen as a nation are not a bloodthirsty race. Torturing, maiming, and burning to ashes living men and women were strange sights to them, and sights at which the native character revolted. This policy of fiendish cruelty had its origin at Rome. For the century and a half it existed in our country, during which its tracks were marked by bigotry and blood, the councils, both of the Church and of the nation, were swayed by the agents of Rome. When the last popish King and humble servant of the Pope stole out of his palace and fled secretly, with no man pursuing him, then men began to breathe freely. They awoke, as it were, from a hideous nightmare and determined that as far as in them lay, they would take steps to prevent such chains ever again being riveted either on their own necks or on the necks of their children.

We may well be thankful for the liberty we enjoy to-day, and we should ever be thankful to the brave men and women who won that liberty for us. Many of them loved the Lord Jesus more than they loved their own lives. May we be as true to the truth we know as they were! So Courtney's Act read that: "Sentence being duly pronounced, the Magistrate shall take into hand the persons so offending and any of their supporters and cause them openly to be burned in the sight of all the people, to the intent that this kind of punishment may be a terror unto others, that the like wicked

doctrine . . . be no more maintained within this realm."

Courtney had triumphed for the moment, but his triumph was short-lived. The Commons returned to the matter next session. "Whatever was done," say they, "was done without our consent. Let it now be annulled, for it is not our intention to be tried for heresy or to bind over ourselves or our descendants to the priests more than our ancestors have been in the past."

There is a ring of sturdy independence about this deliverance which later Parliaments might have copied with profit. So the Commons rescinded Courtney's Act, and not till 1401, in the reign of Henry IV., was the infamous "burning statute" passed. History will ever record it as a disgrace on the reign of a king whose father was a friend to the great Reformer. But Henry IV. had arrived at the throne by the defeat and murder of the rightful King and the help of the priests. To maintain his usurpation he had to bind himself to "support the Church." The priests were overjoyed. They seemed like bloodthirsty animals let loose, and for the next hundred years and more they literally revelled in the blood of the saints of God.

We may here look forward to an incident which illustrates the above remarks, and which shows both the savage cruelty of men calling themselves priests and the bigoted folly of a man calling himself a king. The event to which we refer took place in 1413. Henry V. was reigning. Sir John Oldcastle, who had been the King's companion before he came to the throne, and one too who had fought bravely in the King's service, had become obnoxious to the priests because he had embraced the reformed doctrines. The "fierce and cruel man" Courtney had died in 1396 and gone to his own place, and the "crafty Arundel" was now Archbishop. He had been banished as a traitor by Richard II., but made himself useful as a tool of the Duke of Lancaster who effected the revolution of 1399. The priest having helped the King, the King's son will oblige the priest. Sir John was arrested and lodged in the Tower. His good confession is worth recording, but first the King in person will try to induce him to abjure his faith. To the King he said, "I am, as I have always been, most willing to obey your majesty, as the minister of God appointed to bear the sword of justice for the punishment of evildoers, and the protection of them that do well. . . . But as to the Pope and the spiritual dominion which he claims, I owe him no service that I know of, nor will I pay him any, for as sure as God's Word is true, to me it is fully evident that he is the great Antichrist and son of perdition."

Before the priests his words were of no uncertain sound. He declared in plain language his denial of Transubstantiation, the idolatry of image worship, and the folly of pilgrimages. Then turning to the people, he cried, "Look, good people, for the breaking of God's law these men never cursed me, but for the sake of their own law and tradition most cruelly do they use both me and other men."

Such opinions Rome could only meet in one way. When reason failed, force might succeed. He was condemned, but escaped from the Tower. Four years afterwards he was recaptured and the original sentence carried out. He was hanged (as a traitor) over a slow fire, in order that he might at the same time be burned as a heretic. Truly the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

03.08. Chapter 08 - Rome Attempts to Extinguish the Light

Chapter 08 Rome Attempts to Extinguish the Light

We saw in a previous chapter that the Commons had repealed Courtney's persecuting edict, but with the deceit to which Rome often descends, the bishops concealed and denied the fact. There were no Parliamentary Reports in those days, and no daily newspapers: few would have been able to read them even had they existed. So Courtney determined to use his present authority to purge Oxford if he could. This brings before us some glimpses of others of Wycliffe's friends and followers at Oxford who became his helpers in the work of the Gospel. Dr Nicholas Hereford had learned much from his master at Oxford, and was so ardently convinced of the truths of Scripture which Wycliffe had opened up to him that he thought all men would believe the truth of the Gospel as soon as it was put before them. His faith took in even the Pope himself, and he promptly set off to Rome to show him a better way.

Alas, he did not know the Pope. Urban VI. was no better, and he could hardly be much worse than some of his predecessors. He promptly thrust into a Roman dungeon for life the man who should dare to question Rome's best money-making conceit of Transubstantiation. And life with Hereford, if left to the Pope's tender mercies would have been short indeed. But the city that was governed by the "Successor of St Peter" and the "Vicar of Christ," as the "Holy Father" loved to call himself, was possibly the worst governed city upon the face of the earth. The miserable inhabitants, goaded oftentimes to fury, made periodical risings against their "Holy Father," stormed his castles and emptied his prisons. Such a rising took place after Hereford had been two years in captivity, and he having escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler, wended his way back to England, a sadder and a wiser man. But he could not now go back to his lecture room at Oxford, so he joined Aston and some others of the brethren in the west.

We are grieved to find that this man, who in his early zeal aimed at converting the Pope himself, after preaching the Reformed doctrines for some years, "made his peace with the Church and rose to high preferment." Do these last four words convey the reason of his falling away from the truth? Only grace can keep anyone. Let us not judge him. The paths of these early confessors were spread with thorns, and to all is not given the courage to resist unto blood striving against sin.

John Aston, Master of Arts, was another of those who were brought up before Courtney as "one who troubled Israel," and one who had "cost the Bishop of Lincoln many a sleepless night." Now if the good bishop had been as anxious to put the truth before the people as he was to keep it from them he would have had our sympathy, but this was far from being the case. Dr Aston is described by his enemies as "a man of great scholarship and of ardent zeal and earnest effort," but his efforts in preaching the Gospel to the People were not at all to the liking of his enemies. They said he was "like a bee, always on the wing," or "like a hound, ever ready to start up from his repose and bark." And the bishops did not like Aston's "bark," There was a menacing ring in it that spelled the downfall of their power and pride. There was an echo to it that made the walls of their princely palaces to shake. The question against him was again the old fable of Transubstantiation. This

was the key-stone of their arch on which all their power over men's consciences was built. Were this knocked down, many other things would follow. So Aston was called upon to answer to certain questions in relation to this doctrine, and he replied that his faith on this subject was the faith of the Church, meaning the true faith of the true Church. Then, speaking no longer to his judges, but to the great congregation of people who had crowded in to watch the proceedings, he declared what the true faith of the true Church was, until he was hastily called to order, and "commanded to speak in Latin that the people might not understand him." In the end his opinions were condemned, as we should expect, but as yet the bishops had no power to arrest his person, so "this long lean man" went forth again to travel on foot from one part of England to another preaching with the zeal of an apostle," and "like a bee ever on the wing." Like a bee, also, he carried a sweet message of truth and grace to many a heart tired of the penances, pilgrimages, and works of merit, which could give neither peace to the conscience nor rest to the heart. It was a new and a joyful sound to hear of ONE who could say, "Come unto ME and I will give you REST." And there were many who received and rejoiced in the new-found truths. Beginning at Lutterworth, which was Wycliffe's parish, as a centre, we find the new doctrines extending north through Leicester, Loughborough, and Nottingham; going west there were many of Wycliffe's followers found in Coventry; in Worcester — where the poor bishop had "so many sleepless nights," and in Hereford. Further south the light spread to Gloucester, Berkshire, Wiltshire, and in the extreme south Sussex also came under its influence. Even in the Archbishop's own town of Canterbury were found many who had passed out of the darkness of Rome into the light of the Gospel. Nor must we overlook the life and work of Dr John Purvey, who was one of Wycliffe's closest friends, and who rendered valuable help with Bible translation as we shall see later.

Possibly Purvey was one of the most able and learned men among the early Reformers, and when Wycliffe and his friends were finally expelled from Oxford, Purvey resided at Lutterworth and helped in the publication — if not even in the writing--of the many books and tracts issued during the closing years of Wycliffe's life. The efforts of the latter during these closing years must have been incessant and untiring. Over ninety tracts and pamphlets were issued in Latin for the learned, and some sixty five in English for the common people. Some were written as instruction for his "poor priests," some dealing with the way of Salvation; many, as we should expect, attacking the manifold errors both of the Pope and of the papacy.

After Wycliffe's death Purvey joined some others of the company of "poor priests" in the west, and continued the work of Evangelisation. The little community were residing in an old disused chapel, where there still remained a wooden image of "St Catherine" standing in a corner. Finding themselves short of fuel one cold evening, they pulled down the image and promptly split it up for firewood. When knowledge of this "terrible act of sacrilege" came abroad it caused a great sensation, as we might have expected. But it also led people to think. Why should they worship stocks and stones as pagans do? Were they not, in name at least, Christians? So the fire lighted by the broken fragments of St Catherine helped to shed additional light, both on the errors of Rome and into the minds of the people.

We meet with Purvey again nearly twenty years later. There is another fire before him this time, more fierce than that kindled by St Catherine. At this time, 1401, the "crafty Arundel" had succeeded in getting the Act, "de Haeritico Comburendo," placed on the Statute Book, and William Sawtre, the first of England's modern martyrs, was wrapt to glory in a chariot of flame. He had

dared to say to the priests, "I will worship Christ who died on the Cross, but I will not worship the Cross on which Christ died."

Three days after Sawtre had gained the martyr's crown, we listen sadly to Dr John Purvey reading a recantation, at St Paul's Cross, of all he had said and done. And so the old man passes into the shadows. As far as we can trace he was the last of the Oxford scholars that had originally gathered round the Reformer, but they had done their work. The seeds of truth they had sown bore fruit in the next generation. The banner of truth had been raised, and though many standard-bearers fell on the field of conflict, others were found to grasp what soon became indeed a bloodstained banner and bear it on to victory. The death fires which were first lighted in 1401 continued to burn till 1558, and never more fiercely than during the last six years of that period. Men and women, even boys and girls, sealed their testimony with their blood. To read the Scriptures or even to possess a Bible was considered a crime only to be expiated at the dreadful stake. Tortures, conceivable only by men inspired by the devil himself, were inflicted on delicate women until their poor bodies were so maimed and broken that they had to be carried to the death fire and chained erect to the post. Men had their feet burned to the bone, and were then put in the stocks the night before they were to die, in order to add to their sufferings. All these things were done by the priests of Rome, and all these things were suffered by the martyrs of Jesus. We, to day, have our liberties as the result.

03.09. Chapter 09 - The Wonder of the Book

Chapter 09 The Wonder of the Book

It is a day in summer in the year A.D. 33. A large crowd of excited people are gathered together in an Eastern city. They have come from many parts of the world and speak many languages. Some have travelled from Parthia, Media, and Elam in the north; others from the far east of Mesopotamia; many from the west of Asia; and some from the distant south of Egypt and Cyrene. But the remarkable thing about their meeting to-day is that they are listening to men otherwise uneducated, who yet are able to speak to their audience, to each man "in his own tongue wherein he was born." Then the subject of which they speak is of the deepest importance, for they are declaring to the assembled multitudes the "wonderful works of God."

We all recognise this as a story found in Acts 2:1-47, and we repeat it here because it was to this most interesting chapter that Wycliffe trenchantly appealed when he began to assert the rights of the common people to have the Word of God in their own tongue.

"Those who call it heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English must be prepared," says he, "to condemn the Holy Ghost who gave it in tongues to the Apostles of Christ to speak the Word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven."

Then, growing bolder, he challenged the priests as being the real heretics. "Those heretics are not to be heard," he says, "who fancy that secular men ought not to know the law of God . . . for Scripture is the faith of the Church, and the more it is known the better. Therefore, as secular men ought to know the faith, so it is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them."

These words carry us back to the words of a greater man than even John Wycliffe — even the words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul. When writing his inspired Epistle to the Colossians, he said, "When this epistle is read among you, cause it to be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea." In the days of the Apostle there were no recognised orders of "clergy" and "laity." The scriptural simplicity of the early faith was held by all. They recognised, according to the Lord's own teaching, that all were brethren in Christ, and they "called no man father," much less "Holy father," a title applied only to God Himself. In Wycliffe's opinion there were still the "clergy" and the "laity," but he had made a great advance on the teaching and practice of Rome when he boldly advocated that the "laity" ought to have the liberty to read the Bible in their own language.

We may gather something of the determined opposition he had to encounter from the bishops when we see what they said about his work when completed.

One says, "This Master John Wycliffe has translated the Gospel which Christ gave to the clergy and doctors of the Church to be by them communicated to the weaker sort and the laity according to their need, and has thus made it more accessible to the laity and to women who are able to read than it was before to the well educated and intelligent clergy."

Another says, "He has completed his malice by devising a translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue." In the year 1408, when the priests had more political power, they issued a very stringent order, drawn up by the persecuting Archbishop, the "crafty Arundel," that "no unauthorised person should hereafter translate any portion of holy Scripture into English or any other language by way of book or tract, and that no such book or tract should be read, either in whole or in part, publicly or privately, that was composed lately in the time of John Wycliffe or since, under the penalty of the Greater Excommunication, until such translation shall be approved by the bishop of the diocese." But the bishops were more anxious to burn the Bible than to approve it, and in very many cases they burned the possessors of the Bible with the book hung round their necks. But before we look at Wycliffe's translation, let us turn back and trace shortly how this wonderful Book of God came to men, and also notice some things about it which make it so different from all other books that it has become known now as THE Book. In 2 Peter 1:21 we read that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." God, the Holy Spirit, was the Author of the Scriptures. He used "holy men of God" to write what He inspired. Therefore the Word of God is perfect. It could not, as the Word of God, be otherwise. When men say that the Bible is only a textbook of morals and not a textbook of science, thereby inferring that its science is not "up to date," they involve themselves in a glaring contradiction, for the Spirit of God, who is the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17), could not surely inspire men to write what was not true. Much of the so-called science of fifty years ago flatly contradicted the Bible. Much of the science of fifty years ago has been proved to be wrong. Much of the so-called "assured conclusions" of modern science rest on nothing more solid than a basis of unproved theories which future scientists may discard and disown. If the so-called science of to-day contradicts the Bible, so much the worse for the science. The Bible is the Judge. We may confidently rely upon this: as men approach nearer to the truth in their study of the works of God, so in proportion will they draw nearer to the Bible, the Words of God; and both are PERFECT. True science can never contradict Scripture. Not only is God the Holy Spirit the Author of the Holy Scriptures, but God the Son is the great Subject of this wonderful revelation from Heaven.

He was the promised Seed spoken of in Genesis 3:15 who would bruise the serpent's head. He was the One of whom Adam or Abraham, Isaac or Joseph, David or Solomon were but types. He was the One to whom the paschal lamb in Egypt and every sacrifice in Israel's temple pointed. Psalm and prophecy, and parable, all spoke of Him. Kings and conquerors were only dim shadows of the One who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Judges of Israel and saviours of the people were but faint shadows of the One whose name was called JESUS, for "He shall save His people from their sins."

Then, when He is born into this world as the Babe in Bethlehem's manger, all Heaven is interested in the wonderful event, and a multitude of the heavenly hosts chant the words which mean so much to every one of us: —

"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, Goodwill towards men."

Four separate accounts are given to us in the four Gospels of His life on earth.

MATTHEW speaks of Him as the King of Israel and the One who will yet sway the sceptre of the universe of God in righteousness, power, and glory. To Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

MARK tells of Him as the One who in grace became the Prophet of God and the Servant of Men. The Psalmist had said, "Grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever" (Psalms 45:2); and in Luke 4:22 we read that all the people wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And well they might, for "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God" (John 3:24), and "never man spake like this Man" (John 7:46).

LUKE, the beloved physician, tells of One who was a more skilled physician still — the wonderful Man of God's counsels who came into the world To preach the Gospel to the poor. 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 . . . (Luke 4:18-19). And that "acceptable year" of grace, first announced in the synagogue of Nazareth, is still being proclaimed: blessing is still flowing forth to sinners, and the Lord Jesus Christ, now at God's right hand, is still saying, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." When we come to JOHN'S Gospel we learn that the Man Christ Jesus, who became the Servant of God and men, though He was the King of Israel, is no less a Person than the One of whom Isaiah's glowing page foretold: "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" (Isaiah 9:6-7). The ACTS OF THE APOSTLES and the twenty-one EPISTLES continue the theme and tell us from every varying standpoint what Christ is to God and what Christ is for His people. In the BOOK OF REVELATION we are carried on to a time when time shall be no longer; when the mystery of God shall be finished and the Lord Jesus will rise up to purge the earth, deliver His people, and introduce the reign of righteousness and world-wide blessing.

Then this Book of God speaks to the conscience. It deals with men as sinners. It brings them, as it were, into the presence of a holy God and convinces them that by nature they are unfit to be there. But it also tells of the Way of Salvation, and points to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Another thing, among many, that makes the Bible different from all other books is the prophecies of Scripture. If we confine ourselves to one theme alone — that of the promised Messiah — we find that 4,000 years before He was born it was prophesied that He would come. Micah foretold the place where He would be born (Micah 5:2). Daniel told of the time when He would appear, and named the very day when He would present Himself to the nation as their King, and also indicated how the nation would reject Him (Daniel 9:26). Isaiah portrays the remarkable way in which He would enter into this world (Isaiah 7:14); then that He would be despised and rejected, and finally that His death would be the great propitiatory offering for the sin of the world.

All these things are spoken with exactness of detail, and all have come to pass exactly as foretold, proving conclusively that the writers spake by the Word of the Lord, who alone knows the end from the beginning.

03.10. Chapter 10 - The Oldest Book in the World

Chapter 10 The Oldest Book in the World

We have seen in a previous chapter that the Bible is the best book in the world: it is also the oldest. No other book can compare with it in this respect. Herodotus, who is known as the "father of history," dates back only to 480 B.C., shortly before the closing book in our Old Testament was written. The ancient poets Homer and Hesiod are supposed to have flourished — for no one really knows — about the time of Hezekiah, King of Judah. But 750 years before that time Moses had written the five books which we know as the Pentateuch. So that the Bible presents to us the oldest authentic records of the history of the human race. Egyptian history cannot be traced farther back than 2700 B.C. The Chinese records go nearly as far. Babylonish history begins about 2450 B.C. Greek history dates from the Trojan War — if that war ever was fought — 1200 B.C. Rome was busy founding its capital about 753 B.C., and Persian history begins 200 years later still. But Bible history carries us back for 4,000 years before the Cross, and gives us in the words of Inspiration the history of the very beginning of our present ordered earth and all that it is necessary for us to know about the story of man's creation to inhabit it. The oldest vestiges of human construction are the Pyramids of Egypt, and the oldest of these is supposed to have been built shortly after the Flood. A French engineer has estimated that there are materials in this vast erection to build a wall one foot thick and ten feet high right round France, or about 1,800 miles. For 2,500 years or thereby the world had no Bible — no written word of revelation from God. But it is remarkable that this long space of time was bridged by the lives of but three men. Methuselah, the oldest man that ever lived, is one of the links that connect with Adam on the one side and on the other with Noah, who passed through the Flood and lived for 300 years after it.

Adam lived for 965 years, and during that time he would be able to teach his descendants all the wonderful revelations which God had made to him both before and after sin came into the world. Generation after generation would hear from his lips the story of Eden, the fall, the promised Deliverer, and the way of approach to God.

If we turn back to 1 Chronicles 1:1-54, the opening three verses give us one of the wonderful sentences of Inspiration. It is a sentence containing ten proper names and not a single verb. The names are these: Adam, Sheth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered, Henoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah. Dr Kitto has pointed out that these ten names literally translated in order form the following most remarkable sentence in English: Man, Appointed [or Replaced], Miserable, Lamenting, The God of Glory, Shall descend, To instruct, His death sends, To the afflicted, Consolation. Thus the very names of the antediluvian patriarchs would be a standing testimony to the world. Methuselah's name in particular was a warning message to the sinners of old. The prophet Enoch, whose own name marked him out as one able "to instruct," named his son in words prophetic of coming judgment that would "descend" after his death. The very year in which Methuselah died, the Flood came. One cannot help noting that after the name of the oldest man this world ever saw, God wrote "and he died."

How interesting it would be for us now if any person was alive who had come over with William the Conqueror. Such a person would be able to tell us, for example, about the various dynasties who had ruled in England — the Normans, the Plantagenets, the Yorkists, the Tudors, the Stuarts, and the Hanoverians. We should also be able to provide much interesting information about the laws and customs during the various periods of his life, and to hear such an account from his lips would be as interesting as to read it from a book. So during Adam's long life many people of the ancient world would learn from him all that God had been pleased to make known of Himself at that time.

Methuselah, the grandfather of Noah, lived with Adam for over 240 years and nearly too with his grandson Noah. To Noah he would doubtless communicate all that he himself had learned from his ancestors. Shem, the son of Noah, lived after the Flood for 500 years until the days of Abraham, who was called out from his country and kindred to become the father of the faithful and the repository of all the promises of grace to the nation of Israel.

Five hundred years later we come to Moses, the man of God, and the first of the illustrious men who were chosen by God to write for us the "Scripture of Truth." And so the good work went on; the various revelations extending over a period of some 1,600 years, until the Apostle John, in Patmos, wrote the last book in our New Testament, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," telling us about the solemn events that will usher in the closing days of men in responsibility upon the earth and of the time when "time shall be no longer."

Kings and nobles, priests and prophets, physicians and fishermen, tentmakers and tax collectors are found among the writers (over forty in all, and all inspired by God Himself, so that "the law of the Lord is perfect").

We may well pause here and ask, How has this wonderful Book been received, and how have these sacred writings been treated by the men to whom they have been sent? And in trying to answer this question we shall see that the Bible, not unlike the Person of the Lord Himself when on earth, sharply divided men into two classes — those who loved the Book and those who hated it. In Deuteronomy 31:24-26 we read, "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee." And, again (ver. 10), "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law."

It is very clear from these words that God intended everybody to hear and understand His Word. Even the children are not left out, so that when Rome says that the Bible is for the priests only, she is flatly contradicting the words of God Himself. But let us follow the history of the Book. Placed in the side of the ark, as we have seen, it entered the land with the nation and was with them in all the wars of Canaan. It abode with the ark in Shiloh for 400 years, went with it on that strange pilgrimage when the ark was taken by the Philistines, and with the ark returned again to Kirjath-jearim, whence David removed it on his "new cart." Three years afterwards, when David

had learned his lesson, the ark was brought into the tent prepared for it in the City of David.

We know from 2 Chronicles 6:11 that the same autograph copy which Moses wrote was still in the ark in the palmy days of King Solomon, when he finished the first temple and put the ark in the holy of holies. And it is just possible that it is the same roll we hear of 400 years later in the darker days of Josiah. This pious King was one of those who loved the Book, for, after it had been found among the rubbish in the neglected temple, we read that, just as Moses commanded, he gathered the people together and "read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord." It is always good to read the Bible. God honours in His providence both men and nations who honour His Word. The history of our own country abundantly proves this. Compare England's greatness under Cromwell with its abject condition under Charles II. Queen Victoria rightly called the Word of God "the secret of England's greatness." Only comparatively few years have passed since the good Queen died, but we may well ask, Does the Bible hold the same place in the nation to-day as it did then? But succeeding Kings of Judah were not all so pious as the good King Josiah. We have a sharp contrast in the actions of his son Jehoiakim. Let us pay a visit, unasked, to this King's palace. We find him in his "winterhouse" with a fire burning before him. Another portion of God's Word is being read in his presence, but taking the roll out of the hands of the reader, "he cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed" (Jeremiah 36:26). He was the first person we know of who ever dared to destroy any portion of God's written Word, and short and sharp came his judgment. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Pagan Rome and papal Rome have only too well followed this wicked King's example, but the Word of God is indestructible; it liveth and abideth for ever.

Soon Judah was carried captive to Babylon, but during the long years of captivity God watched over His Word, and provided men to preserve it. It was copied and re-copied with the most meticulous care. Jewish scribes knew the Scriptures so well that they could tell how many words were in each book. They reckoned up even the number of individual letters, so that they knew, for instance, that the letter Aleph occurred 42,377 times, the letter Beth 38,218 times, and so on, right through all the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. So God used this scrupulous care in order that His Word might be faithfully preserved through all time. The seventy years of the Babylonish Captivity came to an end at last. The pride of Babylon was humbled before the might of Persia. King Cyrus, who had been mentioned by name by the prophet Isaiah 176 years before he was born, issued a proclamation enjoining the Jews to go up to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of the Lord. We learn from the book of Ezra that "forty-two thousand three hundred and three score" (Ezra 2:34) led by Zerubbabel formed the first company of returning exiles that reached Jerusalem to set about the task of restoring the fortunes of their overthrown country. The first thing they did was to set up the altar and offer burnt offerings upon it. They thus declared their faith in the words, "God is our refuge and our strength"; and then, when the second modest temple was founded, very touching it is indeed to be present, in fancy, at the ceremony of laying the foundation stone. Old and grey-headed men are here who can remember Solomon's temple with all its magnificent architecture and golden furniture, and the present building which they are so painfully rearing up in the midst of their poverty and distress seems to them so insignificant that they weep as they think of what once was and of what now is. On the other hand, the young men who had been born in exile, when they saw the work so far advanced, shouted aloud for joy, so

that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people. Twenty years afterwards this second temple was completed, and later, when the energetic Governor, Nehemiah, arrived at Jerusalem, the city wall was built and prosperity began again to smile upon the long-desolate land. But what concerns us most in our present inquiry is the work that Ezra the scribe did when he came. He was the Religious Reformer of the day, just as Nehemiah, who came after him, was the Righteous Ruler.

Passing over many of his drastic reforms, both among the priests and the people, let us hasten down to Watergate Street, on the east side of the temple, for Ezra is to hold a great open-air reading meeting there to-day. A great pulpit of wood "made for the purpose" has been erected here, and the "ready scribe in the law of Moses" climbs up into it, with six men on his right hand and seven at his left, and opens the BOOK in the sight of all the people. From the time that it was light until midday the reading went on, "and all the, people were attentive unto the book of the law" (Nehemiah 8:1-18).

We note with pleasure the attention of the people to the words of the Book, for dark days are coming soon both for it and them. They had returned to a land not yet recovered from the desolation of the great overthrow. Jerusalem, the "holy city" towards which their hearts had yearned with such intense longing during the weary years of the captivity, was a mass of ruins. Their old enemies the Philistines were pressing in from the west. The Edomites — foes of a thousand year feuds — had pushed north as far as Hebron, the ancient capital. Moab and Ammon, on the east, are again contracting alliances with the Arabians to the further hindrance of the work of restoration.

We cannot linger longer to hear Ezra, however much we should like to do so, for we have still a long way to travel before we come to the times of John Wycliffe. But one other thing it is interesting to notice before we pass on, and that is that Ezra is believed to have compiled and arranged all the books of our Old Testament as we have them to-day (including, we believe, even Malachi), so that those who came after him had a complete copy of "The Law," "The Psalms," and "The Prophets," according to the three great divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Leaving the Jews to meet and conquer their many foes as best they may, we must take a glance at the blank leaf between our Old Testament and the New.

It was a period of stirring times for the land of Israel. Systematic and diabolical persecution, such as perhaps no other nation could have survived, occupied part of this period. Remarkable victories, gained by a few patriotic men over multiplied enemies, followed. Finally, corruption and decay set in, until all that was good and noble disappeared; and we open our New Testament to find Herod, an Idumean usurper, reigning in the Lord's land: the "sceptre has departed from Judah." But to return. It is the year 277 B.C. Alexander the Great has met and overthrown the might of Persia more than fifty years before, only to be himself overthrown soon after by his own passions. But in the great city of Alexandria, which he built to keep his memory green, and colonised with many races, there is now a population of 100,000 Jews. We pause here to take a glimpse at some seventy learned Rabbis engaged upon the first complete translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into another tongue. This translation into Greek is known as the Septuagint Version, and was the Bible read in the time of our Lord and the Apostles. Many of the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New are from this version; hence the slight textual differences

which sometimes appear. There are 275 Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament, and about forty are from the Septuagint. The Apostle Paul quotes from the earlier Scriptures about one hundred and twenty times.

Another step of about one hundred years and we find that the domination of Babylon, of Persia, and of Greece is a thing of the past, and Palestine finds itself in the power of a more bitter foe than any of these had been. Antiochus Epiphanes (the Illustrious), or some would call him Epimanes (the Madman), is ruler of Syria, and Judea lies at his mercy. He has determined that he will destroy the race of the Jews and banish the name of the God of Israel from the earth. To do so, Antiochus saw that he must first get rid of the "Law of Moses." Perhaps never, either before or since, has the BOOK passed through such an extreme crisis. Copies of it, laboriously written by hand, could be but few. Those who possessed them were weak and their enemies were strong, but God was over all.

We read that "Antiochus went up to Jerusalem with a great multitude and proudly entered into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof . . . and there was great mourning in Israel. And he commanded the holy place to be profaned . . . and he set up the abominable idol before the altar of God, and cut in pieces and burned with fire the books of the Law of God. And every one with whom the books of the Testament of the Lord was found, and whosoever observed the Law of the Lord, they put to death according to the Edict of the King . . . and there was great wrath upon the people."

Just let us take a glance at one of the dreadful things which were frequently taking place in Jerusalem under the rule of this wicked King. We shall not linger, neither shall we return, for the sight is too appalling to witness. If we were to linger, many such dreadful spectacles of suffering should we encounter. A mother and seven sons are led, bound, before the King, accused of "faithfulness to the law of God." One by one they are scourged, the woman being no exception. Then they are commanded to eat swine's flesh and sacrifice to idols. When all refuse to obey, the eldest son is first brought forward to the torture. A sharp knife is drawn round his head, cutting in to the bone, and skin and hair are torn from the living scalp. Again he is ordered to sacrifice in order to save his life. Still refusing, his tongue is cut out, part of his hands and feet are chopped off, and, while still alive, he is cast into a red-hot brazen cauldron to be slowly roasted to death.

One by one the heroic little band of witnesses passes through the same dreadful ordeal till only the youngest is left. Then the King promises with an oath that he will make him a rich and happy man if he will only disobey the law and sacrifice to idols. But he, refusing, as the others did, "the King rages against him more cruelly than all the rest." Last of all the woman dies also. "And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." And Antiochus, what of him?

"The murderer and blasphemer, being grievously struck, died a miserable death, being eaten up of worms, in a strange country" (2Ma 9:1-29). A dark day this indeed for the ancient people of God, but man's extremity is God's opportunity, and the very wickedness of the King brought to the front a hero and a man.

Judas Maccabees, the chief of five brethren, was used by God to punish many of the proud oppressors of the land, recover possession of the temple, and restore the worship of Jehovah. The

Feast of the Dedication, instituted by Judas in 165 B.C., which we read of in John 10:1-42, was intended to keep in remembrance this great national event. The feast began on the twenty-fifth of the month Chesleu (our December). The nations around them were celebrating the heathen Festival of the Sun. The Jews were joining in praise to Jehovah, the only true God.

Just 196 years afterwards we read, "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And JESUS walked in the temple in Solomon's porch" (John 10:22-23). This brings us to the central point of all the revelation of the ways of God in grace. In the Old Testament we read what men ought to be. In the New we find out what God is, and what God is to men. Two sentences in the first Epistle of John convey to us in the fewest possible words the two grandest truths of Scripture "God is light" and "God is love" (1 John 1:5 and 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16). This love has so wrought for His own that every stain of sin that light could detect love has found means to put away. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In our next chapter we shall follow the fortunes of the Book during the early Christian centuries.

03.11. Chapter 11 - The Early Christian Centuries

Chapter 11 The Early Christian Centuries In this and the following chapters we must trace the Book for a period of some 1,300 years, or from the time that the New Testament was completed until the time comes that we can look into Wycliffe's study at Lutterworth and see him busily translating his Vulgate copy into the then spoken language of England. And just as we found in our rapid survey of the history of the Old Testament Scriptures that at various times enemies had striven to destroy them, so we shall find the same thing repeated with the New Testament in an even more determined and bitterly hostile way.

We know that all the twenty-seven books of our New Testament were written before the close of the first century. When and by whom were these various books of the New Testament completed and arranged in one volume as we now have them? Of all the various opinions that have been expressed, it seems most probable that the beloved disciple John was used by God not only to write the closing words of inspiration, but also to collect together those already written. Whether this be so or no, we know from many testimonies that by the middle of the second century all the books of the New Testament were known and read in the Christian assemblies. The Apostle's life was lengthened out for about one hundred years, and during that time he had seen the Church in its pristine freshness and unity, as described in Acts 2:1-47, and seen also the corruption, declension, and decay which set in when, even at Ephesus, believers "left their first love." The letters to the "seven churches" in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22 describe the departure from the truth of "all in Asia," and also supply the needed correction, not only for them, but for believers in all time, "till He come." If we divide the 1,300 years before us into two periods we shall better understand the methods of opposition given to the Book. The first period would last from Apostolic days down to the time of Constantine the Great. These were the years of the great Pagan persecutions.

Church historians have usually divided these into ten, reasoning that the prophetic word in Revelation 2:10, "ye shall have tribulation ten days," foretells in a mystic way the long period of sufferings under the savage rulers of heathen Rome.

Different authorities give different dates for these persecutions, but the most common reckoning is as follows:

- 1 Under Nero, A.D. 64.
- 2 Under Domitian, A.D. 95.
- 3 Under Trajan, A.D. 107.
- 4 Under Hadrian, A.D. 125.
- 5 Under Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 165.
- 6 Under Septimus Severus, A.D. 202.

7 Under Maximinus, A.D. 235.

8 Under Decius, A.D. 249.

9 Under Valerian, A.D. 257.

10 Under Diocletian, A.D. 303. But indeed the whole period of Early Christianity was one of persecution in some part of the Empire. The dates given above only indicate times of special outbreaks of the latent hatred shown to the followers of the Lord Jesus.

We find the beginning of this opposition in the Book of Acts. A few short weeks, or months at the most, after the Lord ascended to Heaven, we read of Stephen, the first martyr, being stoned to death. Saul, the persecutor, being, as he says himself, "exceedingly mad" against the believers, was making so close a search for them that he was entering into every house and committing men and women to prison and to death.

Ten years afterwards, Herod the King took up the work so dear to the hearts of the Jewish priests and "slew James the brother of John with the sword; and, when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also" (Acts 12:3). But Peter's work was not finished, and Herod's chains were but cobwebs when they resisted God's purposes.

Space permits but a passing glance here and there as we hasten forwards.

Saul the persecutor was changed into Paul the Apostle, and by his ceaseless labours, ardent zeal, and tireless activity the Gospel had been preached in every quarter of the Roman Empire before his death, somewhere about the year A.D. 66. At this time Rome was ruled by possibly the most wicked man this world has ever seen. Nero had murdered his brother, his sister, his two wives, and his mother. His hands were red with the blood of assassination and murder. His morals were such as we may not describe. To his many misdeeds he added the burning of Rome, and then laid the blame on the Christians. And so began the first pagan persecution.

Now the Book and its followers are no longer confronted only by the Jewish priests in Palestine and elsewhere. They are face to face with the formidable power of the Roman Empire. So far, the imperial laws had been in their favour, impartially protecting those who were freemen from mob violence, as we see in Acts 18:12. But if there is "another King, one Jesus," Rome will take steps to protect herself by dooming to death all who confess His name. For to confess the name of Jesus was to be in the eyes of the authorities an enemy to Caesar. If they refused to worship Nero they were counted atheists. If the Alexandrian corn ships were delayed by contrary winds, the Christians were to blame. If it did not rain, or if it rained too much, it was they who had offended the gods. "If the Tiber overflowed its banks," says Tertullian, "or if the Nile did not, the cry was raised, 'The Christians to the lions.'" In addition to all this, the trade interests of the image makers, and all the craftsmen connected with the idol temples, were in danger if Christianity prevailed. Truly, it was no small undertaking to turn the ancient pagan Roman Empire "upside down," but Christianity did it. Not by force of arms was this accomplished, but by the power of the gospel of peace, and by the efforts of men and women who loved the Lord more than they loved their own lives. When the persecutors had done their worst, friends lovingly gathered the mangled bodies or scattered bones from the blood-stained sands of the arena, and conveyed them to those wonderful places of interment known as the Catacombs, which became, during the early days of

Christianity, both the meeting places and the burying ground of the believers at Rome. It has been estimated that over three millions of graves exist in its vast galleries, whose intricate network of passages is believed to extend some 587 miles — a distance equal to the entire length of Italy.

We cannot trace in detail all the records of those early years. If we did, we should see exposed on the one hand the hatred of the human heart to the name of Jesus, and on the other we should be amazed at the numbers of men and women who fearlessly suffered and overcame all the cruelty that barbarous and savage persecutors could inflict. But if we look below the surface we shall see that the chief actor was Satan himself. After all, he has but two methods of opposition to the things of God. The one is violence. The other is corruption. For the first 300 years he tried the first method, and stirred up his servants to exterminate the Book of God and the followers of Jesus. But the blood of the martyrs has ever been the Seed of the Church, and like Israel of old, the more they were afflicted the more they multiplied and grew. So the 300 years of pagan persecution drag their leaden feet along the track of history. But we notice that the Christians are winning. All the tower of the Empire, backed by all the will of the rulers and supported by every effort of the governors in every province is unable to stamp out either the Book or the followers of the Book. On the other hand, the numbers of the believers are increasing so fast that Tertullian (A.D. 200) can challenge the oppressors by telling them, "We are but of yesterday and we have filled everything that is yours: cities, islands, castles, factories. . . . We have left you nothing but your temples."

Many standard-bearers fell in the battle front. If we may rely on history, all the Apostles but John died violent deaths. Ignatius, one of John's disciples, was brought from Antioch to Rome to be thrown to the lions to make a Roman holiday in the year A.D. 107. Justin Martyr, with six companions, was beheaded in A.D. 163. Polycarp, with eleven fellow-sufferers, was burned alive at Smyrna in A.D. 167. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 161-180, has been much admired as a philosopher, but evidently he had not wisdom enough to see that, when he unjustly condemned to death men like Justin Martyr and Polycarp, he was destroying the noblest and most loyal of his subjects. In spite of his "philosophy," or because of it, he was one of the most cruel oppressors of the Early Church. Every year of his long reign was defiled with innocent blood. The Church at Lyons in France produced many faithful witnesses. The old writer says, "Then were we all much alarmed because of the uncertain event of confession, not that we dreaded the torments with which we were threatened, but because we looked forward unto the end and feared the danger of apostacy."

Attalus, Maturus, and Sanctus sustained "tortures which exceed the power of description." Blandina, a female slave girl, shared in their sufferings and triumphs. After a whole day of tortures too terrible to narrate, she could only be compelled to say, "I am a Christian and there is no evil done among us." She was scourged, seated in a red-hot iron chair, then, still alive, thrown to the beasts, and so she won the crown of life.

Under Septimus Severus (A.D. 193-211) the stern edict was issued against the Christians, "It is not lawful for you to live," and the military despot who had marched to the throne over the murdered bodies of his nearest friends was not likely to allow such a law to remain a dead letter. From Lyons we must cross over to Carthage and listen to the touching words of the young and noble Perpetua, who with many others suffered at this time. "After a few days we were cast into prison. I was terrified, for I had never before been in such darkness. O miserable day! — from the

heat of the crowded prisoners and the insults of the soldiers. But I was wrung with solicitude for my infant."

Later on in these affecting memoirs we read: "And the prison became to me like a palace, and I was happier there than anywhere else." "When the day of trial came," she proceeds, "we were placed at the bar, and my father came with my child, and said in a beseeching tone, 'Have compassion on your infant,' and the procurator said, 'Spare the grey hairs of your parent; spare your infant; offer sacrifice for the Emperor.' And I answered, I will not sacrifice.'

"'Art thou a Christian?' said he.

"I answered, 'I am a Christian.'"

Hung up in a net, she was exposed to wild beasts to amuse the populace, and, when gored and torn, a gladiator was sent to put her to death. He added to her sufferings by clumsily wounding her in the side, and she herself finally guided the sword to her throat, thereby setting her free from further suffering. But it is in the closing years of the third century and the opening of the next that we see the most determined efforts put forth that ever were made to extinguish Christianity. At this time the Roman world was divided under four Emperors — Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, and Galerius. We must take a glimpse at these before passing on. Two men are sitting alone in secret serious conference in the palace of Nicomedia. One of them is the old Emperor Diocletian, the other is his son-in-law Galerius. The younger is urging his proposals with vehemence. The elder is listening with apparent reluctance to what might well be, even to him, a revolting proposal. Galerius is insisting that the whole Christian community should be put outside of the laws, and that all who will not worship the Roman gods shall be burned alive. The winter of A.D. 302 was spent in frequent conferences. The prudent Diocletian proposing milder measures, Galerius urging on his scheme of fire and blood, until the old man finally gave away and allowed the storm to break.

"It was in the ninth year of Diocletian, in the month Xanticus, which one would call April, according to the Romans, about the time when the Paschal festival of our Saviour took place, that suddenly the Edicts were published — everywhere to raze the churches to the ground — to destroy the Sacred Scripture in the flames — to strip those that were in honour of their dignities — and to deprive freedmen of their liberty if any persisted in the Christian profession." The first Edict ordered the Sacred Books to be everywhere destroyed and the churches to be demolished. By a second Edict all bishops and ministers of churches were cast into prison. Shortly afterwards a more fearful act came into force. Magistrates were empowered to compel by torture all their prisoners to renounce Christianity and worship idols. New and hitherto unheard of torments were to be invented for this purpose. It was thought that if the shepherds yielded their flocks would follow. The next step was to extend this order so that it included every follower of Jesus, without distinction of rank, age, or sex. Multitudes were immediately imprisoned in every place, and the dungeons "formerly filled with criminals and murderers were now filled with bishops and presbyters, and deacons, readers and exorcists, so that there was no room left for the real criminals." This dreadful persecution extended to nearly every city and town of the Roman world. Even far away Britain had its confessors and martyrs. In Gaul alone, where ruled Constantius Chlorus (father of Constantine the Great), was there any respite.

It is a pleasure to contrast the life of this man with his three compeers. Many Christians were found in his own household, and when the first Edict was issued he ordered all who would not retract to quit his service. Then, contrary to all expectations, he dismissed the apostates and reinstated all who had held true to their faith, remarking that men who were faithful to God would be true to their Prince. "Neither did he demolish the churches, nor devise any other mischief against us, but protected pious persons under him from harm. At length he enjoyed a most happy and blessed death, being the only one of the four Emperors] who at his death did peaceably and gloriously leave the government to his own son."

Constantius Chlorus died at York in A.D. 306. It would be impossible to arrive at any estimate of the numbers who perished during the ten years that this persecution lasted. In one province alone 150,000 are said to have been put to death. Some villages entirely Christian were surrounded by soldiers and totally consumed by fire. In some cities the executions reached one hundred daily. Magistrates vied with each other in inventing new and excruciating forms of torture; but all to no purpose: the Christians would rather give up their lives than give up the Book of God.

Wearied at last with murder, the authorities authorised a more "humane" policy. Maiming was resorted to: many had their right hands cut off, and yet others one of their legs. But we must complete this sad story in the words of the old historian and eyewitness, who says: "To mention each name would be a long and tedious work, not to say impossible." The enemy had launched his master stroke and failed. God, who overrules all things, now laid His hand on the savage monster of cruelty, who so far had appeared to have all things his own way. "Galerius was smitten of God," Eusebius says, and some of his physicians, because they could not give him relief, were "slain without mercy."

"Then, struggling with so many miseries, he began to have compunction for the crimes he had committed against the pious . . . First of all he confessed his sin to the supreme God . . . then ordered that without delay they should stop the persecutions and hasten to rebuild the churches . . . and offer up prayers for the Emperor's safety." The Christians might well hail this new Edict like a trump of liberty. It struck the fetters from those in the dungeons. It released the captives from the mines. Those still hiding in the dismal Catacombs were able once again to appear in the light of day, but above all, it was no longer death to be found reading the Book. But God is not mocked. Galerius died. Died as only few men in this world have died. It had to be said of him, as of Herod of old (Acts 12:23), "He was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost." History records the same fate of Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod the Great, Philip II. of Spain, and Lauderdale of the killing times in Scotland — all opposers of God and oppressors of His people.

Meantime Constantine was marching from far distant Britain. Slowly but surely his iron legions were closing in on the heart of the Empire. From Milan he issued the great decree of universal toleration. "We give," said he, "to the Christians, and to all, the free choice to follow whatever mode of worship they wish." Maxentius (son of Maximian), now ruler of Italy, was defeated at Turin, then again at Verona, and finally at the battle of Milvian Bridge near Rome, A.D. 312. Fleeing from the stricken field, the last of the oppressors, endeavouring to force his way across the crowded bridge, fell into the river and was smothered in Tiber mud. Next day Constantine entered Rome and became sole Emperor of the West. His brother-in-law, Licinius, was ruler of the East. With the supremacy of these two men, though both were pagans, pagan persecution ceased.

Satan had endeavoured in vain to burn the Book. We shall see in our next chapter how he tried to banish it, and we shall see that he failed in this also.

03.12. Chapter 12 - The Rise of the Papacy

Chapter 12 The Rise of the Papacy

We have reached a period in history when we might expect that the fortunes of the Book and the followers of the Book would enter upon a time of peace and prosperity. The reign of Constantine certainly forms a remarkable era in the history of the world. In matters both political and social there was a great advance on what had gone before. But the same cannot be said of that which concerns the Church. We have now reached the time spoken of by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 13:32, when the "grain of mustard seed" had become "a tree," with the "birds of the air" lodging in its branches. Evil men, who before had "crept in unawares," now found that the professing Church was the best place for earthly preferment. The company of believers at Rome soon ceased to be known as "the Church in Rome," and became "the Church of Rome." Two little words, but how great the difference in meaning. The Christian religion was legalised, and became a State-aided institution, as paganism had been before it. This period saw also a marked distinction among the Christians themselves. In Apostolic days all believers were looked upon as God's Kleros (clergy or lot, 1 Peter 5:2). Now sharp and very distinctive lines were drawn between the "clergy" and the "laity" (the people). Next the "clergy" began to be divided among themselves into ranks of greater or lesser precedence. Deacons considered themselves greater than readers; presbyters considered themselves greater than deacons; bishops assumed authority over presbyters, and soon there was a strife among bishops themselves as to "who should he the greatest." This unscriptural supremacy was sought for, assumed, and finally asserted by the Bishop of Rome. The finished product was the "popes," and everything that bishops should not be they have been. All alike would seem to have forgotten the divine word, "One is your Master even Christ and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). Instead of seeking in love to serve one another, they soon began to "beat" and abuse their fellow-servants and "eat and drink with the drunken" (Matthew 24:49). Not only so, but so great became their pride and assumption that they impiously declared that all who would not bow to the rule of Rome were on the sure road to hell. Outside of the Roman Church there is no Salvation. And such folly and impiety is still taught among the sect of the Roman Catholics to-day. It is folly, because the Apostles were "outside of the Roman Church." It is impiety, because it transfers the way of Salvation from the Lord Jesus, the alone Saviour of Sinners, to a perverted sect calling itself Christian, but which has both in its history and doctrines manifested everything that is unchristian and of the world. At this period, too, the bones and relics of the martyrs became articles of great importance and high mercantile value. Not only so, but in a most remarkable way the supply was always equal to the demand. Peter's chains multiplied as fast as credulity could purchase, and blacksmiths have been making chains for Peter ever since. Even Joseph's "latest breath" received in Nicodemus's glove could be had for a consideration. In all this we see that the Prince of Darkness was beginning to build up a new system of opposition to the truth out of the debris of his former cruelties. From pagan persecution came papal superstition. Thus the Church gave up entirely the truth of the "heavenly calling" and adopted all the principles of the world. Even the cruelties she had suffered in the early days she, in turn, inflicted in the

Middle Ages on all who truly witnessed for Christ.

Constantine now began to fashion the Church after the pattern of the State. The "priests" were made princes of the Church. (Alas! the Church had forgotten that all believers are priests.) They wore splendid robes similar to the Emperor's. Now, also, we read of them sitting upon "Episcopal thrones" and wearing "mitres." Half-pagan and half-Jewish millinery also began to play some part, for we get a glimpse of "sacred gowns" and other trumpery ill-suited for men who were "not of the world." The bishopric became an office of dignity and influence, and, in the natural course of things, only palaces could be suitable accommodation for such magnificence. These followed next.

Thus the men who had been the mark for Satan's keenest shafts now found themselves patronised by the Emperor and fawned upon by the world. The Church had given up its heavenly calling. We have difficulty in recognising these men as followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, who had to say when on earth, "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). In the first century the Church turned the world upside down; now the world had turned the Church upside down. From this time the Church rapidly fell away from Apostolic teaching and practice, and the results were manifest to all when the Christians began to quarrel among themselves. From quarrelling they came to fighting, and as usual the victors persecuted the vanquished.

Constantine called himself the bishop of the bishops, and in order to settle their differences summoned the first Great Council to meet at Nicea. It is said that a "golden altar" was erected in the centre of the hall, and the Book, which for 300 years had been the object of the world's fiercest enmity, placed upon it. Constantine also ordered fifty copies to be specially bound and sent to the principal Christian assemblies. Three hundred and eighteen bishops met on this occasion, and men who, a few short years before, had lived in danger of their lives found themselves now treated as guests and friends of the Emperor. Many of these men bore in their bodies the marks of the sufferings they had endured. Some were twisted out of human shape, their bones had been broken by torture and badly set afterwards. Some could not sit erect, the muscles of their sides and shoulders all drawn together after having been seared with hot irons. Others walked lame, with legs and sinews torn and burnt. When they were all invited to the splendid banquet given them by Constantine, they must have gone greatly wondering.

One result of this Council was that Christendom, for the first time in its history, found itself in the possession of a Creed. But however Scriptural this may be, we are better with the words of the Book itself than with any definitions therefrom made by men.

Another thing we must notice here before we leave. The Emperor had been besieged with petitions from all the discordant parties accusing each other. Before the debate began he called for a brazier and, declaring he would not read one of them, cast them all into the fire, adding, "It is the command of Christ that he who would be forgiven must first forgive his brother." The years that lie before us are rapidly shading down to the Dark Ages. Dark deeds took place in the Emperor's own family, which finally led Constantine to transfer the seat of Empire to his new city on the Bosphorus, which, through the munificence of the Emperor, soon became greater and more populous than Rome itself. The departure of the Emperor saw the arrival of the "pope." The bishops of Rome from this time began to seek a place of power and influence both in things

spiritual and in things temporal. When the break-up of the Western Empire took place about one hundred years later, they aspired to become earthly princes and rule over this world, forgetting alike both the words and the spirit of Him who said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." But amid all these dark clouds there were in many places silver linings; and instead of dwelling longer on the evils that everywhere abounded, we shall look at a young man who lived in Constantinople somewhere between the years A.D. 335 and 345. He was a Goth from the region of the Danube who had come to Rome as a hostage, and while there he had been converted. He conceived the purpose of preaching the Gospel among his heathen countrymen, and to this end very wisely decided to begin by giving them a translation of the Book. But as their native language had not yet been reduced to writing, he had to form an alphabet as well as make a translation of the Scriptures. Both of these things he accomplished with great success, and a MS. of this version, written in silver letters on purple vellum, is preserved at Upsala in Sweden.

Ulphilus is known as the "Apostle of the Goths." He laboured among them with much success for nearly forty years.

Another devoted servant was Severinus, the "Apostle of Noricum." He travelled through the district barefooted, "fasting and praying, and calling upon men to repent."

Prisoners of war in those days met a hard fate. If not massacred on the field of battle, they were condemned to the harshest form of slavery. Severinus interceded with King Flethus and the barbarian chiefs in their favour, collected money, redeemed many, and sent them to their homes — enriched himself by their gratitude and blessings. When the old man lay dying he sent for the King and Queen. Gisa, the Queen, was a wicked woman, who had been harsh to the captives and severe in the terms of their redemption. Stretching out his hand to her, he said, "Which lovest thou best, O Queen, thy husband, or gold and silver?"

"I love my husband better than all treasure," she replied.

"Beware, then," said the dying man, "of oppressing the innocent, lest their oppressions bring your destruction. Abstain from evil deeds and adorn your life with good works." When his royal visitors had departed, he asked his attendants to sing Psalms 150:1-6. He feebly joined with them in the closing verse, and with the words on his lips, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord," he passed home to his reward.

We may pass over in a few words the reputed "conversion" of Clovis, King of the Franks, in A.D. 496. The Bishop of Rheims was a different type of man from the Apostle of Noricum. What he looked for was change of profession; change of life and nature might, or might not, follow. That they did not is shown by the complaint of his neighbour, the King of Burgundy, who said of Clovis, "A cruel and covetous mind is not the symptom of a sincere conversion; let him show his faith by his works." Already a "Cathedral Church" had been erected at Rheims. We read of "costly tapestries," "sweet strains of music," "wafted perfumes," and "numberless candles." When the barbarian King, about to be baptized, entered the large building, he asked in an awestruck whisper, "Is this the kingdom of heaven?" We are inclined to question the truth of the bishop's reply when he answered, "No, but it is the way to it." Rome was too anxious to number a king among her vassals to make the gate either strait or narrow. Clovis was baptized and became "The Eldest Son of the Church." His warlike Franks, nothing loth, changed their religion to please their

master.

We notice this here only to show that Roman missionary methods now aimed only at conversion en bloc. When a king or chief was "converted" by these methods, his followers had to obey or be put to the sword. This, we know, was far from the Apostolic method, but the Christianity of the sixth century was very different from the Christianity of the first. In many cases it was merely paganism with new titles. The methods of the Book were no longer followed. We may notice here that so far it had not been forbidden, it had only been forgotten. The neglect of the Book, however, was the secret of all the errors, both in doctrine and in practice, we have been noticing. But God has ever had in this world a testimony to His Name and His truth. This we must now seek for outside the Roman Church. Or shall we say Rome was careful to try to extinguish that testimony in fire and blood as soon as she discovered it.

We now take a long step forward in history, and find ourselves in the year 1172 or thereby. Much has taken place in the interval, and Rome now has become, in type at least, "that great city which ruleth over the kings of the earth." Not only the King of the Franks, but all the Kings of Europe, Russia alone excepted, have bowed their necks to her yoke. She is now at the height of her power and pride and glory outwardly. Morally she is at the lowest depth of vice and degradation and infamy.

We are in the sunny south of France, and when things can be no darker, God is about to kindle a light that all the power and cruelty of the Pope will not be able to completely extinguish. A rich merchant of Lyons has been truly converted, and by the study of Scripture he has conceived the desire to bring back the Church to the teaching and practice of the days of the Apostles. His first thought, like that of every true Evangelist, was that the people should read the Book for themselves. At that time the only version of the Bible in Western Europe was Jerome's Latin Vulgate, but Latin was now a dead language, and even the priests, who by this time were alone expected to possess it, were ignorant of the truths it contained. So Peter Waldo succeeded in making a translation into what was called the "Romaunt" tongue. He then gave his money and goods to the poor, and not only began to preach the Gospel himself, but collected round him other helpers like-minded to assist. Just as those who helped our English Reformers were called "Wycliffe's Poor Priests," so Waldo's assistants came to be known as the "Poor Men of Lyons."

Soon Waldo's Testament spread widely through the Waldensian valleys, but as copies had to be written out by hand, and were thus expensive to produce, the young people were taught to commit large portions to memory so as to be able to repeat them in their assemblies when there was no Bible present. Many could repeat complete Gospels without an error. We wonder if even one out of the many readers of this book could do so!

These men hoped to reform the Church, and reform was long overdue. Pride and luxury marked the higher clergy; ignorance and sensuality characterised the lower. But reform was the last thing in the mind of the Pope. He sent instead a company of friars to find out the state of affairs, and take note of who should be burned when opportunity came.

Now for the first time we come across this dread word — Inquisition. It speaks of torture and tears, of suffering and blood. Inside its dark chambers of hellish cruelty we get glimpses of men wholly given over to the devil, and left free to work out their diabolical delights on the sensitive bodies of

men and women by inflicting the most acute and protracted forms of suffering that Satan himself could inspire. But the result of the Inquisition made by Dominic and his fellow-friars was that a "holy war" was preached against the Waldenses. Rewards, both temporal and spiritual, were offered to the ruffian crowd to induce them to join the Pope's army. They were told that the men, women, and children they were called upon to slay were "accursed of God and the Church" — that to shed their blood was to wash away their own sins. The Pope pledged his word that at the moment of death the angels would be in attendance to carry them to Paradise. And for all this they had only to serve a campaign of forty days. Truly the Pope made Paradise cheap. Such were the blasphemous teachings and the bloodthirsty instructions of that which professed to be the Church of Jesus Christ. But enough — here we see Romanism undisguised, Satan's agent and counterfeit of true Christianity. At last the ruffian army marched. The three divisions were led, one by the Arch-bishop of Bordeaux, one by the Abbot of Citeaux, and the third by the Bishop of Puy. And these Churchmen were more keen for blood than even their rascal followers. The city of Beziers was their first objective. Inside its walls many had fled for refuge. The gates were forced and the city was taken. The Abbot, instead of showing mercy as we might have expected, urged on the work of death. "Kill all," he cried, "the Lord will find out His own." Seven thousand of the women and children fled to the churches. Seven thousand dead corpses lay there at night. Fired in various places, the once flourishing city became a vast funeral pile. Not one house was left standing, not one human soul left alive. Sixty thousand human beings had perished. Mohammed himself never perpetrated deeds such as these. He offered "death or the Koran." Rome's cry was "death" without option.

There is a day coming when the Archbishop, the Abbot, and the Bishop will stand before the Judge of all the Earth, and when "He makes inquisition for blood," the blood of Beziers will not be forgotten. And so the work of extermination began, and continued in the various Alpine valleys for nearly five hundred years.

We have selected one example out of many, and that not one of the worst. The record of the sufferings and tortures inflicted on the Waldensian Christians was of such a nature that the details may not be printed in the English language. And these things were done with the full approbation of the Romish Church. The leaders were honoured, the rank and file were rewarded. And these deeds have the approval of the Roman Church to-day, for Rome never changes. What she has done in the past she would do again did opportunity offer and her policy require it. Whatever Rome may profess, we do well to remember what Rome is. But Peter Waldo in translating the New Testament had done a work mighty in its results. The thirteenth century saw but the faint shimmering of the dawn. The fourteenth was destined, in the good providence of God, to see the Book translated into the language of a people that would ultimately carry its message of life and peace, pure and unadulterated, to the utmost ends of the earth. In the fourteenth century, as we have already seen, was born John Wycliffe. In the fourteenth century, for the first time in their history, the people of England had the Book of God in their own language.

03.13. Chapter 13 - Christianity in Early Britain

Chapter 13 Christianity in Early Britain

Romanism in England was not indigenous. It was, if we may say so, an imported religion. Many, if not all, of its dogmas were foreign to the native mind. Compulsion is the first thing Rome has to offer, and it is the last thing to which a Briton is willing to submit. Our country, though apparently under the sway of the Pope from the seventh to the sixteenth century, yet produced many men who refused his supremacy and spurned his teaching. The true light had reached Britain long before Augustine and his forty monks landed in A.D. 597.

Let us go back to the beginning of the two thousand years of our island's authenticated history. We have no reason to be ashamed of the men who then inhabited Britain and became the foundation strata of a strong and virile race. The earliest Roman invader, with his "twelve thousand warriors," was so roughly handled that he had to hie him to his ships before the first wild winds of winter and flee to safer quarters. Learning wisdom by experience, Caesar next year appeared with "thirty thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry, conveyed in eight hundred transports." The size of his new armament was a tribute to the courage of the islanders he was striving in vain to subdue. The danger was great, but, as ever in our island history, with the hour came the man. Looking back over the years, Cassivellaunus is to us now but a name. Emerging out of the darkness on the one side, we see him striking his many bold blows at the haughty Roman, and then he disappears into the darkness again. We know little of the social life of the period, and less of the religious, save that Druidism, with its Egyptian lore, its stern doctrines, its gloomy rites, and its blood-stained altars, held sway over the minds of men. So far, the glorious Gospel of Peace was unknown.

Another hundred years, and again we see through the mists of time another hero letting loose the British lion against the Roman eagles. But Caractacus's nine years' struggle ends in disaster, and we sadly watch the fettered chief, "with his weeping wife and children," transported as captives to Rome. Step by step the natives are forced back. The last refuge of the Druids in Anglesey is invaded, and the heathen worship is extinguished in fire and blood. The "sacrifice to devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20) is coming to an end. The knowledge of the True God will soon find entrance, and to men who have lived in darkness and the shadow of death, the light of life is about to arise. But that, though soon to be, was not just yet. Another startling figure now emerges. Stung to hatred and madness by insult and suffering, the "British Warrior Queen" once again arouses the spirits of this fighting race. Fear and terror marched before: carnage and death accompanied her, and 70,000 Romans lay dead in and around London as the result of that stern campaign. But with a pertinacity worthy of a better cause, Suetonius again gathers his scattered legions, and after the next clash of arms, Boadicea, at the close of a lost battle, perishes by her own hand. And so passes another leader worthy to be remembered — noble men and women all. But we come now to what interests us more than warfare or battles. We catch glimpses, for the first time, of some of those noble Britons who proudly refused to bow to imperial Rome, and see them now bowing in faith and worship at the name of the Lord Jesus. What missionary company first found their way to

our shores? Did they bring the Book? Neither question can be answered, but it is almost certain that Roman Christians would follow Roman conquest. Indeed, many soldiers in the imperial armies were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Another thing we know is that books at this time were comparatively cheap. Bookselling in the first century was a flourishing trade, and Rome then was to literary men what Athens had been before, or what London or Edinburgh is to-day. Publishers employed a staff of girls to copy out, in neat characters, the works of their clients, and so expeditiously was this done that a book of over 200 verses could be sold for about one penny. In later years, as the power of the Empire declined, learning was neglected, and ultimately found a home in the monasteries, where pious men, fleeing — mistakenly perhaps — from the evils of the world, spent their time in copying the Scriptures. Much evil sprang from the monastic system of the Early Church. This is one of the good things: let us not overlook it. It has been estimated that at the close of the second century there would be three millions of Christians and some 60,000 copies of the Scriptures. We may well conclude, then, that the early Christians in Britain were possessed of many copies of the Gospels in the original language, for Greek was still the literary language of the day.

After the coming of the Romans, the next important event in our island history was their departure. Paganism in the Empire came to an end, as we have seen, early in the fourth century. Thus British Christians were free to carry the Gospel to the Picts and Scots in the North, which we know they did. And well it was so, for here the light continued to shine when it had been almost extinguished in the South.

Ninian, who built the first church in Scotland, was born about 360. He laboured in Strathclyde. Then we read of one "Calpurnius, a deacon of the church at Bonavern," near Glasgow. To him was born about 372 a son named Succat. His mother's name was Conchessa, and she must have been a very superior woman, to judge by her son's career. When only sixteen years of age, young Succat, while playing on the shore, was captured by pirates, carried to Ireland and sold as a slave. Here the lessons of his Christian home came back to his mind and led him to faith in Christ. Succat was converted. Some years afterwards he escaped and rejoined his family. But the desire now filled his heart to return to Ireland and preach the Gospel. He did so, and his labours were greatly blessed. From Scotland Ireland first received the Gospel. Two hundred years later Scotland was to receive in return a missionary who did much, not only for Scotland, but for other parts of Europe as well. Columba reached Iona in 563. But before we notice the labours of Columba, we must look at other and less welcome visitors who landed in the South in 449. The departure of the Romans left the nation to struggle unaided against their ancient foes, the Picts of the North and the Scots from Ireland. In an evil moment for his race, Vortigern, the British King, sought help from the Saxon rovers, Hengist and Horsa. With them landed at Ebbsfleet another conqueror, with flaxen hair and blue eyes, and never a shield or spear. But the fair Rowena soon had the British ruler at her feet. The heathen bride was married to the Christian King, who from love for a fair face plunged his kingdom into misery. This much of good we may trace in her tragic story: that through all his troubled life she was true to her husband. And whether her friends or his friends were losers in the many fights, hers was ever the sorrow, for she had relations in both camps. At last she perished with him in the flames that destroyed the fortress in which they had taken refuge after his last lost battle. Poor Rowena! Did she continue to cling to the worship of her father's war gods, or did she open her heart to the sweet influence of the love of Christ? Who shall say. Anyway, in that little

Welsh fortress, firmly facing the greedy flames thirsting for her life, beside the husband of her youth, Rowena bravely met her doom. And so the wild welter of war went on for some sixty years, until nearly every vestige of Christianity had been swept from the land. For it was against Christianity that the rage of the heathen Saxons most fiercely burned. They destroyed the churches, or turned them into idol temples. They slew the clergy. Above all, they burned the Scriptures wherever found, for as of old the Book was the object of men's fiercest hate. The powers of darkness were putting forth another effort to retain the land under the sway of the Prince of Darkness. It reminds us of the tenth persecution, only acted upon a smaller field, but with even more effective results. But just as Diocletian failed, so failed the present reaction in Britain. By many and various agents God continues to work out His purposes of grace, and these go ever forward until the day comes when angelic hosts will chant the song of final victory. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15).

03.14. Chapter 14 - The First English Bible

Chapter 14 The First English Bible

We shall not trouble to trace how the many companies of Saxon invaders quarrelled and fiercely fought among themselves, shaping out the various kingdoms of the Saxon Heptarchy. Let us look rather for the brave men who were willing to risk everything in the endeavour to relight the lamp of truth in eastern Britain. As we have seen, Columba formed a Christian community at Iona in 563. From this centre Evangelists went forth all over the north of Europe. Burgundy, France, and Switzerland were reached by these earnest men. The islands of Orkney, Shetland, and Faroe were not neglected, and we read that even Iceland was visited, though we may well doubt if their frail boats could possibly navigate such dangerous waters.

Kentigern was labouring meantime in Cumberland. Had he received more support from the Iona brethren, England might have been saved from the Romish invasion. Columba died in 597: in 597 Augustine landed in Kent. Here begins the Italian mission: it is going on still. But much of the apparent success of the sixth century has to be greatly discounted if we are to arrive at a true estimate of its real worth, as we shall see later.

Kent was chosen for a landing-place because here reigned the Christian Queen Bertha, with her pagan husband Ethelbert.

Royal ladies fill a large place in life, and just as Rowena, unintentionally perhaps, had brought evil, so Bertha brought good. In the first place she induced the King to receive the missionaries kindly. Next year he professed to be converted, and 10,000 of his people followed. If we are to believe Augustine's report, all were baptized in one day. We hear nothing, alas! of the vital essentials of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. The 3,000 converted on the Day of Pentecost were pricked in their heart and said, "What shall we do?"

Augustine then "converted" the temples by washing them with "holy water," and instead of heathen idols he substituted popish idols, with relics of the saints. Soon, alas! the savage worshippers of Odin saw little difference between the old religion and the new.

We read of one, King Redwald, who had been baptized, but who had "an altar to Christ, and another on which he immolated victims to the devil."

Pope Gregory was overjoyed at the success of the mission. He made Augustine an Archbishop, and wrote to him: "All the bishops of Britain we commit to your charge, that the unlearned may be instructed, the weak be strengthened, and the perverse be corrected by your authority." But the British churches refused the authority of the monk, and very rightly said: "We will have no master but Christ." Conferences were arranged at which the proud Archbishop, "seated upon his throne," tried to bring them to subjection without success. Losing patience, it seems, in face of their devotedness, he threatened that if they would not receive the papal agents as friends they would find them to be enemies.

Augustine died. Ethelbert died. The good Queen Bertha died. Eanbald succeeded to the throne. Soon the priests quarrelled with the new King. Then the King went back to his heathen rites, "and a great portion of his subjects changed their religion with him." The "success" of the Romish mission had been more apparent than real. It is one thing to profess a religion it is quite another to see ourselves as lost sinners needing a Saviour. In the kingdom of Essex the same events took place, and the priests had to flee. Then King Eanbald "became a Christian again." Let us hope that this time it was more than mere profession. Anyway, he hurled down his heathen idols and pagan altars; he forbade sacrifices to Odin, and invited the priests from Essex to take refuge in his kingdom. Very right, too, were the scruples he urged when the young King Edwine of Northumbria sent to demand his sister in marriage "It is wrong," said he, "for a Christian maiden to become the wife of a pagan husband; of one who would neither share with her in the holy sacrament nor kneel down with her to worship the same holy God." The Scriptures say, "Be not unequally yoked together," and this erstwhile pagan King had learned the lesson yet to be learned by many today who profess to call Jesus, Lord.

King Edwine, however, solemnly promised to give every freedom, both to his young bride and to all the Christians who might come with her. So, like her mother before, the royal lady set forth to sojourn among strangers. Like her mother, also, her influence was for good in the end.

Queen Edilburga listened to the preaching of the Bishop Paulinus who had accompanied her, and her gentle spirit was strengthened by the truth of the Gospel. To Edwine the stormy halls of Odin were, as yet, more congenial than the grace and peace of Christ. When his little daughter was born he "gave solemn thanks to Odin," but he also allowed her to "be baptized as a Christian."

We see in King Edwine a true-hearted man in dark days seeking after light. He next called a conference of his ealdormen and pagan priests to discuss the new religion. We must pause a moment here and listen to their interesting conversation. Coifu, the chief priest, spoke first, and spoke well.

"Not one of your whole Court, O King," said he, "has been more attentive to the worship of your gods than I myself, although many have received richer benefits and prospered more than I have done. Now, if these gods had been of any real use, would they not have assisted me? And in the new preaching, I freely confess, I seem to find the truth I sought, for it promises us the gifts of life, salvation, and eternal bliss."

Coifu sits down, and no one seems able to refute his able argument. We look into the dark faces of the priests of Odin and the stern countenances of the Saxon warriors gathered round their King to see who will rise next. An aged councillor, with a faraway look in his eyes, makes answer: "The soul of man, O King, is like a sparrow which, in a dark and dreary night, passes for a moment through the door of your hall. Entering, it is surrounded by light and warmth and is safe from the wintry storm. But after a short spell of brightness and quiet, it flies out through another door into the dark from whence it came. Such, O King, is the life of man: for a moment it is visible, but what was before or what comes after we know not. If this new religion can tell us anything about these mysteries, by all means let us follow it."

After this they went to Godmundham (the house of gods), destroyed the idols, and levelled the buildings with the ground.

We trust Paulinus was able to teach them clearly about the life and immortality brought to light through the Gospel, and we are sure that both he and his fellow-labourers were faithful to the truth they knew, or else they could never have made the good impression they did among the fierce idol worshippers of Saxon England. Edwine used his powerful influence to support the missionary efforts in various directions, and extend his own power as well, for it seems he had ambitious dreams. His rule reached to the sea on the west, and extended north as far as Edwinsburgh, where "he built for himself a great castle on the rock," and there it is until this day. So he went on and prospered. But Edwine's greatness came to a sad end. The fierce pagan King Penda of Mercia, "a man who could no more live without fighting than he could without food," came against him with a great army, and Edwine was slain. On that dark battlefield he laid him down to sleep the sleep no dreams disturb, and men began again to think that the "new religion," which taught peace and goodwill, was not good enough for kings. And so nearly all the land became pagan as before. The gentle Edilburga, with her children, fled to Kent, and Paulinus fled with her. Her brother received her kindly and sorrowfully, and she afterwards retired to a convent. Such was the ending to a lifetime of dramatic events. As a little girl, forty years before, she had no doubt learned the Gospel at her mother's knee. Then she had seen the strange procession of monks that visited her father's Court. She had looked with childish awe and wonder on the figure of the Redeemer exhibited on the missionaries' banners. She had seen her father throw down his blood-stained altars at the call of the true faith, and had witnessed the same experience in her husband's history. But all the good work had not come to an end. We read much in the Book of Acts about the influence of devout women, and we find many similar cases in Saxon history. Edwine's little girl, who had been "baptized as a Christian," grew up to be the wife of another Christian King of Northumbria, and Queen Eanflaed, like her mother and grand-mother before her, used her influence in a right way. But meantime one King after another stepped on to Edwine's vacant throne. We seem to see mere phantoms lifting a crown on to their brows, only to be hurled down in a moment, and they themselves passing to an untimely grave. But what we are most interested in is the sad fact that during these civil commotions it seemed as if a wet sponge had been drawn across the face of the land and had wiped Christianity entirely out of Northumbria. "It was a time that was hateful to all good men." But when heathenism seemed about to close in once more, a young heir to the throne appeared in the person of Oswald, the "Saint King," who had been an exile in Iona. Oswald set himself to recover his people to the faith of the Gospel. The Latin missionaries had fled from the land when Edwine was slain. Oswald, therefore, turned to Iona, and from Iona came the man who has been called the "Apostle of England," St Aidan. For the eight years of Oswald's reign these two men, with their fellow-helpers, worked nobly together. No sanction from Rome was asked for. They had learned the Gospel of Christ, and in His Name they went forth to proclaim it. The King often acted as interpreter to the missionary until Aidan acquired the language.

Aidan's headquarters were at Lindisfarne, a short distance from Bamborough, the royal residence. Here a school was established, and young men trained for the mission field. But the heathen King Penda was again on the march, and after eight short years all Oswald's good work had to be laid down. But the javelin that transfixed him on his last fatal field did not overthrow the work so well done during his life.

Oswy, his younger brother, came to the throne, and once again the old heathen King appeared. Oswy retreated as far north as the Firth of Forth, and offered large gifts. But Penda declared that he came to make an end of Oswy and not to take tribute. In the battle which followed, the last champion of the heathen gods fell on the field, and with the death of Penda the most powerful opponent of Christianity passed from the scene. Never again did the land revert to the heathenism introduced by the Anglo-Saxons.

Two other events we must notice about this time, and then we shall cease to follow the fortunes of the followers of the Book and come back to the Book itself. The first of these events introduces us to another devout woman of the period. The Abbess Hilda was of the royal house of Edwine, who was her grand-uncle. She had been baptized when a girl of thirteen, and was one of the educated women of the time who gave themselves and their possessions to the cause of the Gospel. With the help of Aidan she had founded a monastery and school at Whitby, and from it many missionaries went forth not only through Northumbria but as far south as Essex. Here lived Caedmon, who has been called the father of English poetry. His verse had this recommendation, that it put the words of Scripture in simple language before the people. Here is a sample.

03.15. Chapter 15 - CAEDMON'S POEM

CAEDMON'S POEM

"Go thou, with utmost haste, Abraham, journeying set thy steps, and with thee lead thine own child. Thou shalt Isaac to me sacrifice, thy son, thyself as an offering, after thou mountest the steep downs (the ring of the high land which I from hence will show thee) up with thine own feet: there thou shalt prepare a pile, a bale-fire for thy child, and thyself sacrifice thy son, with the sword's edge, and then with swart flame burn the beloved's body, and offer it to me as a gift."

Soon the controversy between the Romish mission and the Evangelicals became acute. It was no longer merely the time of keeping Easter or the shape of the tonsure that was at issue. What Rome demanded now was subjection to the fiction of the "Supremacy of Peter," or in other words, to the authority of the Pope, apostolic succession, and the adoption of all her other rites and ceremonies. So King Oswy summoned the famous "Synod of Whitby" in 664 to settle their differences. Colman of Lindisfarne, successor to Aidan, with Hilda and others, supported the cause of the Gospel. They held that every Christian ought to be a preacher according to his ability. The Romish doctors declared that Peter was the "prince of the Apostles," that all authority must come from him, and that to him all must submit. We have met this word — submit — before. It is Rome's only argument. Now King Oswy had married the "little girl who had been baptized as a Christian," and, unfortunately, Queen Eanflaed was in the Roman interest. She persuaded her husband to submit. He submitted and declared himself on the side of the Pope. Colman and the others refused. Leaving their all in Lindisfarne they went back to Scotland, and the "Romans" took possession.

We may sum up in a few words the results of the last hundred years by saying that Scottish missionaries Christianised England. Augustine and his followers Romanised it.

We come now to the second event we purposed to notice, and that is the birth of Baeda, or the Venerable Bede, as he came to be called later in life. And this brings us back to the Book, for Bede was the first who endeavoured to translate a portion of Scripture into the native tongue. He had spent his life in the monastery of Jarrow, and was one of the most accomplished men of the age. Six hundred scholars attended his lectures, and his last days were occupied in translating the Gospel of John. Some say he died when he had reached the ninth verse of chapter six, others that he completed the book; then, with the words "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost" on his lips, passed to his rest. Anyhow, we know that he was the first Englishman who really set himself to this good work.

Let us now, in a single step, pass to the year 848, when Alfred the Great was born. In him we again find a man fitted for the great work that lay before him. Just as the heathen Anglo-Saxons in the fifth century swept away nearly every vestige of Christianity, so the Danish Invasion seemed to threaten a like result in the ninth. It was the last effort of the Prince of Darkness to heathenise England and it failed. Everywhere the Scriptures were destroyed. Great monasteries, such as

Croyland and Peterborough, with all their books, treasures, and manuscripts, were given to the flames, while hundreds of priests were massacred in cold blood. But Alfred contended unflinchingly and successfully with all his foes. He not only delivered his kingdom from foreign invasion, but he set himself to rule his subjects in the fear of God. Not content with having learned men among the clergy, he endeavoured to teach the people also to read, and many of the nobles, encouraged by his example, were to be seen conning their alphabet. He founded schools, both for English and Latin, and books of various kinds were translated into the language of the people. But valuable as all these things were, we may well conclude that his greatest work was the translation of some parts of the Bible. He is said to have died while engaged on an English version of the Psalms.

Let us now pass on to the year 1324. Many things have taken place in that long interval. One of these things has been the steadily rising power of the popes, who were seeking to bring all the nations of Europe under their sway, and drain the wealth of the people into the coffers of the Church. Another has been the Norman Conquest, and with it has come a race of Kings who offered unvarying opposition to papal encroachments. When Gregory VII. wrote to Norman William to "do him fealty" for the realm of England, the King replied, "Fealty I have never willed to do to thee, neither do I will to do it now." It required a strong man to speak thus to the greatest of the popes, but William was strong. The people of England, too, were beginning to resent the frequent visits of Roman tax-gatherers. One such was told, "If you stay three days longer, you and your company shall be cut to pieces." A papal legate was hunted out of Oxford amid cries of "Usurer" and "Simoniac." "Where is the gaper for money who enriches foreigners with our spoils?" And so legate Otho "is fain to put off his official robes and escape in the night as best he may." An anti-Roman spirit was rising in the nation, and even bishops of the Church, such as Robert Grosseteste, were among the leaders. When two friars came from Rome to demand from him 6,000 merks, he refused to accede to their extortionate demands. In the end the Pope excommunicated the bishop, and the bishop excommunicated the Pope. Then the bishop appealed from the tribunal of the Pope to the tribunal of Christ. "After which he troubled himself no more about the matter, but died quietly in his bed."

Such a man was no unworthy forerunner to John Wycliffe, who may well be called the "Morning Star of the Reformation." Seventy years after Grosseteste died, Wycliffe was born. To him belongs the honour of producing the first complete translation of the Bible into our language. To Rome belongs the shame of ordering — after that noble work was issued — that "all who read the Scriptures in their mother tongue shall forfeit lands, cattle, life, and goods from their heirs forever." Rome's vengeance stayed not even at death. She dared to prejudge the cause of her victims and consign their souls to Satan. And now we reach the time when we can look into the quiet little study at Lutterworth and see Wycliffe and his helpers busy in penning the Words of Life in language understandable by the people. Busy and willing must have been the many hands at work, for it requires sixty hours even to read through the Bible. How many it would take to write it we do not know. Earnest and faithful, too, must have been these helpers, for Rome was determined the people should not read the Book, and soon was coming that dreadful statute condemning men and women to the flames for daring to read the Word of God. But the good work went on. Neither the labour of production nor the cost of purchase hindered it. Latin had been a dead language in Europe since the break up of the Empire, but all MSS. of the Scriptures had

been copied in that language ever since Jerome's Latin Vulgate had been issued nearly eight centuries before. Now, clothed in the language of the people, it came home to the hearts of the people. Men were so eager for the Words of Life that they risked their lives to procure them. Soon it could be said that every third person in England was a Lollard.

Here is a sample of Wycliffe's translation. Can you read it?

"Yan whan He was borne in bethleem of Jude, in ye dais of Herod kinge: Se ye maistres come from ye est to jerusalem, and saiden, Where is he yat is born ye kinge of Jues, For whi we sen his sterre in ye est and we come to adore him: And Herod ye kinge whan he herd yis is greteliche troubled, and al ierlm wiy hi. And he gadred alle princes of prestes and maisters of ye folk, and asked of hem where yt crist was borne: And hy saide to him In bethleem of Jude: For so is it written yom ye prophete. And you bethleem lond of jude you nart nouzt lest in ye princes of Jude: For of ye schal corn out aduk yat gouerney mi puple of isrl." The Pope summoned Wycliffe to Rome to answer for his errors, but Wycliffe replied by "giving the Pope some good advice." With the completion of his English Bible, Wycliffe's work was done. He was stricken down with paralysis on the last Lord's Day of 1384, and on 31st December passed home to his reward.

Let us take another short step, this time of forty years only, and again we are back at Lutterworth. Is it a public holiday, or have all these churchmen come out to do honour to the memory of Wycliffe? Archbishop Chichele is here, dressed up in all the gaudy show of Romish pomp, with many other priests and bishops as well. And all are marching to the grave of Wycliffe, but, alas! it is not to do honour to the Reformer. They have come to burn his bones. And yet may it not be that Rome, in basely desecrating the grave of the dead, has done him more honour than she intended. She was unable to reply to him when in life. She now shows her fear of his work by revenging herself on his body when dead. Many of the inhabitants of the village would be able to remember the good old man who had counselled them, and preached to them, and pointed them to the One Way of Salvation. Now they are silent but not indifferent witnesses to the ceremony of to-day. A bonfire is lighted near the bridge, the grave forced open, and with childish spite the bones are flung into the fire, burned to ashes, and the ashes cast into the river. The spectators that day received a lesson as to what Rome is. But Wycliffe had done a work Romish intolerance, spite of its utmost efforts, has never since been able to undo. She hates, and also fears, an Open Bible. He was a sage counsellor who said to the priests later, when Tyndale's printed Testament appeared, "We must get rid of printing, or printing will get rid of us." So far Rome has not "got rid of printing," but in every place where the Bible is read and believed men are "getting rid of Rome." And to-day there are more Bibles than ever before. It has been estimated, from the records of the three great Bible Societies, that over six hundred millions of Bibles have been produced since the art of printing was discovered. The Bible has been translated into over eight hundred different languages, and in embossed printing it can be read even by the blind. To all it brings the true light; to all it offers life and salvation through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

We may well say with the Psalmist, "The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

THANK GOD FOR THE BIBLE, THE BEST BOOK OF ALL.

03.16. Chapter 16 - Bibliography

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