

Notes on Matthew's Gospel

James McBroom.

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No. 1. From Birth to Baptism.

In the Gospel of Matthew there are recorded some of our Lord's longest discourses. The first of these (Matt. 5-7) fills a peculiar place. We would endeavour to lay before the reader the teaching of that discourse in its moral order and note at the same time the dispensational setting of it, and to whom the Speaker addresses Himself. But we must first learn something of the Teacher; whence He came, what are His credentials, and wherein lies His right to a kingdom.

"Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." Two of the greatest names in the nation's history are here brought together and linked with His, who is the first and the last. He is the true Solomon who will bring in righteousness and peace: but as all must be brought to pass on the ground of death, He is the true Isaac who in resurrection will bring in everlasting delight.

Forty-two generations are given from Abraham to the Messiah which are divided into three groups of fourteen. The first of these bridges the history from Gen. 12 to the Books of Samuel. There we get a full account of the origin and development of that people in whose history the being and character of God are remarkably displayed. We are taken through the Patriarchal age to the day of David the king. He is the great figure in the day of the nation's prosperity and the outstanding type of Him in whom all the nation's hopes centre.

The second part covers the decline and fall of Israel. It began in her brightest day and extends to the waning of her glory and ends with the break up of the kingdom in the time of Zedekiah. The splendour of Solomon's reign was the brightest point in the nation's history. His father had made the name of Israel to be feared and respected everywhere. Then the decline set in, and kingdom glory gave way to prophetic testimony, when men like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, etc., etc. — the grandest figures in history — did their service. The sons of Aaron fulfilled their courses also in putting incense before Jehovah and whole burnt-offerings upon His altar. But, alas! Israel's conduct went from bad to worse, until all had to go. The period which had begun with such rich promise in the building of the Temple, finished with its destruction, and along with it the break up of the kingdom, and Lo-ammi, "not My people," written upon the nation.

Of the third part of the history indicated in these genealogies, little is recorded on the pages of inspiration. God graciously opened the way for the return of a remnant of the people through Cyrus, the Gentile monarch, and a bright picture of revival is seen in their return to the city, temple, and worship of Jehovah. But in process of time all tended to failure, and we learn from the prophets of that period that, however faithful the remnant might be that was maintained, the nation itself was made to pass through the hands of both Persia and Greece, until when the New Testament opens it is found under the iron yoke of Rome.

In verses 18-25, mystery, dignity, simplicity, and beauty are combined. At a time when the House of David had sunk into obscurity and poverty, Heaven began to move in relation to the promises. If on the inner and most sacred side all manner of profane scrutiny is forbidden, the surroundings on the other are spread out in such a way that the heart is held under their influence in worship and adoration. The stable and the manger are lighted with a glory far surpassing thought, and exalted for all time beyond the most princely palace. The Eternal One had become Man and is here presented as the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham. He did not come in the splendour of Solomon, nor with myriads of Seraphic beings in His train. He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant; He came to serve.

It is interesting to see that where Christ is presented definitely in relation to Israel, Gentiles are the first to seek Him. There is a contrast to this in Luke's Gospel. He is presented there as Son of Man in relation to the human race, but the first two chapters present a beautiful picture of the faithful remnant of the Jews. Ruth and Rahab, two of the four women named in the genealogy in this Gospel, were Gentiles, and in Luke 2 certain Gentiles from the East come seeking Him who is born King of the Jews.

Heaven and earth were brought together in the birth of Christ in view of the accomplishment of Divine purpose and the fulfilment of the Scriptures, but the lower regions were active at that moment as well. Ps. 40: 6-8; Heb. 10: 5-9, with John 1: 14, record the movements in the eternal world, while Luke and Matthew present the earthward side. The harmony of the higher intelligences is voiced in Luke 2: 11, but here the dragon of Rev. 12 is active, working through Herod the usurper, for the destruction of the young Child's life. So Joseph is instructed to take Him and His mother into Egypt, that that might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." God's intention was that the nation's history should be taken up in the Lord's own Person from its commencement in Egypt and carried through until its consummation in glory: evil is thus compelled to serve God in the working out on His will.

The interest of the chapter seems to centre in two indoor scenes: one where there was alarm and dread combined with craft and violence; the other where there was peace and joy. The first was an

exposure for the leaders of the Jews. Had their moral sensibilities not been entirely dead they would have been ashamed that the Magi had come from a distant land to enquire for the King while they had to be awakened to an interest in His advent by Herod the usurper. They use the Scriptures and correctly say where Messiah was to be born, but though they were the people that this great event most directly concerned they were the least interested of all.

At the other meeting we have Christ among the Gentiles, "the hope of glory." It is sweet to see that He is the Object of the affections of these men in an atmosphere of peace and joy. It speaks of a time when the kings of Sheba and Seba shall render tribute.... And He shall live and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba (Ps. 72). Before that time comes, the church is called in as the heavenly company to witness to the thoughts, purposes and ways of God, and every instructed Christian knows something of the excellencies, beauties and glories of Christ, and they delight to pour out their spiritual treasures at His feet. The gifts of these wise men were symbolical, and we see in them something of the hidden glories both of His Person and work. Gold witnesses to the Divine and eternal glory that was there; the frankincense of all those precious human graces so blessedly combined with the Divine of which the Father could take account; while myrrh — a plant which is said to yield its fragrance when crushed — tells of that which came out by suffering and death at the Cross.

The Spirit takes occasion of the awful massacre of the children by Herod to allude to the heartrending distress which was Israel's when many were bound in chains at Ramah and carried into Babylon (Jeremiah 40). In that portion which belonged to Benjamin there had once more been deep distress. It is interesting to see in the same prophet that the future unprecedented trouble the nation is yet to pass through is called the time of *Jacob's* trouble, the father's name and not the mother's being used in this case as taking in the whole twelve tribes. The similarity of the words of verses 19-21 to Ex. 4: 19, though not a quotation, is remarkable. Moses was raised up for the deliverance of Jehovah's people from bondage: Jesus came to save His people from their sins, to begin a new order, to destroy Satan's power and the world's system; He was the full revelation of God. Joseph acted in simple obedience but without much intelligence. Mary, who had before manifested the most lively faith combined with obedience, is the subject of angelic care, but the Child, who is mentioned nine times in the chapter, is the centre around which everything must revolve.

Matthew 3 and Matthew 4: 1-11 go together. Here two of the outstanding events in the history of Immanuel come before us, both of which connect with the transition from His private to His public life. His birth and the movement in the heavens connected therewith we have already seen; here it is His baptism and temptation. The interval between birth and the baptism was of very great importance, though little of what occurred is recorded. What happened during those silent years prevented defeat of God's purposes and provided glory to God with regard to the whole race. Man's history from Eden had been failure in man, triumph for Satan, and apparent defeat for the Creator, but now things are reversed. By this Man's obedience Satan is defeated and Heaven is delighted. If there was to be the recovery and blessing of fallen men, the Cross must be met with all its woe; about that there could be no question, but that in no wise touches the truth that Jesus fully glorified God in the path of a man in the world. Two things came out during the years of His ministry, namely, God was revealed to men in Him and in Him God found His full delight in a man. The One who was revealing God to men was at the same time perfectly setting forth man to God. The latter *only* could be true during those thirty years.

In the light of redemption we can see God's name and throne covered with glory in the blessing of sinful men, but during those thirty years God was glorified in Man in flesh and blood upon the earth. We may catch glimpses of the life of Jesus during that time as we read the prophetic description of it in Ps. 16, or Isa. 53: 2, but the silence of the New Testament is that which leads the devout heart to adore.

What a heaven must the humble home at Nazareth have been during that time!

John came preaching repentance, the kingdom of heaven, and Christ. Again Heaven puts things in movement, but this time it is to assert itself in the souls of men and women. Repentance, confession, and baptism, owning the claims of God in deep self-abasement was proof of a real work of God accompanying the labours of this distinguished servant. He was a preacher of the type of Elijah and came from the desert, his ministry was of a searching nature, the necessity for it being the state of the people.

The Branch of Jehovah having come the axe is at the root of the trees. All man's greatness must be brought down because of this glorious Person. Three kinds of baptism are mentioned: water, the Spirit, and fire. John was doing the first, the other two would be the work of the King Himself. The baptism of the Spirit refers to the future, to be fulfilled when the believing remnant of the Jews shall constitute the nucleus of the nation and enter into blessing; then shall the fire of His judgment purify His threshing floor. Meantime we have a present aspect of the baptism of the Spirit in the church (Acts 2), which may be viewed provisionally as the garner.

His coming to John for baptism calls for attention, for around it circles some important principles. While mercy is in evidence among the people, grace and righteousness are brought into evidence in Christ. The more we think of Him and who He is, the more amazing does His condescension appear to us, while the grace displayed in His seeking baptism at the hands of His servant was in the circumstances morally beautiful. Having taken a place in the creation, for the working out of all moral questions, and the establishment of the Divine glory, He identified Himself with the work of grace in others. This principle of identification we have already seen in a dispensational way (Matthew 2: 14-15), here it is association with God's work in others.

But deeper things come out here, indeed some of the grandest things in Holy Writ come before us. We behold Him the true Meat Offering of Lev. 2, anointed with the Holy Ghost, and hear with reverence the Father from the opened heavens saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I have found My delight." He is the Son in Manhood for the express purpose that through His death others might be brought into this holy relationship and share with Him the Father's love. A Man was here on earth sealed by the Father, setting before us what the Christian's place is to-day. "In four ways He sets forth in Himself the pattern of the place He would set us in by redemption: Heaven opened, the Holy Ghost given to abide, Sonship, and man's place in perfect Divine favour (the object of God's delight)"

(J. A. T.).

Sonship to David and Abraham (Matthew 1: 1) speaks of what is official, relating to the glory of the throne and the security of the promises. The Virgin's Son of Matthew 1: 21, like the woman's Seed of Gen. 3, describes Him in relation to the human race, but the Father's voice proclaims Him as His beloved Son, the object of His own peculiar delight.

Bethlehem for Him involved Calvary, but between these two came out what shall ever remain the richest treasures of eternity. He is seen as the most accessible of men, but ever sustaining Divine dignity; speaking in simplest words but unfolding Divine mysteries; living in the company of the simplest of men, yet far beyond earth's greatest. This was, as it should be, when God was manifest in flesh.

No. 2. The Temptation of our Lord.

In Matthew 4 we reach the scene of our Lord's temptation. The One born King must first be

subject; His right to rule is to be demonstrated by His delight to obey; He whose prerogative it is to command takes first the place of a servant. If God is to have the redeemed creation in abiding stability, every part of which will be beyond taint of sin or shadow of imperfection, the One who shall hold it together must be tested. The beginning and guarantee of that new creation is Christ, but for Him there must be testing, and that in a way no other could ever know.

Fallen man lives in a world which is the sphere of Satan's rule, but He who lives with the Father has to be led into the wilderness to meet the tempter. The three recorded tests doubtless correspond to all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2: 16) in the way of pleasure, pride and glory. They touch the Lord in a threefold way as Man, Messiah and Son of Man.

If, as we have seen, the going to Egypt had identification with Israel in view, this first temptation goes back to Eden in view of the history of man. There was no prohibition here as in Adam's case, a point which brings out the perfect obedience of the Lord. The first man had failed in the best circumstances in which he could be placed, the abundance of God's creation was within his reach; but with the second Man there was perfect devotedness in the worst extremity. He was in the wilderness, had fasted forty days, and was an hungered. "Satisfy Your hunger, use Your power for Your own comfort," said the tempter. The Lord replied from Deuteronomy. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

The holy city and the temple referred to in the second attack brought into view His royal rights in Israel. For Him, according to God's will, they were to be reached through a path of suffering and taken up by redemption. This attack was more impudent, with an endeavour to support it with a text of Scripture. The Lord again replied from Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The distinction between miracles and magic should be noted. Our Lord and His disciples wrought the former and exposed the latter. In Acts 8 a man is seen using magic arts and spoken of as the power of God, and one of a like class is called a son of the Devil in Acts 13. It was the same with Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses. As Herod looked for some display of that kind, some sensational feat (Luke 23: 8), so here the Devil suggests that character of things.

The last test was an offer of worldly power, and was a challenge to the Lord's place of universal sway in the creation. He could have it by submission to the Devil. It was, however, far beneath what God had in store for Him, as we see in another mountain scene in this Gospel (Matt. 17). The transfiguration displays His glory in the creation when for the glory of God He shall control it all. Nothing would He take from the Tempter. He who received the cup of suffering from the Father, doing His will in drinking it, will also take the answer to that sorrow in glory from the same hands. At that moment the Lord stood the appointed Heir of all things, and the whole hierarchy of the heavens, whether thrones, lordships, principalities or authorities, were for Him. Satan sought proofs of His Sonship by outward works of display; the Lord gave full proof of the same by obedience to the WORD.

But we lose much if we miss the important lesson here, namely, that the enemy's recorded suggestions cover the range of his resources and pervade the whole complicated course of man's life upon the earth. It shows the interweaving of good and evil, and brings out the need of the Incarnation. It was necessary that One should **enter** the conflict who was able to disentangle the one from the other and put each in its place for eternity. In this way these temptations speak of whatever surrounded the Lord, and are still to be resisted by His saints in the power of God's Holy Word.

He stood in need of what He had power to supply. The thrust appeared innocent. Make use of personal ability for personal ends. One feels how poorly we can catch the drift of such a suggestion.

This has been practised to such an extent that not to do so would put one, in the eyes of his fellowmen, in the place of a madman. It is the predominating sin which has made the world what it is, and is the proof that when man lost God he became self-centred. The Lord Jesus Christ showed that life does not consist merely in what it can get or in doing for oneself, but in what it can give and what it can do for others. "Man shall not live by bread alone, . . ." See Matt. 6: 19-20; Luke 12: 29-31.

The enemy had not met this before, hence the new device. If that is your idea it is no good in this world; no one will be able to understand or appreciate such a life. You may, however, arrest attention by some wonderful achievement that no one has heard of before: you may direct attention to yourself in such a way that all will marvel. "Cast thyself down." To do this might seem complete abandoning of Himself to God, in reality it was distrust — tempting God; for it meant that an outward act was needed to demonstrate His care. No true confidence in God calls for that. Instead there is an inward peaceful trust. See John 6: 30; John 7: 3-5, and the Lord's answer quoted from Deut. 6.

But there is still need of submitting, as men say, to reason. He had come to recover the world for God. There could not be success on the lines adopted. Such a life could neither be understood nor appreciated. It is no use attempting it. If you will be advised by me I can put you in the way of success; in fact, if you commit yourself to me I will guarantee the whole. "All these things" — "the kingdoms of the world and their "lazy" — all are yours "if, falling down, Thou wilt do me homage." Again from Deut. 6 come the words "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." He had not come to be a patriot or link Himself with creature schemes for putting things right. How often His followers lose their true glory by accepting some favour from the world. The key to the whole position is in the hands of every simple saint who understands the distinction between the faith system, or the world of God's purpose, and this poor world and its efforts, which is dominated by the Devil.

The conflict over, Satan disappears, and angels come and minister unto Him. The public ministry of the Lord according to Matthew now begins, though a good deal had been going on before. (See John 1-4) John is imprisoned for reasons stated later (Matt. 14), and Jesus leaves Nazareth for Capernaum. Having bound the strong man He goes forth to spoil his goods in His royal rights as David's Son and His irresistible power as Immanuel.

Note: His personal appearance was the crowning test to man in his responsibility. His acceptance or rejection stood for a time an undecided point. To understand the development of truth in Matthew this must be kept in mind. He stood before them as the Minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and all His words and works had the setting up of the kingdom in view. We who live in the full light can go back from the moment of His rejection and see that all He was doing had also the full purpose of God in view. This could not be otherwise.

He had come from heaven to die, and though necessarily veiled, that death may be seen bearing upon His spirit before Israel's decision had come fully out. See Matt. 9: 15-17, where His words anticipate the cross and involve Paul's gospel and the new creation.

Connected with this is the use of the term kingdom of heaven. John began with it, the Lord used it Himself, and so also the twelve apostles. It was a term suited to cover both periods, but in its full meaning stands proper to the day of His session at the right hand of God. It was used to designate the blessing then offered in fulfilment of prophecy. From chapter 13 the kingdom is set forth in mystery with the King in heaven, the result of Israel's rejection of Him, and His consequent death, resurrection and ascension.

No. 3. The Master's Words.

The greatness of the Person of the Lord as He is presented in Matt. 1-4 prepares us for the teaching of Matt. 5-7. Matt. 4: 23-25 shows the immediate connection of the Sermon on the Mount with what went before. His fame had gone throughout all Syria and the whole country had been stirred, and as the King He took occasion to unfold to His subjects in the hearing of the people the word of God for the moment.

Here He is teaching, and all that He teaches is new. The history of the human race had been that of a downward course, but now we have a new beginning, and an immeasurable gap lay between Christ and the whole race. "The first man was out of earth, made of dust; the second man is out of heaven," hence the teaching must be altogether new. And this the people felt when they said, "Never man spake like this man." If the men of God of previous ages can only stand out in contrast to Him, how painful is the attempt in these modern times to compare certain philosophers and leaders of heathen nations who were mixed up with all manner of uncleanness with Him. Nor is it true as some teach that He merely attained a height towards which others had striven, that as Moses or David were each head and shoulders above their generation, so He went beyond them and gained the height. The fallacy of all this is seen when we remember that "He that came from above is above all," and what He testified He had seen and heard. The language of this Person would have been blasphemy on the lips of any other man.

The discourse supposes regeneration in those addressed and the new relationship which redemption brings. "Having sat down *His disciples came* to Him and having opened His mouth He taught *them*." Because it is not understood that the Lord was addressing those in relationship with Himself as subjects of grace, it is assumed that these moral traits can be produced by man in the flesh, apart from the new nature which is implanted at new birth, and the whole truth of the gospel set aside. It is this that accounts for the fact that many admire the Sermon on the Mount who reject the truth of the gospel as set forth in the New Testament, and it demonstrates the truth that man wants to be or do something to merit God's favour but will not tolerate the idea of being nothing and God everything.

The Lord's teaching had its own divine origin and character and could neither compare with nor link on with any other. It was not a new law nor indeed a moral code in the true sense of that word. It was a Person, the living Word, set before men in the spoken word, and a new life, His own life, to be reproduced in His disciples through grace and the power of the Holy Ghost. The grand contrast lies in the fact that this discourse begins with that which all others set out to reach, namely, suitability for God. He had before this time insisted that man must be born again, and that that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3: 6), and in this very discourse He shows the working of each nature as true to law. "Do men gather a bunch of grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruit, but the worthless tree produces bad fruit" (Matt. 7: 16-20. See also Matt. 15: 13).

The opening verses describe a class of moral virtues different from every other system of teaching that men followed. The seven virtues in verses 3-9 are not what men call the heroic virtues, but in the sight of God they are blessed. There is little room in the schools of philosophy for the poor in spirit and for those that mourn. These blessed things are the reproduction of the life and character of Christ in His people in a world where all is out of gear as the result of man's departure from God.

"*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.*" Trust in the hand of Omnipotence and dependence upon God is a law in the sphere of creature obligation. "To this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at my word." This draws down the complacency of God in a world of man's self-confident boasting. The bearing of this upon us today

may be seen by comparing Jer. 45. In the crisis preceding the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian, the word of God through Jeremiah to his servant was, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for behold I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord." We are today nearing a greater judgment; "Behold, the Lord cometh . . . to execute judgment" (Jude 14). We may well take heed to such words. The promise attached to the state of soul in this first beatitude would cover all the virtues mentioned, "Theirs is the kingdom of the heavens."

"Blessed they that mourn for they shall be comforted." This is apt to be misunderstood, particularly at a time like the present when the hunt for pleasure and fashion is engaging the mass of men. There were those who sighed and cried in Ezekiel's time for the abominations done at Jerusalem, and we live in the midst of a godless and suicidal infatuation which calls for the judgment of God. Such a state of things calls for mourning on the part of those that know God. Every divinely taught heart knows that the time of the Bridegroom's absence is the mourning time (Matt. 9), but like Mary of old has divine comfort even now (John 20). To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning.

"Blessed the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Meekness contrasts with the bold boasting of man, but is far from being a sign of weakness. It was no sign of weakness in Abram when he yielded up his right to Lot, as may be seen from his exploits in the following chapter. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth, but there was none so valiant as he. "The meek shall inherit the earth." The land for the people is the cry to-day, and large estates are changing hands constantly. The time is near when in bold apostasy "the wilful king" shall divide the land among his favourites for gain (Daniel 11: 39). But at that time the Lamb will take possession and overthrow every opposer. While we wait of that day it is well to be able to say, Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup (Ps. 16).

"Blessed they which hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." This is the central trait of the seven, and it seems to bind them all together like the central light on the candlestick. Do we know what this means? David cried, "As the hart panteth after the water-brook so panteth my soul after God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." No person ever sought the Lord and was disappointed, and no amount of this world's goods can ever satisfy the heart that has fed upon the bread of God. A Jewish Rabbi when urged to accept a lucrative situation and to fix his settlement in a place where there was no synagogue, is said to have resisted the temptation by the recollection of the words "The law of thy mouth is better to me than gold or silver" (Ps. 119: 72).

"Blessed the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." How God-like is man when seen in this character. What bright examples are seen in Joseph among his brethren and David when he had Saul in his power but would not smite him. Elisha also when he led the blinded Syrian soldiers to Samaria, and when the King of Israel said, "Shall I smite them?" "Thou shalt not smite them, set bread and water before them," was the answer of the man of God. Mercy is a quality which so affects man that his beast gets the benefit of it. It springs from an inward sympathy with God. In mercy He is sovereign, great, plenteous and tender.

"Blessed the pure in heart for they shall see God." The same lips describe the human heart in its sinfulness, but by His power He can change it from being hard and stony and write His laws upon it, that in boundless grace it might be like His own. It is said of the elders of Israel that they saw God and did eat and drink. Surely it is blessed to behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in His Temple. Have we ever beheld the King in His beauty? Can we say, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour"? If so we can look forward to the time when His servants shall serve Him and shall see His face (Rev. 21). Meantime there is a wholesome word for us, "Pursue peace with all, and holiness without which no

man shall see the Lord."

"Blessed the peace-makers for they shall be called the sons of God." This is not peace at any price. The wisdom that cometh from above is "first pure and then peaceable." This feature supposes all the others, for only those who are righteous, meek and merciful are able to discriminate in moral and spiritual matters in such a way as to lead to peace. This demands much spiritual energy, combining and putting into practice all the other traits mentioned. They that do such thing are called the sons of God. They exhibit the moral features of a generation that has sprung from God. They show themselves the sons of their Father (verse 45).

Verses 10-16 show the submission of heart which accompanies the foregoing. Suffering whether for the kingdom or the King was to be esteemed a favour, and it would have its bearing both on the present and the future. Future reward it ensured to them, but it also gave the present distinction of being in the ranks of heaven's most distinguished witnesses on earth, and set them in the line of divine testimony. They were the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Notwithstanding the persecution and hatred of men they were to be a force for good, able to meet and counteract in divine power the corruption that is in the world through lust, and shed a beneficent influence on all around them.

Continuing this great discourse, the Lord said, *"Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets; I am not come to make void but to fulfil."* The discourse goes on to show who were the transgressors here, and becomes a tremendous exposure of the leaders of the Jews, both in their teaching and practice. The traditions of the Rabbis are brought under the searchlight of Immanuel the King. For such was He who at that moment stood before them as the embodiment of all that God's ways and words had pointed on to and shadowed forth. Every claim of God put forth in the law met its answer in Him. Nothing that belonged to the relationship He had entered into but was perfectly carried out. This incidentally shows the difference between Him and the Adamic race. The perfect law of God which was His delight became a ministry of condemnation and death to everyone else.

The point, however, was not what He did but what He was. He presents Himself here as filling up in His Person all that the typical system and the law presumed, and in that way He is seen as the embodiment of all that the law and the prophets contained, He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. God's end in it was Christ: He is the essential and underlying spirit of it all. He is indeed the filling out of all Scripture. Speaking of this He said, "They are they which testify of Me." And again, "Beginning at Moses and the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." A system had been sketched out in previous days which is now permeated with life; the kingdom, covenant, house, temple, all are made good in Him.

Has the reader ever pondered this? Christ stands before us in the Gospels as the ultimate end towards which all time, all nature, all history hastened. The whole march of events down through the ages, with every movement of divine testimony in the progress of revelation, had Him as their goal. He was bound in the very nature of things to be the Pivot around which everything in the ways and purpose of God revolved, and every movement in the Godhead, whether creation, providence or government, had Him in view.

Note, too, His authority. If it is the glory of other teachers to hide behind their theme, not so with Him. He brings His Person to the front, and that without apology, in the most simple and unaffected way. He spake with authority without stopping to say why, and commanded without declaring His right. He teaches in a way altogether different from others, penetrating to the heart of things in a way that carried conviction and exposed the accredited teachers of the day. While ever honouring and fulfilling Holy Scripture, He cites no previous authority for what He says: He taught them as One

having authority and not as the scribes.

We may now pass on more rapidly till we reach the end of the chapter. In verses 21 to 37 the human heart is laid bare, and evil is traced back from the overt act to the motive which gave it birth, and with this the adjusting of existing relationships in regard to earth and heaven, time and eternity. Violence (verse 21) and corruption (verse 27) are mentioned only to be traced to the heart of man, however cultivated, and then (verses 29, 30) not only is the spring of evil in man traced to its source, but the cause or opportunity of it must be cut off. (See Col. 3: 5, 8, 9.) The sacred character of human life; the sanctity of marriage; the authority of God in regard to the taking of oaths and its bearing on their conversation, all of which connect with the virtues mentioned at the beginning of the sermon, would indeed manifest the fact that His followers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is from the old corrupt tree of fallen human nature that these evil things spring; introduce the new life, and instead of the works of the flesh there are love, joy, peace, long-suffering: against which there is no law.

The end of the chapter fits in with the beginning in moral beauty. If at the opening it is character, at the close it is conduct. The standard of all practice is to be according to the Father, who makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust. The blessed God is above all the strife and evil of man, and our adorable Lord is seen here the expression of it all, and He desires that His followers should be the same. If such practice is called for from the earthly people, what shall we say about those who are blest with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ? What a triumph for God that there should be in this world a class so formed in their inner being after Christ as to be expressive of Himself! A class that love their enemies and bless those who curse and do good to those who hate them, and pray for those who insult and persecute them, that they are known as the sons of their Father in heaven. Under the teaching of the Holy Ghost this becomes one of the grandest chapters in the whole Bible.

A few words are necessary here in connection with the dispensational character of this discourse and the class of people the Lord has in view.

It was His early ministry given before His definite rejection by His people, the Jews, and it gives those to whom it is addressed association with Himself in that rejection that was becoming more and more apparent every day, and describes a state of things which ran on to the fall of Jerusalem late in the Apostolic age. Before the gospel as we have it could come out in its fulness, His ministry, involving death, resurrection and ascension, had to be completed. Christianity proper, which gives a much higher range of blessing, and opens out the truth of part with Christ in the glory, could not be given yet. This commenced with the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and goes on right through the Spirit's day till the removal of the church to heaven as given in 1 Thess. 4: 13-18. The church formed at Pentecost came into her place at the time of the suspension of divine testimony among the Jews. She is the vessel of God's counsels and witness of a new heavenly testimony during the time of that suspension; and her translation to heaven will be the signal for the renewal of divine dealings with the Jews in view of the advent of the King. In this way all is seen to work out in perfect harmony, and the order and beauty of God's ways fill the believing heart with delight. When the church has been translated to heaven, a company will be converted and entrusted with the testimony of heaven, on the earth, and will pass through many sorrows into the reign of glory with the King. They are seen in many Scriptures both in the Psalms and Prophets. They fall into two distinct classes, one going into heavenly blessing through martyrdom in the unprecedented sufferings of the great tribulation, and the other preserved to inherit the earth. See the reward mentioned in verses 5 and 12.

In Matthew 6 the Lord sets His disciples before the Father with regard to acts of kindness and devotional exercises: all they did was to be done before Him who knows the heart. How effectually must His words have swept the ground from beneath the feet of the accredited teachers of the day! He had said, "Unless your righteousness surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven" (5: 20). The body of chapter 5 showed the hollowness of their teaching; what comes out in chapter 6 exposes their practice.

The chapter divides at verse 18, the first half falling into three paragraphs which treat of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; the second, 19-34, practical exhortations relating to earthly treasures and single-mindedness and anxiety about the future. Almsgiving (verses 1-4) relates to our fellow-creatures, prayer (verses 5-15) to God, and fasting (verses 16-18) to ourselves. It is helpful to see that grace teaches us to live soberly, righteously and piously in this world, and these three things cover the same ground. Soberly as to say to ourselves, righteously to our fellows, and piously to God. This again is confirmed in the beautiful cluster of fruit mentioned in Gal. 5: 22, 23, that can only be produced in us by the Spirit of God: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law." These nine features are easily seen to fall into three groups of three each, which may be seen to work out personally in relation to others and toward God.

"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them" (R. V.). He puts His finger upon the tendency which is inherent in every human heart to seek greatness in the eyes of others, and shows how the works of charity and devotion done in this world must be done before the Father and His world. Happy are they who are delivered from the mere appearance of things, and from the value that fellow-mortals may put upon their works, and who value only the approval of Him who sees in secret. Their reward is certain, a reward that will not perish with man and his world, but will abide for ever. Surely it is a mark of Heaven's grace in this world to be able to carry on works of kindness in it, but the effect upon and result to ourselves is the point here. Not only is there a secret chamber into which we may enter and close the door (verse 6), but a secret place in our souls where the record of such gracious acts is concealed, that none but the Father who sees in secret may know and reward openly. *"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does."*

"But when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; . . . Enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret." The Pharisee of Luke 18 is an example of that which is here condemned, but the centurion of Acts 10 beautifully illustrates what the Lord here sets forth. The ostentation and the pride of the Pharisees and the senseless babble of the heathen are mentioned that the vanity of it all may be exposed. The Father knows all the needs of His own before they ask Him. Hence much speaking is an offence, and prayer should be marked by brevity and simplicity, as becoming a creature speaking to His God.

Then the Lord gives a prayer in words unequalled in simplicity, depth and brevity, which was well suited for the disciples in their then position.

Was this that is called "the Lord's Prayer," given to be used as a mere recitation for millions of people all over Christendom apart from any definite sense of their state of sin or of need before God? The prayer is not understood because the dispensational bearing of the whole discourse is unknown. On two different occasions we read of Jehovah giving to Israel a form of words to address Himself, but we do not read of them being perpetually recited afterwards (Deut. 21: 7, 8; Deut. 26: 13-15). John taught his disciples to pray — the Lord here does the same. And this prayer is far beyond the Old Testament prayers, as may be seen by comparing it with the Psalms. It is beyond, in all probability, what John

taught his disciples, but in the nature of things it is not up to the increased light brought in by accomplished redemption.

It should be remarked that it is not the prayer for a penitent sinner seeking mercy, but for those who are in a certain relationship with God, who have direct dealings with Him as Father in relation to their need. The petitions divide it into two distinct parts: the first three express the desire for the glory of God, and the last four express the creature's dependence. It is beautiful to see the spirit of worship in the way the Name, the kingdom and the will of God are put in the front. In another connection the Christian knows that these three things cover the whole scope of the counsels of God, and go far beyond what could be known then, extending even to God's eternal day. The four petitions in the second part are the expression of dependence and obedience. The whole may be said to show the three main thoughts in true prayer: God's glory, and the creature's need, first in the temporal and then the spiritual spheres.

We should distinguish between the prayer given here and that in Luke 11: 2-4. Though there is little difference in our Authorized Version, it is well known that Luke takes a wider view and gives an advance on what is here. The Lord goes on there to speak of the gift of the Spirit which links on with the fuller instruction in John 16, the latter being connected with *full Christian prayer* as seen in the Epistles, which the prayer we are considering is not. (See the New Trans. and R. V. for the prayers in Matt. 6: 9-13, and Luke 11: 2-4.)

It should be remembered, however, while giving due attention to the different readings, that the evidence is not merely external. The ordinary reader who has an insight into these things by divine teaching will see the difference and the moral necessity for it. This difference hangs upon the aim of the Spirit in each Gospel. In Matthew the Lord is teaching in connection with the Messianic kingdom as Son of David for the Jews, but in Luke He is specially before us as the Son of Man, and of necessity in that Gospel the Mediatorial kingdom has its bearing towards the Gentiles as well. This accounts for the difference in words, and teaches that while Matthew shows the remnant preparing for the King, Luke has the same company in view but as about to be introduced into the Christian faith. This is further confirmed by the fact that the prayer is placed in the first Gospel before the question of the King's acceptance was decided, but in Luke's Gospel it is given to us after the King had already been refused, and when the preparation of the disciples for the Church, as a new and heavenly company, was going on. In each case that which was needed for disciples in their circumstances was given, but the Spirit in Matthew had not only the remnant of that moment in view, but those also who will await the coming back again of the Messiah.

In the instructions as to fasting (verses 16-18) the Lord again exposes the desire for display, as He had done in connection with almsgiving and prayer, and shows that that only is of value that is done in secret, i.e., before God. All true prayer supposes not only the refusal of what is evil but the avoidance at times of what may in itself be right. Man is not only a spirit being but has a physical body, and he may be drawn into sin by the very needs of that body. Men may fall both by eating and drinking, as Adam and Noah. On the other hand, people may be deluded into the denial to the body its dues for the sake of appearance (Col. 2: 23). There is, however, a deep moral connection between true prayer and fasting, as all spiritual minds have felt, and its blessedness lies in the fact that a Christian may be so engaged with God and His things as to forget for the time the needs of the body, and even when these make their appeal he may be so filled with God as to be able to deny the natural in the power of that which is spiritual. Such a state, it is needless to say, is far removed from the eye of one's fellow-men.

Coming to the last half of the chapter, we shall see that all the instruction is in close affinity with the three thoughts already touched. Laying up treasure on earth poorly qualifies for almsgiving. The single eye supposes that the whole inner man is laid bare in the presence of God in prayer. A body full of light gives the thought of moral influence, and nothing could be finer than this; it was seen in Stephen before the council, and in Paul before Agrippa, and may be seen in the woman whose unbelieving husband is to be won by her Christ-like behaviour without the word (1 Peter 3). It is blessed when the character is so formed that the body can be offered to God. There is a transparency in a man when the whole soul has been poured out to God in the closet and has been formed there by the communications of His love. Decision of character and clearness of spiritual vision must be the result.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth." Here our Lord contrasts the heavenly with the earthly, the spiritual with the natural, the things of time with those of eternity. His estimate of these is perfect, and He would have us governed by that. The heart follows that which is most highly prized, and if it be the things of earth how great is the loss! Many artificial contrivances are got up to give security in this world where death lies upon all, but there are no insurance societies called for in regard to what is heavenly and eternal — eternal things are the sure things. Spiritual treasures are laid up for eternity, and to have heaven and eternity in view gives clearness of vision. The danger here is that selfishness may darken the moral sensibilities and weaken the character in such a way that power for decision is lost.

"The lamp of the body is the eye." This would indicate the organ of spiritual sight, the single eye denoting uprightness of motive with unity of purpose. "One thing I do." The body gives expression to the inner state, and in walking with God a person becomes an influence for good; where this is not, there is wavering like a double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways.

Verses 25-34 connect with the middle clause of the prayer — "Give us this day our daily bread," showing that the strength expended in the cares and distractions of distrust means positive loss. What a gain it is when the energy of the soul finds expression in faith! The relative bearing of the natural and spiritual spheres upon each other is touched in verse 33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [the things that all the fretting is about] shall be added unto you." This seeking depends upon the single eye of verse 22, which again connects with secret intercourse with God and the state produced by it. It was the saying of a dying saint: "Had I trusted the Lord better my life would have been different." To this the writer can feelingly subscribe and doubtless many another. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee."

He next presses upon His disciples the need of confidence in the Father for the things of everyday life, so that they might be free from that care which so often withers up the soul. This He does by a threefold illustration drawn from the creation, of which our bodies form part. The birds of the air, the human body, and the lilies of the field. The first and last of these He applies to bring home to them the providential care and goodness of their heavenly Father. The way the Lord draws His illustrations from the creation when setting great truths before men reminds us of His wisdom as a Teacher, and by these illustrations we are reminded of the wonders of creation wherein is displayed the grand scheme of His Providence whereby God meets the needs of all His creatures. But men are His special care, and especially those that believe. So He says, "Look at the birds of the heaven.... Are ye not much more excellent than they?" So also in regard to raiment. "But if God so clothe the herbage of the field, which is to-day, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, will He not much rather you, O ye of little faith?" May we not say in regard to ourselves that if the character of the moment were apprehended and the value of these tests to faith laid hold of in their relation to the glory of God and our present and future position, such exercises in regard to them would be cheerfully accepted in the power of prayer and communion

with God.

If we have followed the line of this precious Discourse in the two previous chapters it will not be difficult to understand what is here. If we live before the Father in simplicity and sincerity, our dealings with others will be marked by kindness and consideration rather than fault-finding, which seems to be the sense in which judging is used in this first verse. It is not that we are not called to judge between good and evil, for had it meant that there could have been no abstaining from evil, but that we should be free from a censorious spirit, which is a very great evil. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4: 31, 32). It is never right to judge motives unless it be our own, for love thinks no evil and will not condemn until it has proof. Should we be, on the other hand, judged wrongly and misrepresented by others, the way out is put before us in Matthew 5: 44: "*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*"

"*Judge not, that ye may not be judged For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.*" A wrong spirit is soon seen and condemned by others. "He hath digged a pit and hollowed it out, and is fallen into the hole that he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head" (Ps. 7, see also Esther 7). In the school of God where the daily exercises prove the imperfection of all, ability to look upon our brother for good should be cultivated.

It brings its gain as the opposite brings its sorrow.

The warning as to the mote and the beam of verses 2-5 recalls the single eye of Matthew 6: 22, and as the soul answers to these solemn words there is ensured a right state both with the Lord and with one another. The beauty of character described at the beginning and sustained in the middle of the discourse by prayer is far removed from the petty jealousies which often destroy the happiness of the children of God.

Comparing verse 6 with the above, we see that if a censorious spirit is condemned, careful discrimination is called for in our dealings with those that are outside. It does not seem to be the ordinary unconverted person which is in view here, but that class of profane person, such as Herod, to whom, at a later time, the Lord would not answer a word.

"*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" Here it is our dealings with God. We are taken back to the section on prayer, and reminded of the hungering and thirsting of the fourth Beatitude. There were those who asked amiss, that they might use it for pleasure (James 4: 3); others sought, but not in faith (John 6: 34); and some will knock to be refused admission (Matt. 25: 11); but the Lord encourages His own to simple direct dealings with their Father in heaven. This is the opposite to all vain repetition, and teaches that the Lord's disciples were not bound to the recitation of the form of words He had put before them in the previous chapter, but free to voice the deep feelings of their souls to God and to present their needs to Him. The illustration drawn from human relationships was calculated to encourage them, for it shows the delight of God in giving. If man in spite of his fallen condition recognizes the claims of nature, and fathers after the flesh give good gifts to their children, what shall we say of the giving God? He it is who delights to be enquired after, and "He is a rewarder of them who seek Him out" (Heb. 11: 6).

The mention of the law and the prophets in verse 12 seems to indicate that a point is reached where He will sum up what has been said and conclude: "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye desire that men should do to you, thus do ye also to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*" In the first sixteen verses of Matthew 5 He describes the character suited to the Kingdom of Heaven; in the next

four verses His own position in regard to the law and the prophets, after which He shows the bearing of the law in its inner spirit upon the human heart in relation to the details of life. This in the nature of things was bound to expose the falsity of the current teaching of the day. In words of surpassing beauty in Matthew 6 He directs His disciples in what is becoming in acts of kindness to men, and in their approach to God, all of which must have been a solemn rebuke to the hypocrisy of the leaders of religion. Here in few words He shows all that is required for the fulfilling of the law and the prophets. A beautiful parallel is given in 1 Tim. 1: 5: "But the end of what is enjoined is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and unfeigned faith." It is as if the writer had said this is a full summary of true Christianity.

"Enter in through the narrow gate." What is of God can never be popular in a world of fallen sinners. As the dupe of Satan man has lost his bearings, and consequently the road which suits the masses is that which ends in destruction. For them the virtues and graces of Matt. 5 are a narrow way indeed, but how great the difference at the end! There are those who appreciate Him and His way and rejoice in the favour of fellowship with the rejected Christ, knowing it is a way that ends in life. For this, let God be praised.

"Beware of false prophets." Here comes in the religious element. How solemnly He likens them to prowling animals which go about to destroy and devour I Whatever their profession they cannot be anything else but what they really are. "By their fruits ye shall know them." A worthless tree cannot produce anything but bad fruit. This anticipates the words of Rom. 8: 7, 8, about the carnal mind, the enmity of which was proved at the cross of Christ.

And now note, in closing, the solemnity of His words. The supremacy of Immanuel shines out here. "Not every one that says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in the heavens." He looks down the ages to the last final judgment when He will have to say, "I never knew you." Their estimate of their service will have to give place to His, that which they thought works of power will then be seen as evil, and the result will be their final doom. How deeply solemn for all who take part in the service of the Lord! Trafficing in holy things is perhaps the worst sin of all.

Mark the words "hearing" and "doing" in verse 24 and compare with verse 21: "Whoever therefore hears My words and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man." Here again in the simplest of words is the cleavage set forth. There are two builders, two houses, two foundations, two storms, and two results. Let us note the solemn finish. "And every one who hears these My words and does not do them, he shall be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain came down, and the streams came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and its fall was great. Blessed are they that through grace belong to that kingdom which cannot be moved, who, founded on the rock of ages, are secure for time and eternity."

A few words are necessary on the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, which may help still further to clear the position. We begin with the enquiry, Why is it that the Sermon on the Mount is so much spoken of with apparent appreciation by many who refuse the full truth of the gospel? To answer this we must take account of its place in relation to what went before and what came after. It comes in as a link between the position of the faithful in the Old Testament and the place of the church which is called into the full revelation of God in the New Testament. The relationship in which those addressed stood was with the Father in heaven, and it shows a knowledge of God which the saints of earlier days could not have had, consequently the standard of holiness is raised much higher. Evil is traced back from the outward act to the heart, and the good is elevated from Old Testament practice to the ways of

the Father, so that praying for enemies and doing good to them that despitefully hurt, contrasts strongly with many Psalms which call down vengeance upon the enemies. The Messiah was present, and consequently the advance on the position held by those who had waited for Him was very great. The discourse was, therefore, a great advance on what had been before, and an illumination worthy of Him who spoke.

It is for this reason, however, that we need to distinguish carefully between what is set forth in the address and what came out later in Christianity by the gospel. At this time it was still undecided whether He would be received or not as Israel's Messiah; the people had to be tested as to this. The trial of man in the flesh which had been going on through the ages and which came to an end later at the cross was still proceeding, consequently responsibility is made prominent while redemption is left untouched. The gospel as we know it today comes from a glorified Christ whose work at the cross brought the trial of the first man in his race to a close. It is because this is not laid hold of that this grand discourse is so much misused and so badly misunderstood.

It is needful to account for the twofold bearing of the Lord's position at that moment. He stood before Israel as proof of the faithfulness of God to all His promises, and was **ready, if** received, to set up the Kingdom. It was foreknown, however, that He would be refused and crucified, so that we can also view Him as come to die, that by resurrection He might establish a new order of life and manhood on the other side of death. Having accomplished this, He then took His place at the right hand of God, that the gospel might come from Him there to the world which was guilty of putting Him to death. When the gospel did come man was no longer under trial. Until the cross, and therefore when this discourse was given, man was being tested, that his incapability to stand before God in his own righteousness might be demonstrated. After that solemn event he is no longer treated on his own responsibility for blessing' but provided with righteousness from God in the gospel. The enormous advance of blessing brought in by the gospel shows that the believer is accepted in Christ, the risen Head of a new race, and all who believe have a new life and are brought into a new creation in Christ.

The Father's name occurs many times in the discourse, and it may be said that this is the Christian revelation. This, however, is not the full truth, for although there was a partial revelation of God in that relation so that the disciples could look up and address Him in that way, there could not be the full revelation of this till the death and resurrection of Christ. It was the knowledge of God as a Father by a people on earth who were *associated with Christ in humiliation*, and without the knowledge of redemption. One who cared for them and valued them far beyond the fowls or lilies, knew their needs, sought their trust, and would care for them all the way through. The gospel, on the other hand, gives *association with Christ in glory*, "Part with Me" in a life in resurrection where neither needs nor cares can come. The one does not displace the other, but it is not difficult to see that the latter is the greater. Here the Father is made known to the adoring heart in the fulness of His love and counsels of grace, made known by the Son as First-born of many brethren to those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren. The reader will note that, while it was impossible for the believing remnant of Israel before the cross to know the full Christian position, for it was not then revealed, we who have come in afterwards, and enter now into the full revelation of the Father's name in association with the Son who is in the glory, share with them all the Father's grace and care as being associated with a rejected Christ upon the earth.

In the thought of God these Jewish believers were to be lifted into the full blessing by the exaltation of Christ and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. The Epistle to the Hebrews and first of Peter show the enormous advance for those who had received the Messiah. Along with these came the revelation of the church's place through Paul and the corresponding heavenly character of the new thing

through John, concluding the apostolic testimony. We know from the Acts that this glorious transfer was not generally accepted by believing Jews, for many of them clung to Judaism and were zealous of the law. This an ever-gracious God bore with for a lengthened time, and the Epistle of James is the message of the Spirit to such. This explains how that this epistle gives more allusions to the Sermon on the Mount than all the rest of the New Testament put together.

The destruction of Jerusalem ended this state of things for the Jews, but what of Gentile Christians into whose hands was put the responsibility of the testimony of God? It can easily be shown that before the church had been in existence a century, saints to whom the truth had been committed allowed it to slip, even that as elementary as the forgiveness of sins and justification by faith, so that instead of learning and knowing deliverance from the world, believers as to their experience were left in a worse position than those in a previous dispensation. This being so, we cease to wonder how that all down the ages even the very best of men have been unable to place this glorious discourse and properly appreciate its beauties. Such expressions as "the new law," "the moral law," and the "laws of the Kingdom," can but add to the confusion which is the result, surely, of the activity of the mind to the exclusion of the Holy Ghost.

How great is the grace that we should be given to see the beauty, order, and precision of God's ways! The Book of Acts shows the workings of God among men during the transitional period, but the time of the calling out of the church as a whole fits in to the parenthetic gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel's prophecy. Further revelation shows that the church, like Enoch, will be called from earth to heaven, making room for the resumption of divine dealings with Israel in fulfilment of the promises to the fathers. The future remnant will be waiting for the Kingdom which will be set up at the coming of the King. The interval between their call and the appearing of the King will be a time of unprecedented suffering, many will be slain and pass into heavenly blessing, while the sealed ones will enter into full blessing on earth with the King. This, as we said, explains the difference of reward mentioned by the Lord in Matthew 5: 5 and 12.

The Lord in these last days has been pleased to recall our hearts to the truth which is for the whole church, and there are those who have learned through mercy something of the beauty and preciousness of this discourse in its proper setting. In the wealth of ministry coming out from these it has been remarked how little is said on Matt. 5-7. The fact of its Jewish connection and that it is not properly Christian may account for this. To apprehend it in its dispensational bearing requires a knowledge of both Old and New Testaments, while in its moral and spiritual setting it provides a fund of heavenly wealth. This gives the balance; may we be preserved in that balance, and may the Lord create in us all a keener appetite for the things concerning Himself, for His name's sake.

The Fame of Jesus - Matthew 8 and 9.

The fame of Jesus as mentioned in Matthew 14: 1 is an enchanting theme. It comes out in a very precious way in this first Gospel. The great fact which appears everywhere in the New Testament comes out at His birth, namely that He is God and Man in one glorious Person. "Thou shalt call His name JESUS;" and again; "They shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

The two lines of truth as to His Deity and Manhood had run in the prophetic word right through the Old Testament. He had been spoken of as the woman's Seed (Gen. 3), the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22), the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49), and the Prophet greater than Moses (Deut. 18: 15), all of which found their fulfilment in this holy birth. But when we come to the prophets Isaiah and Micah we

get not only the Man, but God and Man prophetically announced in one glorious Person. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9: 6). "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5: 2).

Here in Matthew the Child born is to be called JESUS but the same one is Emmanuel, God with us. In Matt. 2 He is taken down to Egypt for in the dispensational ways of God He must take up in Himself the history of His people from Egypt right through till the time of the glory. (See Psalm 18, and compare Hosea 11: 1 with Matthew 2: 16). In Matt. 3 John the Forerunner proclaims Him King, and the Father acclaims Him Son. The Divine and human is thus kept in view. In Matt. 4 this is immediately challenged by the Tempter and we are led to the scene of the temptation where His glory shines out in the complete baffling of Satan. This is one of the grandest scenes in the whole history of time. Having defeated the strong man He goes forth to spoil his goods. This gives the beginning of His public ministry which was in such power that soon the whole country, all Syria, was astir by His fame. "And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan."

This gave occasion for Him to bring out the situation as it existed at that moment. The sermon which followed in Matt. 5-7 is a very real advance on what had been before, although in the very nature of things it could not rise to what came out after His rejection. It lays bare the heart in its inmost secret motives: it calls upon His followers to be a transcript of the King in moral character, through being in association with Himself, but the Church as such is not found in it; that awaited the work of redemption and the ascension of the Lord to heaven. Note the way Godhead and Manhood, the two great features already spoken of, come out in this mountain discourse. While the moral instruction flows out in beautiful progression strewing the conduct due to God from His creature there are statements here and there which would be blasphemy on the lips of a creature. What created being, for example, could say in reference to Holy Scripture: "Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . But I say." (Matt. 5: 21, 22; Matt. 27: 28, 31, 34). Not that there was any contradiction between the law and His sayings; the first spoke of the outward acts, the second of the innermost thoughts and passions behind the acts.

In Matt. 8 and Matt. 9 we see the power of the kingdom displayed in the Person of the King. These two chapters hang together and we may take Matt. 10 with them. If He is refused in the working of all His grace and power, we see in chap. 10 the gracious forbearance that will not be turned aside from His mission of mercy, but will send forth His servants fully equipped to carry on that work.

How then was He received? He had adapted Himself to His people as and where they were. If they were poor He became poor; if they were despised He also was despised of men. Was the house of David in poverty and obscurity? He had no place to lay His head, were they groaning under the Roman yoke? He associated Himself with them in that also, claiming no rights for Himself, but bearing their burdens and sorrows, like the weeping Jeremiah, and finally going under the judgment of God on their behalf. But in spite of all this the state of the people was such that the very grace in which He came was used against Him and the door closed in His face. Think of the sorrow of it. God had come down in measureless grace to heal them and bless them and reconcile them to Himself and they not only refused Him but actually charged Him with doing the works of the devil. The miracles which were for their deliverance they attributed to Satanic agency, so blinded were they. By so doing they blasphemed the Holy Ghost and committed the sin which never hath forgiveness, and showed themselves to be children of the devil, sunk down to the lowest depths of moral degradation. So much for the leaders.

But He went on, undeterred by their malice, dispensing abroad the bounty of God, and none needed to despair. Those that felt their need clung to Him and they were healed and blest for time and eternity. He had Himself been tested (Matt. 4) and now had become the test for all, and there was no neutral ground; either they were for Him or against Him. Richest blessing there was in Him for all, but only the wise saw it and believed. Wisdom's children owned their need and confessed Him, and came into all the favour of God, while the proud who professed to see and judge were left to their blindness (John 9: 39).

The Lord's glory is made to shine out as it were incidentally in the midst of His work in these chapters. He is confessed Lord many times, He speaks of Himself twice as the Son of Man, the blind men own Him Son of God. The Gentile Centurion rises perhaps highest of all in the words: "Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof." No quarter is given to demons or to the devil; His power is seen at work in grace on behalf of men and for the destruction of the Satanic kingdom.

While fitting into the exact position and condition of the people, there was in His ways, words and works a pledge of the full triumph of His grace. Defeat for Him was impossible whatever the appearance. Underneath all He did in the midst of these blinded people there was the pledge of the fulfilment of the whole prophetic scheme of blessing in the most complete accord with the testimony of God in all His ways past, present and future. The very order in which these works are recorded is so planned as to give a typical foreshadowing of the ultimate blessing of the people who in their representatives were at that time leading onward to the cross. Based upon His death which would be their culminating crime, would come out the fulfilment of all the promises in covenant blessing and the complete triumph of God.

The twelve miracles of these chapters seem to cover the whole ground of conflict, namely; disease, death, demoniac possession, and the power of the devil. There was one leprous man, two palsied men, two diseased women, two demoniacs, two blind men, one dumb demoniac, one little girl in death, and the work of calming the storm. Is there any wonder that His fame went throughout all Syria and that they followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond Jordan. God had come within the sphere of nature to work; and men could take cognisance and avail themselves of His mercy.

But what of the WORKER? God is active; Father, Son and Spirit in love and goodness (See Matt. 12: 28 and John 14: 10). There is Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnipresence, but beyond all else there is LOVE. This is the moral nature of God and this it is that calls into action all the other great and glorious features of His Being. This it is that has brought God so near to man — a lowly Man, Jesus the Saviour who saves His people from their sins.

It should be clear to the thoughtful reader that Matthew 8 divides in two at verse 17, and also that the three miracles of verse 1-15, give a sample of those cases which are summarised in verse 16. In this verse we get a summary of His mighty works and the Spirit takes up Isaiah 53: 4 to show how His blessed heart was pressed by the very things which His power removed. We little know what He felt as He moved amongst His creatures, every one of whom was under the power of death, and with diseases of every kind doing their dreadful work.

The scope of His work is seen in relation to the various circles of society namely, country, town and home in the first part, while in the later part (verses 18-34), there is the exercise of His power in the material realm with moral ends in view. As to the first part, leprosy is a figure of the corruption that must be isolated; it was a bodily affliction that tells of that cancerous evil that affects man in his moral nature which nothing but the blood of Jesus can remove and apart from which must find its isolation in

the lake of fire for ever. What an awful thing it must be for a man to die in his sins and be separated from God for ever. No man can cleanse his own pollution. "For though thou wash thee with nitre and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord." "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Only one, He can do it, who said to the leper, "I will, be thou clean."

With the palsied man it is helplessness. This again must be taken as applying to the moral condition in which men are found. "When we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5: 6). "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6: 44). Then there was fever in the home. It was in the house of Peter, the foremost of His disciples. This calls for peculiar consideration. The home is the circle of family affections and in these affections there is that which God can still take account of in spite of all the wreck that sin has wrought in men. The Lord in mercy puts the physical complication right with a touch and she rose and served Him. Fever in its moral signification speaks of that restless excitement which so often incapacitates both for communion and service. Are we to learn something from the fact that this state so often marked Peter, this much loved servant of Christ? Be that as it may, we know the Lord loves to see His people both in person and in their homes free from excitement, and marked by that peace and sobriety which flows from communion with Him self. That Peter came to be marked thus may be seen from what he wrote later to the saints "Finally be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous (1 Peter 3: 8).

The presentation of our Lord in the rest of this chapter (Matt. 8), fills us with wonder by the majesty and grandeur of it. The simple historic record presents our Lord Jesus Christ in a three-fold view which captivates the heart and produces richest praise. First it may be pointed out that the whole passage presents to our view Messiah, the King, who is Emmanuel speaking and acting in His place, God and Man, a Divine-human Person. Then in the beauty of a Man asleep in the ship and later the mighty Creator who commands the winds and waves.

The incapacity of human nature as seen in Peter's house is illustrated in the first and second proposal to follow Him. The scribe had to learn that He is not a popular wonder-worker but a homeless Stranger, and the other disciple had to learn that this Stranger without a place to lay His head in the land must take precedence of every human claim. There were those who owned His claims and they followed Him in the ship. Cost what it might they would be with Him. They found themselves in His company outside the nation, tossed upon the waves in a storm which threatened to engulf them. Whatever the appearance no storm could harm them in His company. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee" (Isa. 43: 2). He is at their command, for needy ones were never turned aside by Him, and never shall be.

Nothing could more clearly show the perfection of the manhood of the Lord than the fact that He slept in the stern of the vessel. The sacred mystery of His sinless, holy Manhood cannot be explained by men, but we see it there nevertheless when He slept in that storm that threatened to wreck the ship. He knew what sighing and grief and weariness and fatigue were (Mark 7: 34, John 4: 6), and He had withdrawn for a little repose. Why disturb Him? But they were in danger. Was not their panic at that time something of the state of fever that we have seen in Peter's house?

They come to Him saying, Lord save. And at once He responded to their cry. Here we see Him from the side of His Godhead, the mighty, the almighty ONE in majesty supreme. "They that go down to the sea in ships . . . see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, and go down

again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of all their distresses, He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still" (Ps. 107: 23-29). This threefold view of the Lord covers the pages of the four Gospels for the blessed One Who is seen there is God become Man, the Word become flesh.

Underneath this first recorded incident on the lake of Galilee there is a glorious pledge of divine victory at the cross. It was there the waves and billows of God's judgment passed over Him, but it was there He triumphed over all the power of evil. Both Matthew and Luke record what the Lord *did* in the storm but Mark tells us *what He said*. "And having been aroused He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Silence, be quiet" (Mark 4: 19). The word means to muzzle, and blessed be His name He has not only silenced the storm on the sea but He has muzzled all the forces of evil. The world is judged, the devil defeated, death annulled, and all the forces of hell laid low." (See the Interlinear translation and Young's Concordance).

What follows is deeply humiliating. Think of swine in Immanuel's land. The humbling thing to a Jew in the parable in Luke was the words "He fain would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat." But lower still; in the land of God's choice there are two men possessed of as many demons as could enter into two thousand swine. But yet deeper and beyond which it is impossible to get; men will rather have their swine and also the demons than the Saviour of sinners, the Son of God.

Matthew 9.

The rejection seen at the end of Matthew 8 is continued by the leaders of the people in chapter 9. But the Lord goes on with His service of love in its bearing both on body and soul. The case of the palsied man was peculiarly trying, but the Lord graciously encourages him. "Son be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven." The first thought of the scribes who were sitting by was, this man blasphemeth, but He who used the words knew also their thoughts and while exposing them before all immediately commanded the man to rise up and take up his bed and go into his house. It will be noticed that in this case the Lord demonstrated who He was as strewn in Psalm 103. By dealing with the moral state first, the need of the man's soul before his body, He showed that He was in full accord with that Psalm. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." These men were right in their conclusion that none could forgive sins but God (see Mark's Gospel), but they were ignorant of the fact that God was there in their midst. Man was wrong both in soul and body and the Lord was there to put both right.

Notice the Lord's use of the title Son of Man. Not now does He speak of Himself as a homeless stranger but of His divine sovereignty. The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. Why? Because the Son of Man is God.

Nothing could more clearly show the glory of His Person than this constant tracing of attributes both human and Divine to one and the same Person. A comparison of its use by Himself in these two chapters makes this clear.

Passing over the call of Levi we reach that miracle which shows the power of the Son of God over death (John 5). There came to Him a Ruler, one who had a certain place in the house of God but was at the same time helplessly at the disposal of another. This other was that cruel foe death under whose power the whole race lay. But the resurrection and the life was there in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the way to the death chamber there came behind Him a woman with an issue of blood. We learn from Mark that she had spent her all on the doctors without relief. She touched Him and her trouble was healed. The woman's disease was of twelve years duration and the dead girl was twelve

years of age. Putting the two together we see the only possible end in the child to that which was at work in the woman.

"Who touched My clothes?" (Mark 5: 30) said the Lord Jesus. And again in Luke 8: 46. "I perceive that virtue has gone out of Me." It was the effectual power of God to meet the power of death working in her. Faith was there before the touch and well He knew it, but His blessed heart would not let her go without the fuller and richer blessing of peace from God in her soul. The paralytic at the beginning of the chapter was put right first in soul then in body: here it was the body then the soul by the healing virtue of the Son of God. In the woman there had been the touch of faith from her side but in the death chamber it was the touch of power from His side. These two cases bring out very clearly the love and power of the Son of God. First His gracious condescension in following the man, then His tender kindness to the woman, His dealing with the tumult and the minstrels or flute-players in the house bespeak the tenderness of that blessed Man, while the Omnipotence of God shines out to heal the sick, raise the dead and bind up broken hearts.

The two blind men and the case of the dumb demoniac give a fitting termination to the group of the Lord's miracles which the Spirit has been pleased to put before us here. In all three the avenues of the soul were affected. In the blind men's condition there was a world outside, the beauty of which was hidden from them, with the demoniac there was a terrible world within but no way of telling it out. Faith opened the eyes, which were shut to nature, to the glory of the Messiah, the Son of David, and in the confessing of His power bodily healing followed. They had yet to learn that their Messiah Son of David was in rejection and the time for display not yet come. In their new-found joy they departed and spread His fame in all that country. The dumb demoniac was the lowest down of all, and it is to be remarked that both here and in Luke 11 the putting such a one right brought upon the Lord the charge of doing- the works of the devil. How closely this healing of the dumb demoniac stands contrasted with the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit (Luke 11: 13-15) and how awful the state of those committing the sin beyond forgiveness at that moment.

Now a few words on the place this group of miracles holds in relation to the dispensational and prophetic ways of God. The Holy Spirit puts the works of our Lord in the order that would show Him in relation to the testimony of God for all time. By comparing this Gospel with the others we can see that the miracles recorded are not always placed in consecutive order but are set down in view of the Spirit's purpose in this particular Book. We have already seen that His being taken to Egypt had in view that the history of *Israel* should be taken up in the Lord's Person and carried right, forward to the kingdom glory. The temptation goes further back and shows the history of *the race* in His Person. See the question of food which was raised in the first temptation.

Having set forth the character of His kingdom in Matt. 5-7, the power of it is displayed in Matt. 8-9. This is so arranged as to give a figurative view of the whole range of testimony from that moment till the kingdom be set up in glory.

First then note how clearly the cleansing of the leper shws the way He put the remnant of His people right when He was here. These were taken up as children of the free-woman while the unbelieving mass were left like the Ishmael generation in bondage. Such are spared to come in again, for Israel is beloved for the fathers' sake. The dealing with Simon's wife's mother furnishes the picture of the future restoration, while the healing of the Centurion's servant shows what has been going on during the long interval since He has gone on high: the work of grace among the Gentiles on the principle of faith, for the man was healed by an absent Saviour. Next follows the boat scene which portrays the cross. Here the storm of evil rose to its height and here the mighty power of the Son of

God muzzled all the forces of evil. The saved remnant seen in the Book of Acts may be pictured in the two men delivered from the power of the demons, while the mass of the nation as seen, in that Book are left to run down the hill and were lost in the sea of nations. Even then the respectable world is seen in its refusal of Christ, preferring its commerce to the Saviour and it is left grovelling in its own unclean swinish ways till the time for judgment comes.

In Matt. 9 the paralytic is a clear picture of the Jew as set up here on earth in contrast to those of the gospel period whose home is with Himself in heaven. The call of Levi is to follow a rejected Christ right outside the world. All shows very clearly the calling and place of the Gentile in the time between the cross and the glory and amplifies the teaching of Matt. 8: 5-13. All this is confirmed in the conversations that followed. In a dim way (it could not be publicly declared till He was fully rejected) He alludes to His death and the way His followers would be affected. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast . . ." This is the place of Christians in His absence, but if so they are brought into a new creation. The instructed believer today has no difficulty in seeing in all this that which is brought out in the Epistles of a later time, particularly those of the Apostle Paul.

In the remaining part these things are still more vividly set forth, for the great Master painter puts in touches that fill up the picture. The Jew as we have said is seen in the paralytic (ver. 1-8) and the raising of the daughter of Jairus further amplifies the type in accordance with Ezekiel 37, where we see the raising up of dead Israel. The poor woman that touched Him on the way shows what grace is going out to the Gentile at this time, before He puts forth the power that will put Israel in their place. The giving of sight to the two blind men shows what is preparatory to the state produced in Zechariah 12: 10. They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced and shall mourn as one mourneth for an only son.

It is then that the dumb demon will disappear; their tongues will be loosed to confess their sins, own their Messiah in the Person of Jesus and adore Him. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53: 4, 5). Then also shall the words of Psalm 96 peal forth. "Oh SING unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among the people. For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods." And then too it shall be said, "Happy art thou Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee and thou shalt tread upon their high places" (Deut. 33: 29).

Matthew 10

Chapter 10 should begin at verse 36 of Matthew 9. This shows the heart of the Lord moved with compassion for His poor people in spite of the wickedness of the leaders, and leads to the sending forth of the twelve. They are sent forth on their mission to proclaim the kingdom of heaven. He sets their work before them making Himself chargeable for their every need. This brings out His power in the providential sphere. But there is much more, for what man, though possessed with power to work miracles could impart that power to others?

Having been in His company as learners they now go forth as His witnesses and He presses upon

them the solemn nature of their service. "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, be ye therefore prudent as the serpents and guileless as the doves." Besides this they were to look well to their own state of soul as His ambassadors and according to their faithfulness would He acknowledge them before the Father. It is a most precious enfolding of their privileges and responsibilities as brought into His confidence and drawing upon His resources. The beautiful line of moral instruction is most blessed for all and in spite of certain modifications in the later mission is most precious for all that seek to serve the Lord.

But a point is touched in the dispensational ways of God that makes this one of the most important chapters in the whole Book. The principle which marks all prophetic Scripture is here, and if the reader has carefully pondered the character of the discourse in Matt. 5-7 it will not be difficult to follow out what is here. We allude to the marvellous interweaving of the distant and future with that which is near and present so that the men sent out by Him on this mission can be spoken of as the same men which would be busy with their work when He comes back again in glory. He so orders His words that while applying to His servants at that moment they equally apply to those who will carry the testimony of the kingdom in Israel in the day to come: passing in this way over the Church age to the immediate preparation for the great Millennial display. This clearly supposes the transition in the Book of Acts from Judaism to Christianity and the break at the destruction of Jerusalem which left room for the parenthesis gap which has lasted so long and is now about to end in another transition, namely from the Church age to the resumption of divine dealings with Israel.

It seems clear that up to v. 15, the apostolic band is chiefly in view. This was marked by the personal presence of the King. From v. 16 to 20 the language is more general having in view the preaching during the "Acts " and on to the fall of Jerusalem. Here the King is gone away and His servants are delivered up to be scourged and brought before rulers and kings. The Holy Spirit from the Father would be in them and would be the power for every emergency. He then speaks in language much more general, much of which applies at any moment but evidently with the testimony in Israel at the close definitely in view. This may be seen from the words of v. 23, "For verily I say to you, Ye shall not have completed the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come."

Remark that it is during the time that this testimony is suspended in Israel that the gospel of the glory of the blessed God goes out to all nations in view of the church which is the body and bride of Christ. In that way the fall of Israel has brought salvation to the Gentiles, and made room for a character of blessing which coming in after the accomplishment of redemption and the declaration of eternal counsels is much richer than anything before proposed. Nothing had ever been seen or known from God like what is known today of His counsels concerning Christ and the assembly. Here, alas! the failure is much greater, for while the Spirit forms the bride for the Son and leads her home to Him in glory in the light of all the precious things of heaven, the mass of Gentiles refuse this the richest of all testimonies and go on to judgment. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: upon them who have fallen, severity; upon thee goodness of God, if thou shalt abide in goodness, since otherwise thou shalt be cut away (Rom. 11: 22).

We know that the Gentiles have not continued in the goodness and favour of God and that the time of their cutting off is at hand. The times of the Gentiles are nearing a close when Israel will be reinstated in their Land in a security that nothing can assail. They were cut off in holy government but through mercy and the faithfulness of God to His promises will be restored again. Christendom which has so long flourished under heaven's best and still continues in apostacy will be cut off in judgment never again to raise her proud head. Jerusalem having received double for all her sins, the Spirit of God moves in the valley of dry bones; the gospel of the kingdom will again be preached and preparation

made for the coming of the KING. "O Zion that bringeth good tidings, get thee up into a high mountain, O Jerusalem that bringest glad tidings, lift up thy voice with strength lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, behold your God" (Isa 40: 9).

Matthew 11

The sorrow connected with His rejection, so deeply felt by the Lord, is here augmented by the message from the prison of His servant John. It but served, however, to bring out the greatness of His moral perfections. But all had been fore-known and prophetically described. The connection with Isaiah 49 is clear. I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought and in vain: yet surely My work is with My God. Jehovah answers: — "It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob. I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation to the ends of the earth." The bearing of these last words on the Church age is seen in the way the aged Simeon uses them (Luke 2: 30-32), where the blessing of the Gentile precedes that of the Jew and also in Acts 13: 47, where Paul takes them as the warrant for his mission to the nations. All the wickedness of men and devils eventually but serve God, and here we see it brought out along with His moral perfections in meeting the circumstances the place the Lord fills as Centre of the ways of God.

He sends back the messengers to tell John of the great things that they had seen, finishing with a personal word for His beloved servant. This done, He brings out in the presence of the multitude His estimate of John's worth: first his true moral greatness, then his place as Fore-runner; next He points him out as a pivot in the dispensations and last of all associates him with Himself as refused by the guilty nation. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord," said Gabriel; "Among them that are born of woman there is none greater," said the Lord. Prophetically foretold to fill the nearest place as Fore-runner he was also a pivot man for "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John." He came in at the end of one order of things but spoke of another. This is the explanation of the apparent contradiction of verse 11. "There hath not arisen a greater ... notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The Lord had already cited Malachi 3: 1 in reference to John's present place and ministry (cp. Luke 1: 17); here He refers to Malachi 4: 5 as showing the Elijah ministry yet to come of which John was the pattern. So definitely is John associated with the Lord in this official way that the Lord goes on to say of him in Matthew 17: 12. "Elias is come already and they knew him not but have done with him whatsoever they listed." But see the place all this puts our Lord Jesus Christ into. All John's greatness was derived from the place he filled in relation to the great Sun and Centre of all the ways of God.

In the light of all this how blessed to see John associated with His Master in persecution and death. John came neither eating nor drinking." His home was the desert and his food locust and wild honey. "They say, he has a devil." Through John came one of the greatest revivals that had been in Israel yet his head was bartered away for a dance. He stands out conspicuously in God's roll of honour and here the Lord associates him with Himself in relation to the then past, present and future.

And now the Lord upbraids the cities that had been in such incomparable favour. They had spoken ill of John the servant, a fellow man. They attacked the Lord of glory. "Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber," they said of Him, but the Lord adds "Wisdom is justified of her children." These were the people that at that moment in face of natural obstacles in themselves, and the determined opposition of those who had the key of knowledge, were taking the kingdom by force. The others could not be charmed, their moral insensibility was such as to blind them to all the grace of heaven which had been brought to their door. That ministry that began with "Blessed" (Matt. 5), here

comes to "Woe" and along with it the righteous relation of the judgment to the grace and favour that had been despised.

The turn of the dispensation had come. The Lord is rejected and turns to the Father saying, "I thank Thee, Father." A few remarks on His refusal may help here. The Jews made it clear in every possible way that they did not want the Lord Jesus. The Messiah Son of God was a Man after a different order, and the distance morally between Him and man in the flesh was immeasurable. Even under divine culture as the Jew was here the new birth is a necessity. The Epistle to the Romans written later shows clearly that man is so irretrievably wrecked and lost that reconciliation to God can only be in a new Head. The Lord Jesus was at that moment on the way to the cross to bear the judgment and remove the enmity that was then at work in His refusal, and lay the basis of a new creation in death and resurrection for the glory of God.

They sought therefore to condemn Him at every turn. In His words and works, the question of the Sabbath and the Law; the woman taken in adultery and the question of tribute money; it was no use; they were balked and exposed at every turn. In no case could they take Him; the sending the officers for Him failed, and their defeat was such that they proposed to put Lazarus to death because of his witness to His power. The darkest possible point must be reached and that surely which shames and humbles us all is the betrayal by Judas Iscariot. What a blot on the pride of humanity: the Son of God betrayed by a friend. Even this, however could only succeed because His hour had come. He had said no man taketh it from Me (His life), and the time came when He gave Himself up saying "this is your hour and the power of darkness."

But to return; we see how the Lord turns to the Father. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." He is the Son whose being none can know in the intimacy of His relationship with the Father, a rejected Messiah upon the earth. These relationships subsisted in the mutuality and reciprocation of holy love and at that moment the Son could speak of Himself as the Centre of the whole counsel of God. While thanking the Father He turns and says, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." Let the light of this marvellous saying shine out upon the dark scene of His rejection. Hear Him speak of the place He fills in the relationships, intimacies and joys in Godhead purpose and glory. He whom we have been thinking of is the Centre of God's ways in relation to the Father and the counsels of eternity in the grand structure of God's purpose in relation to both heaven and earth, of which but an infinitesimal part connects with Israel and the Davidic hopes.

A three-fold view stands out here which leads from the position of the Lord at that moment down to the fulness of His eternal glory. First the Messiah Son of David Whose royal rights were then refused, then the Son of Man at the centre of all things: the Centre of the vast creation of God. Greatest of all and from which all springs, He is the Son in all the intimacies of love and joy that is proper to Godhead in the relations of Deity. This latter carries us to a point beyond which we cannot go even in thought, to the unknown and knowable Son of the Father and what is proper and native to the glorious Godhead.

We may have beheld a glorious view in nature where beyond a stretch of landscape rises a range of hills, behind which, with intervening valleys, rise range upon range of mountains of ever increasing height which fill us with awe and delight as they seem to recede far and away into the unknown beyond. All the gracious unfoldings of our Lord's ministry which has been before are surpassed here in view of His sorrowful refusal, and just at the point where this is reached His glory begins to rise higher and higher towering in the sunshine of its everlasting splendour, until it passes beyond our view for ever in this eternal grandeur of its own infinity.

We know from the Gospel of John that our Lord came to make known the Father, to reveal God. This shows that His rejection as Messiah was fore-known. He had come to make known God in a way far beyond all that the covenant relations pre-supposed, but as ever it is the Jew first. And at that moment there comes into view a new generation which becomes the vessel in which is deposited this revelation of the riches of the grace that are in the SON. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." To Himself the despised and rejected He calls us that He might make known to us the Father. This surely is rest; the rest of a relationship outside of Israel nationally and outside of all that is of nature as in Adam. Nor is it something only for the advanced for He speaks of it as the first thing needed.

All this is hid to the wise and prudent and revealed to babes, but amidst the accumulation of glories we must not miss the moral glory of His perfect submission. The Son whose being none can know, a rejected, slighted man! Let us attend to this in the light of the words, "Learn of Me." Whatever the circumstances may be He takes all from the Father and so orders His teaching that those who come get the revelation of the Father and learn in Him how to bow and accept every circumstance from the Father's hand.

Matthew 12

The glory of the Son which belongs chiefly to the Gospel of John certainly has a place of importance in the Gospel of Matthew. It is the centre from which shine out the many rays of His moral and official perfections in chapter 12. On the dark background of hatred, scorn and rejection this glory comes into bold relief. The Son is here, a Man to make known the Father, the Messiah, greater than the Temple in regard to Israel; the Son of Man, Lord of the Sabbath, in relation to mankind: greater than Jonah in resurrection power, and greater than Solomon in relation to all the glories of the Kingdom.

Matthew 12 includes the features both of Mark and Luke, and if we link with it the end of Matthew 11, of the Gospel of John also. Within this section there is a concentrated view of all four Gospels. The words Son of Man (verse 8), connect with Luke; My Servant (verse 18), with Mark; Son of David (verse 23), is the theme of Matthew, while Matthew 11 is the subject of John. And if for a moment we anticipate Matthew 13 and think of Him as the great Prophet, Revealer and King, we have a galaxy of glories before which we bow in deepest worship and praise.

The attack by the Pharisees in this chapter is because of the incident in the corn field. The Lord graciously condescends to reason with them. These Sabbath scenes bring out the state of these leaders and show their utter moral degradation. To condemn doing good in the alleviation of suffering betrays a class whom the Lord likens to vipers; men whose moral sensibilities were so deadened as to put the animal before a fellow man. They indeed had become like the viper which has venom like the power of hell (Gehenna) Matthew 23: 33. Could hatred go further than attempt to tie the hand of God down to an ordinance, and seek to kill God's Son for doing good? When the Lord healed the withered hand they went out to hold a council to destroy Him. The allusion to David and the priests shows how God is cognisant of the state of things at any time and orders men's conduct in relation to the need. Compare the permission of that which was an apparent disorder in the feast of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29: 30). Mercy rejoices against judgment.

Next note the power of life put forth on the man with the withered hand. He is a picture of Israel who instead of the freshness of living power to serve God which the hand represents, had become withered and decayed. "Stretch forth thy hand." How could a man with a dead hand stretch it forth? The living One who said the word imparted the power and in the presence of the exasperated Pharisees

the man's hand was made whole. They held a council to destroy Him, but the Lord went on with His works of mercy. They were on the line of murder, He in the way of mercy. They were mad, He was sad (Luke 6: 11. Mark 3: 5-6).

Two things mark these leaders. They are here described by the Spirit as the bruised reed and smoking flax. First they had a pretence to support the weak but when leaned upon could only wound (see Isaiah 36: 6. Ezek. 29: 6, 7). Second, a burning hatred which is powerless, but waits its time to break out into fierceness of flame (Isaiah 7: 5). This is how the Spirit designates these men in their council of murder. But see Jehovah's Servant in the moral beauty of His service. " My Beloved in Whom My soul is well pleased ... He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory." His heart and hands were so full of His works of mercy that all else must stand over till they are finished. Then shall He deal with those murderers in consuming judgment. Meantime His work goes on in the remnant of His people soon to break through to the Gentiles (Acts 1: 8 from whom many shall come and hope in Him (Romans 15: 12). In the midst of His glories both personal and official which mark this section this gem of moral beauty is set (Matt. 13: 21) in a way that calls forth admiration as well as adoration and leads to the fullest praise.

Here then one glorious Figure towers above all else in the chapter, and from this point down to verse 37 He meets the whole power of evil. He took no notice of the charge of casting out demons in Matthew 9, by the power of Beelzebub, but does so here in a way that narrows everything down to Himself and the opposing power of the devil. "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." The tree is either good and its fruit good or corrupt and the fruit corrupt (verse 33). The two classes could not be clearer, and in the light of christian doctrine it is the distinction between what is of Christ and of Adam. Here the two generations are brought out: one come under judgment as having blasphemed the Holy Spirit, and another coming into view as doing the will of the Father and associating themselves with the Son, the rejected Messiah.

Mixed with the fearful state of things which was bringing down judgment and breaking the links between Him and the nation there was much of a deeply pathetic character. The marks of moral death and decay on the one hand coupled with a people whose state could only be likened to a sheep fallen into a pit; the moral insensibility of the leaders that would hinder their rescue and charge their great Benefactor with evil, and under cover consult His death. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I . . . and ye would not!" Surely blind and dumb and possessed of a devil described the nation at that moment whose true condition was seen in their leaders.

Their leaders seek a sign (verse 38), a sign of awful portent would be given. The sign in Luke 2. 12 was His birth. A "Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger," that had failed to affect them; here it is His death and resurrection. Jonah had come forth from the belly of hell (Sheol) a sign to the Ninevites; the Lord Jesus Christ would come forth from victory over death a Judge to this generation. In chapter 11 three cities of Galilee were contrasted with three cities of terrible notoriety. Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum had left these far behind in guilt. Here the contrast is between the men of Jonah's day and "this generation." The Queen from darkest Africa and the men of Nineveh would rise up in the judgment against these people who were rejecting the Lord of glory. There had been an external cleansing since the days when Jerusalem's sisters were Samaria and Sodom (Ezekiel 16) but now the last state was worst of all. Whatever fulfilment this passage (verse 43-45) is yet to have, and it certainly will have a terrible one, the rejection of the Son of God passes beyond all other sin.

Since the fame of the Lord is our theme a few words on the group of chapters eleven to sixteen may help to clarify the position. We who live in the full light of revelation find it difficult to visualise the position as it was before the eyes of the people at this time. Prophecy had outlined in glowing language the coming of the Messiah in glory to reign (Psalm 72 and 96-100), but it had also foretold His rejection, suffering and death. While all were ready to receive a King in splendour there were few prepared to accept the lowly homeless Stranger. A King in Solomonic splendour would have been hailed with general acclamation, but One born in a stable and coming from an obscure village was out of the question. A King with outward display might put honour on the people and deliver them from bondage, but a lowly Stranger! who could understand? Yet the Prophets had spoken of the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (1 Peter 1: 11: Psalm 22: Isaiah 53). The passage from Peter links together both comings, but the church age coming in between none could understand at that time.

The presence of the Lord among His people had all nations in view for the Incarnation was really a covenant made with all the peoples (Gen. 49: 10: Zech. 11: 10). The Lord was there in all the grace of the good Shepherd to feed His flock, His rejection by them constituted them a flock of slaughter; a dreadful slaughter which was carried out later by the Romans. He is seen in the prophet with two staves, a rod and a staff, the one called Beauty or Favour which meant protection; the other He called Bands in view of binding Israel together in blessing. All this grace was refused and in their blind infatuation they sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. (Ex. 21: 32; Zech. 11: 12, 13; Matt. 26: 15.) The consequence was that He broke the staves, the whole world came under judgment as proved at the cross, and the blessing both of the Jew and the nations postponed till He comes again after the gathering in of the church out of the world.

The Lord's rejection thus made room for the turn of the dispensation, and at this point He steps out into the wider place of Son of Man, and begins to unfold a new order of things, namely, the kingdom in the mystery and the Assembly (Church) as its inner treasure, which would result from the cross and the coming of the Spirit from Christ glorified. It was not that His rejection was a surprise which caused the formulation of a new plan. No, all was foreknown, and the perversity of the people made room for God to bring about deeper things which lay behind His outer ways with Israel.

The Lord proceeds in Matthew 13 to connect His labours which had seemed to be for nought and in vain in Israel with the Kingdom as now coming in. Though refused by the covenant people the kingdom would go on but in a different way. Instead of the blessing of the nations with Israel at the head it would be a Kingdom in mystery, as having its King, the source of life, light and glory, an object of faith at the right hand of God in heaven. This leaves room for a hint as to His Assembly, in the pearl of great price, which we shall see is the innermost thought of His blessed heart. Could anything show the perfection and beauty of God's ways like this?

Here is the secret of the permission of Messiah's rejection. The future day of glory necessitated the cross and the call of the Assembly, that company destined in the purpose of God to be the vessel in which the Son would find all His deepest joys and God would give an answer to the creation concerning the sin question and the solution of every moral question.

Matthew 13

The long chain of parables in chapter 13 bring out the glory of the great King-Prophet. In Hebrews He is the King-Priest. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) the Godhead glory shines through the words, and the same is here in the Sermon on the sea. The mountain is descriptive of Israel but the sea speaks of the testimony of God among the nations of the world. No created being could

behold the future ages and give an accurate description of coming events. In the seven parables before us the Lord connects His second coming with His first and shows the leading features of testimony during the time that rolls in between. He Who holds every heart under control can alone describe the future, and in His prophetic discourse we see the great Immanuel.

The first parable is given in verses 1-8, and the explanation in 18-23. Between these the Lord opens out the situation to the disciples and the place of favour to which they were called. A parallel is seen in Revelation 2: 18-23 where the Son of Man with eyes as a flame of fire and feet like fine brass removes in holy judgment the candlestick of the professing church because of its state of iniquity, and singles out a remnant, putting them in a place of favour and witness for Himself. "To you it is given," the Lord says here, "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given . . . Therefore speak I unto them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing they hear not neither do they understand . . . But blessed are your eyes, for they see and your ears for they hear, For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye hear and have not heard them." As the wicked and unprofitable generation recede from the place of testimony the new company are seen separated from the nation to the place of richest favour.

The parable shows what the Lord had been doing since He began His ministry. Refused as Messiah, Son of David, He did not then begin to sow but had been sowing all along in view of a harvest from a much wider field. This work might necessitate a transition of the remnant of His people to the nations, extending the boundaries of divine testimony in the earth to a much wider sphere; a work which His rejection made room for.

He opened His heart to them strewing the secret working of God head wisdom in the divine ways from the beginning of the world. The One Who created the world planned also the ages (John 1: 1-3. Hebrews 1: 1-2). The inconceivable grandeur of the milky way with its innumerable hosts of suns and systems shows His creative power, but the ages with their unfoldings of moral life bespeak His wisdom and resource. Here at the turn of one age and the entrance upon another He stands in Manhood the *ONE* who planned them, the great Centre of all strewing to His disciples their place with Him in divine favour and bringing out of His treasures things new and old. If the time had not yet come for unfolding eternal things which belong to eternal counsels He, as the great centre of the time ways of God, can speak to them of things kept secret from the world's foundation (Verse 35. cp. Psalm 78: 2).

The first of the parables describes His work on earth; all the rest describe the kingdom as set up from Him exalted to heaven. These last six are commonly spoken of as similitudes of the Kingdom, and are divided into two threes at verse 36 by the Lord's movements. The first three are spoken in the presence of all and have the external order of divine testimony in view, the last three are spoken inside the house, and have the inner spiritual side of the dispensation in view. The three outstanding elements of prophecy mark the whole six. The pre-intimation, the whole outline in range, and then the fulfilment. These again presuppose the eye of Omniscience, the attribute of Omnipotence that is almighty to fulfil and the beneficent wisdom and goodness of divine love. If He is Immanuel then the power of evil which seemed to have triumphed in His abasement and rejection can but serve His glorious design.

The parable of the wheat and tares properly understood helps greatly to the understanding of the whole, and since much has been written on this chain of parables we shall only note a few points which help to bring out the beauty of the King. "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man which sowed good seed in his field." The parable is given in verse 24-30 and the explanation in 37-43. A man sowed good seed in his field. The Sower is the Son of Man, the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom (v. 24 and 37-38). But while men slept the enemy came and sowed tares (28).

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the tares are the children of the wicked one; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Thus far is the complete explanation of the parable. Now for the glory and the future of that which was gathered into the barn. The ground covered includes from Pentecost right through the church age, past the rapture of the heavenly saints, and through the preparatory providential judgments right into the scene of millennial glory strewing the whole divided into two grand parts, the heavenly and the earthly; the one the Kingdom of the Father, and the other the Kingdom under the whole heaven, the Kingdom of the Son of Man (verse 41, 43, and see Daniel 7: 27). It began as the kingdom in mystery and runs on to the kingdom in glory, and while the result of the enemy's work is only too sadly in evidence, room is left for all its inner grandeur going on to the final glory of the righteous shining forth in the Kingdom of their Father.

In the following parable (verses 31-32) the Lord foreshows the wholesale departure and development of worldliness in the christian profession during the time that the wheat and tares grow together. The beginning at Pentecost was outwardly insignificant but in process of time it grew to become a great public concern. From a small beginning, a mere mustard seed, there sprang up in process of time a great imposing commonwealth likened to a great tree which became the shelter of the birds of the air. Its passage from Pentecost and the Apostles to the church of the fathers and on to the Papacy was steady, but in the next parable the Lord shows the inner corrupting principle which was at work permeating the whole.

Having reached the point where all seemed defeat the Lord goes inside and after explaining the parable of the wheat and tares gives to His disciples a glimpse of what was really the cause of God's forbearance with the outer ruin he had previously sketched. In the next two little parables we pass from man to God, to that which, though but dimly touched, is the richest part of His eternal purpose in Christ. He began to speak inside of what belongs to the inside, of what is of priceless value to Himself; the treasure and the pearl. The treasure was unseen and unknown to all but Himself. He found it and hid it again. The great tree might be conspicuous but that which was of interest to Him can only be in evidence when He reigns. The pearl was of great value. He was seeking beautiful pearls and found one of great value and went and sold all that He had and bought it.

In the first similitude the enemy was busy while men slept; in the second there was expansion, publicity and popularity, while the third shows the hidden power of corruption that underlay it all. But in the Treasure and the Pearl there is that which is gratifying to the Lord; that which in its own indestructible beauty passes beyond the power of the enemy to corrupt. It is not merely that believers are distinguished from unbelievers as in the case of the wheat and tares, it is the saints seen in the light of eternal purpose anticipatively in the divine nature and in the life of Christ. The great idea is preciousness; for such a pearl He sold all that He possessed, yea, He went further for "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." In accord with this we read of the saints being "God's workmanship" and also "He that hath wrought us the self-same thing is God."

The last of the similitudes is the net cast into the sea. In the first it was the seed sown in the field of mankind here it is the same testimony among the nations and the end carries us outside the present age to judgment. Angels, providential agents of the King, remove all that offends. Whether it be the sea or the field, all are His. His by creation and also by purchase on the cross. While all are His by double right, He acts here in the light of the latter. He bought the field, in view of the treasure and it was costly, for to secure it He had to sell all that He had. If the treasure was to be had He must purchase the whole field, this gave Him possession of all. The time is near when He shall ask and receive the heathen for His inheritance, but distinct from these is the wheat which are the children of the kingdom and the tares which are the children of the devil.

Matthew 14 and Matthew 15. "And His fame went throughout all Syria," Matt. 4: 24.

In chapter 14 the apparent triumph of evil in the death of John the Baptist becomes the occasion to introduce certain features of the Lord's glory in relation to the new thing that was coming in, namely, His church. Being rejected as the Messiah by Israel, He declares in Matthew 16 that He would build His church upon an impregnable foundation.

The three incidents that follow the murder of John — the feeding of the five thousand, His going up into the mountain alone, when His disciples were sent away across the sea, and His coming to them walking on the water, show the wisdom of the Lord in relation to God's glory and man's need in view of the transition that was taking place. The first incident shows the headship of Christ, the second His priestly service, and the third His lordship.

The grace of the Lord is seen in relation to the need of men. This is the basis upon which all that we may learn of His glory rests. The circumstances were Jewish, but the time had come for Him to put the stamp of a heavenly order upon them. He was a rejected Saviour, and about Him gathered His disciples, a remnant of the people, and then the hungry multitude. His heart went out to these for He could not be indifferent to their need. From five loaves and two small fishes He fed them all, and then said "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost," and there were twelve baskets full gathered up. The number twelve in Scripture often denotes divine administration through human vessels, as the twelve disciples, etc. We may apply this to what was then near at hand. The disciples were being fitted to go forth into the world with a basket each, filled with the good things of God. Their service here of carrying His bounty to the hungry multitude was a fitting introduction to the great work they were called to do after He had gone on high, and the Holy Ghost had come down at Pentecost. We may give the miracle a distant application also and see in it the time of the full blessing of Israel in the day of their deliverance, and that blessing overflowing to the nations.

How His glory shines out here, and what fame is His! Omnipotence at work in creating food, His power being at the service of His compassion, the foreshadowing of His administrative supremacy on high, He is rich unto all that call upon Him, as well as the indication that He was indeed David's Son and David's Lord who will bring in the glory and the plenty of the millennial day. His authority, capability and resources as well as His compassion illustrate for us His present place on high as the head of every man. Joseph in Egypt displayed the wisdom of headship by interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and preparing bread for the people. Our Lord is Himself that which He ministers (John 6) for here as everywhere the contrast between Him and all others is marked. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world."

After sending the disciples away and dismissing the multitude to their homes He went into the mountain alone. He separates His own from the mass of men while He goes on high. "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15). While He is away the world goes on forgetful of all His benefits, and His own are tossed upon the waves, the wind contrary, verse 24. The sheet of troubled waters is not an inapt figure of what the devil — the prince of the power of the air — has made this world for those who witness for Christ. Taking the distant view, the disciples represent all that is proper to Israel and about them the storm will rage to its very height, for they have yet to pass through "Jacob's trouble." But then He will appear for their deliverance. He came once and the nation refused Him, but in the language of Scripture He will appear the second time to them that look for Him unto salvation.

His coming will bring their travail to an end for as soon as He entered the ship the wind ceased. The darkest time of Israel's history is fast approaching when in deep distress the remnant of them will cry "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever" (Psalm 44). At that time of terror He will appear. Then shall they see Him whom they have pierced and shall weep, a national weeping, every family apart. He who plants His footstep on the sea will bring them to their desired haven.

But the incidents have a present application. He has gone on high, and ever liveth to make intercession for His own who are buffeted by the storms of life, yet in another sense He draws near to them. The act of Peter in leaving the boat to go to Jesus on the water has long been used to illustrate the transition from Judaism to Christ. Having been refused by Judaism the Lord is outside it, and the system that refused Him answers to the boat. There was no room for the Lord either in the world or amongst His people Israel, the outside place was His, and Peter by his act indicates the place of the believer in the outside place with Him. For his witness for the Lord the man in John 9 was cast out of the synagogue but he found the Lord there, or the Lord found him there.

The new thing which began at Pentecost, namely the formation of the House of God and the Body of Christ by the Spirit was not a continuation of Judaism. The Apostles and those brought in by their labours were gradually brought from their earthly hopes and expectations to the joy of haying part with Christ in glory. We learn from the Book of Acts how this transition was effected and see the forbearance of God in bearing with that system which had crucified His Son. God bore with it in the forty years between the Cross and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Peter's leaving the ship to go to Jesus is a beautiful expression of what it is to join Christ outside the world, the One disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious.

In His answer to the terrified disciples the Lord said, "Be of good cheer, I am." It is well known that this is the right rendering of the words. We see Him thus a Man yet the great "I Am" in a scene that shows figuratively all the power of evil under His feet. He walks upon the sea as His by double right: in Godhead He created it and in Manhood it forms part of His vast domain and in a coming day when the universe, animate and inanimate, hymns forth His praises, the sea shall join with all other parts in that universal song. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof, Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord" (Ps. 96: 12, 13).

The sea is often taken in Scripture to represent the restless forces of evil. At its creation He had shut it up within doors when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb. He had set bars and doors and said, Hitherto shalt thou come but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. Again it is said "The floods have lifted up, O Lord the floods have lifted up their voice. The floods have lifted up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Job 38: 8-11; Ps. 93: 34). Here in the double rights of His Divine-human Person the Lord Jesus Christ is seen with all the powers of evil figuratively underneath His feet. What a scene for our devout contemplation; well might we adoringly sing "Crown Him LORD of all."

At the end of the chapter He is received where He had been before refused (See Matt. 9). He is coming and will be received in the world that preferred its commerce and its swine to the holy One; meantime we are permitted to enrich our souls with all the moral wealth of such unfoldings of His glorious Person morally and officially as come out in the incidents where He made the very needs and distresses of His people to draw out the riches of His grace and glory.

We may sum up the 15th chapter of our Gospel in the words exposure and disclosure. The

exposure of the heart of man and the disclosure of what is in the heart of God. Both Peter and John speak of the Lord as holy and righteous, both features shine out here in the exposure of these leaders of the Jews who were again finding fault because the disciples did not conform to their traditions. The Lord quotes from the Scriptures in which they boasted to bring home to them their hypocrisy. To possess the outward form of religion with the heart untouched is the most dreadful of all states in which a man can be. Zeal for religious observances with an unsubdued spirit sears the conscience and hardens the heart, and blinds men even to the extent of refusing aid to helpless dependants under the pretext of faithfulness to God.

He deals first with these blind leaders and then in verse 10 turns to the multitude, and lastly addresses the disciples, verses 15 - 20. To these last He describes the utter corruption of the human heart in a way that corresponds with the Holy Spirit's summing up of the human race in the three great branches of it — Shem, Ham and Japheth (Rom. 1 - 3). There appears to be some correspondence with Romans 7 and 8 also. The Lord goes to the root of things, He exposes the condition of the human race. His words are of universal application. In Romans 7 we hear the cry for deliverance from this state of things in view of entering into the liberty of Romans 8; and here the exposure of man's condition precedes the wonderful revelation of the church in Romans 16, where we learn that those who form it are of the same nature as Christ Himself, the builder of it.

As always the Pharisees displayed the perversity of the flesh, but in the incident that follows the power of the devil is revealed; both were opposed to Christ, and the truth is that it is through the flesh, or fallen condition in which man is, that the devil works against God; he has succeeded in turning against the Creator His best workmanship. But have we not today something which closely resembles what is disclosed in these chapters? Apostasy from the faith once for all delivered to the saints is spreading with alarming rapidity in Christendom, the leaders of this apostasy answer to the leaders who- opposed the Lord, while we have a strong evangelical element, for which we may be thankful, which answers to the state of the disciples; real souls who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, but like the disciples not fully able to avail themselves of the great resources that are for them in Christ. Then there are those, who may be of no account in men's eyes, who like Peter have learnt of the Father something of the glory of Christ and what the assembly is to Him (Matt. 16). It is a blessed thing to know that He who was "cut off and had nothing" so far as Israel and the kingdom of this world went, did not go until He could say, "I will build My church." We may thank God that in the midst of the growing apostasy we may through grace appreciate the glory and the grace of Christ and appropriate the precious things of heaven of which He is the Administrator.

There is something unusual in the Lord's manner towards the woman of Canaan. We cannot recall a case in which He refused to answer except in the case of Herod, and there He was carrying out His own injunction "Give not that which is holy to dogs." From Him who came from heaven freighted with divine bounty to meet all need there was no answer to a cry of need. Why? The answer from a dispensational point of view may be twofold. A Gentile could not be met on the ground of the Messianic testimony, she had no claim on the Son of David as such. Though morally, as the sequel proved, far beyond the Jew, she cannot be heard on that ground. Secondly, all that which the nation had refused He will honour. The relationship and blessings of Israel will yet be owned and met, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This Gospel may be said to present Him as the Minister of the circumcision to confirm the promise made to the fathers but if we look at the text we have cited we shall see that it finishes with the words "*that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy*" (Romans 15: 8, 9).

The mercy of God transferred this woman from the place of a dog to blessing of the highest

character. She owns Him Son of David, she owns Him Lord and acknowledges Israel to be the children and herself a dog. but beyond that she has a sense that the One she is addressing cannot refuse to meet her need. Her *faith* penetrates through every difficulty, dispensational or otherwise, right to the heart of the Lord and it meets as it always does its full reward. He said, "O woman, great is thy faith." To her as to ourselves the crumbs turn out to be the very best; like the baskets taken up after the desert feast they speak of the precious things of heaven.

Here again note the combination of glories which meet and shine forth in the Person of our Lord. He cast out the demon but did not go to where the girl was; He is God, omnipresent, and His power is in operation everywhere and so He met and answered the faith of the woman out of His sovereign mercy. The moral perfections of His Manhood are seen in the way He acts, while what is official and dispensational comes into evidence in the way He guards and honours the place of the people who had already dishonoured and rejected Him.

The feeding of the 4,000 sets forth the unwearied patience and ungrudging beneficence of the Lord. He had already fed her poor with bread according to Psalm 132. Here He repeats and extends His bounty in a way that fits exactly into that moment, namely the widening out to all nations the testimony of His grace. The feeding of the 4,000 seems to have been a miracle of greater proportions than that of the previous feast where 5,000 were fed. There are certain peculiarities in regard to time, place and numbers which seem to indicate this; while both were the fruit of Omnipotence the bearing of each was different. The time was later as witnessed in their sitting upon the ground or earth and not on the grass as in Perea on the eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee.

There the people would be mostly Gentile, as we read "Galilee of the Gentiles." But perhaps the most notable difference lay in the difference of the numbers used. The numbers five and twelve, in the first feast are pretty much Jewish as seen in the Pentateuch and the twelve tribes, while four and seven are numbers that speak more of the creation in relation to God. Four speaks of what is universal, and seven of divine bounty ministered to the creature. Seven can be viewed indeed as four and three which gives God in Trinity in relation to the universe. Taken with all the circumstances it is clear that we are much more on Gentile ground and in the gospel age. In the former there were twelve small baskets. one for each of the disciples, here there were seven large baskets, as those who read the original tell us. In the former we have a ministry begun at Pentecost which like all committed to men broke down, in the latter we have that which speaks of heaven's administration which never breaks down because it is in the hands of God.

This turns us to the blessed One Himself who ever is the guarantee of divine fulness of blessing in unbroken continuity. If the exposure of man was deep, strewing the universal state and not that of the covenant people only, the disclosure of the heart of God to meet it was also complete. "I have compassion on the multitude . . . and I will not send them away fasting lest they faint in the way," was the revelation of His blessed heart, strewing forth His moral glory and bringing in His activities which display Him in Divine Omnipotence and grace. This again put forth in such a way as to go far beyond the need and create the position for seven large baskets to be gathered up as if He would bring us to the very heart of God in its limitless outflow towards His poor fallen creatures in their need.

Matthew 16

The cleavage between the Lord and the leaders of Israel becomes very manifest at the opening of chapter 16. Like many leaders in Christendom to-day, they were materialistic, but stood convicted of moral blindness, for they could discern the face of the sky, but Him they knew not, nor the time of their

visitation. His refusal to give them a sign left them in their darkness. He had already exposed the blindness of the nation when He gave Jonah as a sign against them in Matthew 12, here He goes further and turns away from them. "He left them and departed," verse 4. It is humbling to see that the disciples with all their privileges as being always in His company were hampered by materialism also. When He warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees their minds ran on food, they seemed incapable of receiving moral instruction.

It is interesting and of great importance to note that before bringing out the truth of the Church for the first time in His ministry to them, He warned them against these two leavens. The leaven of the Pharisees is Ritualism, and the leaven of the Sadducees is Rationalism. The pure truth of the Church has been corrupted all down the centuries by one or other, or both these leavens, and was never more so than today. It is the enemy's work, and he knows that no one can know the blessedness of the truth of what the Lord speaks of as "My Church" who is under the influence of the doctrines of the Pharisees or the Sadducees.

Amid the conflict of opinions concerning our Lord there came from the lips of Peter a true confession as to Who He was, "the Christ, the Son of the living God," but Peter did not arrive at this great confession by natural observation, it was a revelation to Him from the Father in heaven. This confession goes beyond that of Nathaniel's in John 1: 49, which had Psalm 2 in view, and beyond that of Martha's in John 11. It was the revelation of One who though truly Man is beyond the estate of man — the Son in Manhood into whose hand the Father has put all things. And it has often been truly said that no one can understand the truth of the Church who has not first apprehended the truth as to the Lord's person.

It is as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," rejected as Messiah by Israel, that He becomes the builder of something that He can call His own. As the rejected One. He stood with His disciples, — the babes of John 11: 25, looking forward to the time when in virtue of redemption He would begin to build His assembly, a new spiritual structure wherein He would deposit and carry through all the blessings which Israel had refused. This building began at Pentecost, and it necessitated the transfer of the disciples from Jewish relationships and hopes to that of living stones in a living house, built by the Son of the living God.

His Church, the Assembly, derives its existence from Him as the Son of the living God, but the Kingdom is bound up with Him as the Son of Man. He had said, "Whom do men say that I *the Son of Man* am?"

After speaking of the Assembly, He proceeds to speak of the kingdom and its administration as it exists in mystery today — i.e. in its hidden character, in contrast to the time when it will be in public display. To Peter He said, "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This clearly refers to the place given to Peter in the front rank of the testimony as seen in the Acts of the Apostles. He it was who was used of the Spirit to open the Kingdom for the Jews in Acts 2, and for the Gentiles in Acts 10. Binding and loosing was committed to all the Apostles (Matt. 18) and seems to refer to the way heaven ratified their work as under the control of the Holy Spirit.

This passage brings together the Assembly and the Kingdom. The one is the inner and the other the outer. It has been said that the Kingdom is the bulwark of the Assembly. We remember that David had to establish the Kingdom before Solomon could build the temple. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the assembly is viewed as the fruit of the eternal purpose of God in its richest and highest place of blessing as God's house, His habitation, a holy temple in the Lord; consequently in Ephesians 6 the

saints are exhorted to stand against the wiles of the enemy, having on the whole armour of God. They are to be strong *in the Lord* and the power of His might. Administration is the thought here. Those who are being built up a spiritual house are subjects of Christ as Lord, and fitted to take up His interests. The Lord is the great Administrator in the kingdom and in His might the saints stand against the enemy, while at the same time they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, Ephesians 2: 22.

At this point the Lord is seen in each of the first three Gospels acting in the light of Isaiah 8: 16-18. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples and I will wait upon the Lord that hideth His face from the house of Jacob . . . Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me are for signs and wonders; etc., etc. Here He charged His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ (Matthew 16: 20). Having introduced the new thing which He would build, the necessity of His death comes before Him; and Peter, the one who had just been so greatly favoured drops so low as to rebuke Him. Such is man. How often the very greatness of our blessing throws us off our guard. Lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations given to him Paul received a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. He who had so signally honoured Peter has to rebuke him saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me for thou savourest not the things that be of God but the things that be of men."

The recipients of divine favour cannot have a place in the world that crucified their Master. Having given them a place with Himself in the new resurrection order of things which He would set up they must take up their cross and follow Him. It is well for each to count the cost. If a person would essay to follow a rejected Christ he cannot consistently be one with the world that crucified his Master. To take up the work of God and to be in it in the holy influence and power necessary for carrying it on, life must be given up in the sense of citizenship status, rank and all that man counts dear as man in his place in society here. In another place the Lord said "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before you" (John 15: 18). In the passage before us it is not the world casting off the Christian but his giving up the world because of his identification with Christ in another order of things which is divine. These men had given up the world, Peter says so later (see Matt. 19: 27), and His Master does not contradict him, and in spite of his lapse in Matthew 16: 22, he still had the keys and moreover had the place of honour as being one of the three whom the Lord was just about to take with Him into the holy Mount to witness the glory of the Son of Man in His Kingdom.

Matthew 17

Chapter 17 opens with the record of the Transfiguration of the Lord on the holy mount. There He shone in His own proper glory. He was the Man of Sorrows, but here we have a glimpse of Him as the Man of Glory. "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." The presence of Moses and Elijah show that the material for this display was all bound up with the nation of Israel that had refused Him and was about to crucify Him; their blindness and enmity would not rob Him of His glory. Here is an anticipation of the glory of the kingdom that will yet fill heaven and earth. It is a scene of holy splendour based upon redemption in which both heaven and earth unite in His praise. The two heavenly visitors had been pillars in the nation which had been the scene of God's operations. Here they are communing with their Lord and the subject of their communion, as Luke tells us, is His decease — His exodus which He would accomplish at Jerusalem. Upon that everything depended. The wise and prudent of earth could not understand either the meaning or the necessity of His death, the cross is foolishness to them, even His disciples could not in that day grasp it as Peter showed in Matthew 16, but it was the theme of heaven; it was known to Moses and Elijah. They could not have

been with Him in that glory except as the fruit of His work on the cross, although all its ignominy and shame and sorrow still lay ahead of Him.

Moses and Elijah picture to us that vast host that will fill the heavens, some having passed through death and others to be called up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming (1 Thess. 4), while the disciples set forth the nation of Israel set up in richest blessing upon the earth and those at the foot of the mountain, the nations that will yet come into millennial blessedness under His glorious sway, when He appears to undo all the works of the devil. In that way we may think of Him as Son of God in relation to the Church, Son of David in relation to Israel, and Son of Man in relation to the Gentile. But there is still something of His glory that carries us inside beyond it all. He is the Father's beloved Son. The saints of today, those who form His assembly, His body, and His bride, will see Him in His relation to Israel as the Messiah and in relation to the nations as the glorious Son of Man, but it is theirs to behold Him, in the inner intimacy of sons, as the Father's well-beloved Son. How wonderful is His prayer for them, "Father I will that they whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17).

Two great lines of truth run right through the Bible and meet in the Person of our Lord. First, God glorified in the Son of Man and the Son of Man glorified in God. Second, the revelation of the Father in the Son and the Son with the Father in the circle of divine affections which in its own innate excellence reaches to that which is beyond display. Both are here, the former prefigured in full regal splendour, the latter embodied in the Shekinah cloud and the voice of the Father.

The Transfiguration was clearly an answer given to the Lord by the Father with regard to His service. From that landmark in His pathway the Lord descended right down to the Cross. The glory of the Kingdom and indeed every part of the glory of Godhead right through to eternity must be secured there. The three who were with Him were told to tell it to no man till after He was risen. Matthew, Mark and Luke record it and Peter as the only one of the three present speaks of it in his second Epistle. "We . . . were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Peter's language about building three tabernacles has often been spoken of as an attempt however well meaning to lower the Lord. We may say that it showed how little he had understood the revelation of the Father to him in the previous chapter, and yet it could not be otherwise, for until the Spirit came neither he nor any of them could enter into the meaning of the wonderful favour which had been theirs as being the companions of the Man who is God the Son.

His death was before the Lord. Of it He talked with Moses and Elijah. On coming down the mountain He spoke of it again, and later to them all (see verses 12, 22, 23). But the incident at the foot of the mountain was a trial to His spirit and drew forth a peculiarly solemn word to His disciples. "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you." He connects the close of His testimony among them with want of ability on their part to avail themselves of all that He had put at their disposal. It is indeed solemn to see the close of the Lord's service here linked with the want of faith and power of His own to make good what he had brought to them. But blessed be His name, no failure on our part can lessen His love or interfere with the wealth of blessing He has brought us into. This is surely made abundantly clear in the incident at the end of the chapter.

The moral perfection of our Lord in relation to His transfiguration must not be missed. It has power to fill our souls with praise and worship. The Man Christ Jesus is here seen as the Ante-type of the Hebrew Slave. "And if the servant shall plainly say I love my master, my wife, and my children, I

will not go out free: then his master shall bring him . . . unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be His servant for ever" (Exodus 21: 5, 6). It was at this point that the Lord acted in the spirit of this passage and declared in an unmistakable way that He would not go out free. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. This was for Him the valley of humiliation right down to the Cross. His personal fitness as well as His right to go up at that moment none would deny. But had He done so He must have remained alone, a Man in heaven for evermore. He had left heaven to die, and had said the Son of Man must be lifted up, and "It was a necessity." The glory of God, the fulfilment of Scripture and the blessing of every creature hung upon His death, but while giving full place to all this we bow with adoration as we discern the moral beauty of the Man Christ Jesus who would not go out free. The Hebrew servant was to have his ear bored with an awl and become his master's servant forever, setting forth the cross and a token of the condescension of Him who by that cross has become a Servant forever.

All this is richly amplified in the closing incident of the chapter: the incident of the tribute money. Peter with his best intentions is again at fault. Nothing could more conclusively prove the hopelessness of man in nature to understand the things of God, they can only be known by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2). It was not flesh in an evil way. Peter was doing his utmost to show his appreciation of his Master but was unconsciously lowering Him. Of course my Master pays the tribute: He could not be behind in anything and particularly in that which concerns the House of God. Yet his previous confession put the Lord infinitely beyond both the temple and the tax. The question the Lord puts to Peter puts the whole thing in order. "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers?" "Of strangers," said Peter. The point was simplicity itself. "Then are the sons free," said the Lord. In another place the Lord said, "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." The point here however is the way He connects Peter with Himself. He, the Son of God, stood beyond these claims, but in grace He would come down to it and pay the tribute. Peter is sent to the sea to get that which would meet and pay the tribute both for his Master and himself.

The way the moral beauty of manhood combines with Godhead in this act fills our souls with deep delight. Could any manifestation of Godhead power impress us more than what is here? He not only sent Peter but controlled the fish. All creation is His and all is under His control not only on the land but whatsoever passes through the paths of the deep!

In its figurative bearing we touch the deeper depth of the heart of the Son of God. It speaks to our hearts of that which can never be forgotten, which will cause the hallelujahs of countless hosts of redeemed throughout eternity's golden days. Death lay upon all at that moment but He, the Man Christ Jesus stood outside its claims. As we have seen He could have gone out free but how then was the "mighty debt" to be paid? He who is free from the claims of death endures the death due to us that He might have us with Himself. He made our sins His, our judgment His judgment and paid the debt we owed. Blessed precious holy Lord we adore, and as we adore THEE our souls are led into the deeper depth of Thy holy perfections as the Son. The depth of Thy humiliation can be measured only by the height of Thy glory and both are beyond our comprehension forever. We see them in combination at Calvary where the heart of God was revealed and thereby each of us learns the meaning of the words "For Me and thee." The Bridge that spans the gulf of death none could cross without paying toll; that which meant eternal condemnation. In love surpassing all thought the Lord of glory paid all that was our due and having met every claim takes us in His own acceptance as those given to Him by the Father into that scene of heavenly bliss to share with Himself all that He inherits and has acquired as our Redeemer and Lord.

Matthew 18

The term "Kingdom of Heaven" is peculiar to this Gospel and denotes a sphere on earth under the "control of a King now enthroned in heaven, centre of power and authority. In this chapter the Lord is instructing His disciples in its laws and ways. None can enter into it save by the door of repentance and the becoming as a little child, and to be great in it, this condition of heart must be maintained. This is moral greatness, and evidently the kingdom of heaven is the exact opposite in principles and character to the kingdoms of this world. It is here composed of true believers, those who have been born again, for only such have the "little child" character; and we have a different view of it to that given in Matthew 13, where wheat and tares grow together. While sin and death reign in the world and its kingdoms, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life in this kingdom.

True greatness consists in being servant of all, the power for which is in the Lord Jesus Himself, who as in all else was the perfect example of it in a life of service to others. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, but it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant. *Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, to give His life a ransom for many,*" Matthew 20: 25-28.

The kingdom of heaven was set up at Pentecost, and worldly rank, wealth and education had no place in it. For nineteen centuries the power of evil has been at work against it, yet it stands today in its own distinctive character, as the sphere where the moral rule of God is maintained, the Lordship of Christ is owned, and salvation for man is enjoyed. The administration of the kingdom was committed to the Apostles and as this was carried out under the control of the Spirit it was endorsed in heaven, and in this chapter the promise of the same goes out to all who are obedient to its laws, verses 18, 20.

This kingdom as it exists today is in mystery, i.e., it is not publicly displayed as it will be when the Lord takes His great power and reigns, now it carries on its gracious work in the hearts of men, and is in moral power. The King is in heaven and His subjects are on earth, therefore all is on the principle of faith. It is prophetically described in the Old Testament, but never in the form described here. There it is the power and splendour of the King, who is the Prince of peace and who ensures a state of society never dreamt of in the kingdoms of men, who will cause the desert to blossom as the rose and fill the earth with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. The more we consider the glowing descriptions of His reign yet to be the more our souls are amazed at the character of His kingdom as it exists today. It was offered to Israel as the prophets had spoken of it at His first coming but His chosen people refused it, and, as to the outward glory of it, it was postponed, and set up instead in mystery.

The rejection of Christ created the position for the display of the resources of the King, for nothing that evil powers could do could defeat Him. In result all that the Kingdom will bring in for man in a *public way* is available *to faith* today. The coming day of glory will reveal salvation and eternal life for man in a public way, and indeed all the blessings of the heart of God for men, but these blessings are now enjoyed in the Spirit's power and on the principle of faith by those who have accepted the gospel and have been brought into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love.

The first feature of the subjects of the Kingdom is that of a little child; simple, confiding and unsophisticated. This strikes at the root of self-importance and a vindictive spirit so that one can be calm and quiet when wronged and leave room for the Lord to take up his case in righteousness. But the Lord speaks of the children as such, saying: — "See that ye do not despise one of these little ones, for I say unto you that their angels in the heavens continually behold the face of My Father who is in the heavens. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." There is something exceedingly blessed here: His coming and the Father's favour shown to children. Not, to *seek* and save as in another

passage, but to save, tells that though not having wandered away they have inherited fallen nature and must be saved. They have a place of special favour with the Father: their salvation brought Him, the Son of Man here.

We have seen already the connection between the Assembly and the Kingdom. Here it is the working out of the truth locally. In His providential wisdom God has placed His people in relation to one another in a way suited for the furtherance of mutual profit in their daily life. This works out in true Christian fellowship in the enemy's world and is one of the richest favours divine love bestows, but it supposes the blessedness of daily going on with the Lord. If not, the very best thing may work towards sorrow. How often alas, sleepless nights through "local troubles" and "Assembly matters" have to be passed through because grace spoken of here is wanting. "But if thy brother sin against thee, go, reprove him between thee and him alone." This indeed would avert many sorrows. But more may be needed, hence the witnesses. But even this may not be enough. What then? Tell it to the Assembly. This was to be the believer's only court of appeal. If still the offender remained obdurate, what then? Leave him alone. "Let him be to thee as one of the nations and a tax gatherer."

Binding and loosing on earth and in heaven are spoken of in the next verse. It surely conveys the meaning that whatever was done under the Spirit's control would be endorsed above. This we have seen committed to Peter and in some way carried out. Here it is continued in the Assembly and under the Apostolic advice seems to have been carried out at Corinth. (See 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 6: 11).

What follows in verses 19 and 20 connects closely with the gathering together of saints in these last days, linking up also with the Philadelphian Epistle of Revelation 3: 7-13. "Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on the earth concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from My Father who is in the heavens. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." Here is a state produced by the Spirit to which the Lord can attach Himself and the Father can take account of it and grant an answer to the prayers.

Although the Holy Spirit is not mentioned, the Holy Trinity is seen at work. What is here has been the resource of faith in a day of confusion and general breakup. It would be the link with the revival above referred to by which saints have been recalled to own the Spirit's presence in the Assembly and thereby get the gain of the full truth of the revelation committed to the Assembly at the beginning. It should be remembered that there is no warrant for organisation or ecclesiasticism, but simply a spiritual state which owns the ruin and its own utter helplessness, cleaving in faith to the promise and in this way gets the gain of the Lord's presence and the sense of the approval of the Father. The attempt to go beyond this can only bring sorrow, and alas, we have all to own the sorrowful condition of things so much in evidence to-day, the result of spiritual pride and the opposite to the child-spirit.

Two important things may be noted here. First the full light and blessing committed to the Assembly in the gift of the Spirit. Secondly, we are come to that which no failure, breakdown, or ruin can touch. The presence of Christ in the midst is what distinguished the Assembly at the beginning: it was His first thought if we may reverently say so on rising from the dead (See Psalm 22: 21-22). The prophetic intimation in the Psalm we see carried out in John 20 and after the Assembly was formed the truth of it described in Hebrews 2: 11, 12.

"And when the Queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and their apparel, his cup-bearers also, and their apparel, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her." Is there not some faint likeness here of the glorified Man in the midst of His own, those He is not

ashamed to call His brethren? What a blessed favour it is to be permitted to meet the Lord in His own circle as risen from the dead. All this in its deep blessedness is available to-day in being gathered to His Name: a Name which gathers up in itself all that He is now in redemption glory, as He Himself has said "My new Name." All this and much more may be said for there is no end to the blessing of accompanying with the risen Lord in His own circle, but it must be emphasised and more especially in view of the misuse of Matthew 18: 20, that it cannot be touched but in the Spirit. For the Lord to attach Himself to anything else, or the Father grant the petitions or heaven to endorse the actions of anything else, no Spirit-taught soul would ever assert. There is an atmosphere of grace and forgiveness in these verses which is of great value in the sight of heaven and which excludes by its spiritual power the very idea of ecclesiastical claims.

FORGIVENESS, verses 21-35. Peter's question as to how often he should forgive his brother went far beyond what we should be prepared to go naturally, but the Lord's answer shows that there must be no limit to forgiveness, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God also for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Ephesians 4: 32. The parable of the unmerciful servant that follows calls for careful consideration. It may be that it has a dispensational bearing and depicts the state of unbelieving Israel among whom the Lord had ministered with such grace, not imputing their transgressions unto them, but it also exposes what human nature is, and by Him who knows the heart, and the soul that is taught of God will feel the need of continually cleaving to the Lord to be preserved from a vindictive spirit and to be like his Master carrying forgiveness to all.

A debt of ten thousand talents means limitless guilt, but forgiveness is also limitless as the seventy times seven indicates. What believing soul would not bow before God in the light of this sovereign goodness and infinite grace that has forgiven him and relieved him of a load of guilt that merited eternal condemnation! In this connection I have thought how blessed and fitting it is that numbers of departing saints and servants of the Lord, even those far advanced in ministering the unsearchable riches of Christ, should fall back in faith upon the precious blood of Christ and the joy that the knowledge of full forgiveness gives. We remember the prayer of the Lord to His Father for the forgiveness of His foes when suffering on the cross; nothing could equal the grace and pathos of that prayer, it melts the soul into adoration before Him and covers us with shame at our lack of grace and narrowness of soul and self-importance in sometimes demanding apologies for wrongs done, instead of overcoming the evil by a greater good.

Dispensationally the Jew owed ten thousand talents but viewed nationally they did not repent, they would not have the grace so freely offered to them and they forbid the Apostles to preach it to others. 1 Thess. 2: 15, 16. But Christendom living long in the full light of the goodness of God is no better than the Jew and a day of solemn reckoning is at hand. Knowing the terror of the Lord and the just doom that awaits a grace-despising Christendom we may well use our time in seeking to arouse men and implore them to turn to the Lord who is rich in mercy and ready to forgive.

Marriage. Matthew 19. His ministry finished in Galilee the Lord departs to beyond Jordan to where a great part of His labour was wrought according to St. Luke. The Pharisees came tempting Him, asking, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? This gave occasion for Him to put His perfect touch on the Divine ordinance of marriage with an allusion to certain exceptions which are of a special nature. It is well known that divorce was common among the Jews at that time, women were put away by their husbands for mere trifles as indeed the form of the question implies. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away" (Mal. 2: 15, 16).

The Lord goes back beyond the Law to show that at the beginning God instituted this relationship and that it takes precedence of every other. God made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. They say unto Him, why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? Jehovah in the Law through Moses had permitted divorce in a certain exceptional case (see Deut. 24: 1), not commanded it as they said, and it was because of the hardness of their hearts. This word is the key to the whole passage. Had these men ever entered into the finer feelings of the human soul in relation to the ordering of God for His creature they never could have quibbled about divorce. It is to these same feelings Jehovah appeals when He applies the figure of marriage to the relationship in which Israel stood with Himself and when He pours forth His plaint over their unfaithfulness (see Isaiah 50, Hosea 2). Well might the Lord say unto them "Have ye not read." Had they but entered into the meaning of their own position nationally at that moment it would have led them to think more seriously about the sacred bond of marriage. The light way it is treated today in Christendom shows the terrible departure from the doctrine and the will of God.

We ought to be greatly impressed by the beauty of God's order in marriage, and the way the Holy Spirit takes up this relationship between man and woman to illustrate the holy place of intimacy the Church is put into with the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom," and the Spirit goes so far as to show the Church as the complement of Christ in answer to the showing forth of the same in Adam and Eve. Marriage was instituted at creation, for an exceptional case divorce was permitted by the law, but now in grace the woman is recovered from deep debasement to her honoured position in life as created by God. The awful departure from it in these last days is working dreadful havoc in society and causing suffering, sorrow and death. Does not this show that an outrage upon marriage is an attack upon the soul in its most inmost and mysterious depth.

The Lord next shows three exceptions to marriage. Two of these are connected with nature from different angles of which we need not speak, but the third is of some import and calls for a few words. "Made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." First let it be noted that we are here far from the shocking thought of enforced celibacy. If we have looked at marriage as the richest blessing in nature: here we have a power introduced by grace which carries one above nature altogether. There is nothing legal, stoical or ecclesiastical about this; perhaps it may be best explained by the well-known phrase: — "The expulsive power of a new affection." It is indeed the blessed power of the grace of heaven working in the heart and so shaping the life that a person is so controlled by the interests of Christ as to forego what is his proper portion as a man here on earth. Everything that could distinguish the

Apostle Paul as a man on earth was given up that he might be free to serve the One he once persecuted. In him we see as doubtless in many others a power working which carried him definitely above nature at her highest and best. This again connects with verses 16-22 of our chapter by contrast but before that there is the incident of the little children being brought to the Lord.

Children. Here again the disciples are at fault much in the same way though perhaps in a lesser degree than the Pharisees, and here again the moral beauty and holy refinement of the Man Christ Jesus shines out. Children are an inheritance from Jehovah (Psalm 127). This is indeed a touching scene; the stern disciples like many others today seemed to have no room for the little ones, but they did not know the heart of their Master. Are we not all children? Surely we would admit that the distance between the child and the man is small compared to the infinite distance between man and the Lord Jesus. He took them up in His arms as He had done before, and said "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to

come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Cp. Mark 9: 36, Mark 10: 16). Still later when the priests and scribes were offended at the children voicing His praise He referred them to Psalm 8 by saying out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise. We little understand how the Lord Jesus could appreciate human nature in its uncorrupted state.

Matthew 19.

The Young Ruler. We have had the beauty of God's order in creation with regard to nature, then; the beauty of nature in its uncorrupted state in the little ones and the moral beauty and perfection of the Lord's ways with regard to both. In what follows we see how nature can conform to the outward forms of the Law without any true knowledge of self, and how one could seek the Lord's approval and blessing apart from complete surrender of heart to Himself. This is a peculiarly pathetic case. How it must have affected His blessed heart to look on this young man and love him and then to have to expose him to himself in the very springs of his moral consciousness. We have seen in this Gospel where man would prefer his commerce even among swine than have the Saviour, but here we have a character that is irreproachable, one whom the Lord could look upon and love (See the parallel passage in Mark 10) one who had kept himself blameless in the light of the outward form of the Law and yet he would prefer earth and its good things to having Christ and heaven. Nor, let it be remarked, was he alone in this for it is the universal state of man in nature as fallen and gone far from God. This is that which the Lord alone could detect and His doing it not only exposed this young man but shows to every one of us where we were and are apart from the grace of our God.

Here again the Apostle Paul shows the way out both in his doctrine and practice. He, like this young man was according to the law blameless. He could say, "I had not had conscience of lust except the Law had said, Thou shalt not lust." The last commandment of the ten exposed him to himself and showed him that however blameless he was in an outward way there was a state of corruption within from which nothing could deliver him but the death of Christ. This through grace he faced, as he tells us, "For I through the Law have died to Law that I might live to God" (Romans 7: 7; Galatians 2: 19).

The young man went away sorrowful. He was outwardly blameless, upright and lovable, but his love for earth and earthly things was too strong to allow him to have Christ and the precious things of heaven. Such a case cannot well be dismissed without a tear, but if so do not let us forget that but for the grace of God everyone of us would have judged things as he did. Another question might well be raised with those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, namely, how far do we in practice put earth and earthly things before heaven and the whole range of unseen things — the sphere of faith? It is just here that the whole-hearted devotedness of Paul was seen. He provided the perfect answer to what the Lord desired from this young man. Outstanding in every way as a man in rank, status and personal qualifications; he laid all down at the feet of Him who called him by His grace from being a rabid persecutor to be a humble follower of Himself, the rejected Christ. It was he who said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (See 2 Cor. 4: 17-18; and Phil. 3: 4-10).

But the disciples had left all to follow the Lord, therefore Peter says, "What shall we have?" It's as if he said we have done what this young man would not do. The Lord graciously meets this with both present and future reward. They would have a distinct place in the coming day of glory, then widening out, He mentions a full present and eternal reward to all who give up what is natural for His

Name's sake. Whatever the reward may be and thank God there will be a rich reward to each and every one that has given up for Christ and sought to serve Him, yet it is well to see that the Person of Christ and true devotedness to Him is always the motive for true service. This indeed ensures the enjoyment of the hundredfold now as well as to inherit everlasting life.

Have we noted how the moral glory of our Lord Jesus Christ pervades this nineteenth chapter of Matthew? Difficult questions are met and delicate matters adjusted, human nature is treated both before the fall and after, in its sinful state under Law, and in its uncorrupt condition in the children, and in that peculiar state in the young man who though outwardly blameless had his heart set so on his possessions that he refused Christ and missed heaven's very best. But in this blessed and glorious Teacher there has come a new power which can carry us outside and above nature in every sense and make us lay ourselves at His feet and count everything else but dung and dross.

This parable of the householder and the labourers links on with Peter's question in the previous chapter, "Behold we have forsaken all, and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?" It is confessedly a difficult parable but it is a parable of the Kingdom of Heaven, and may be more easily understood if we see that service and not salvation is the theme. Of course the motive power for all true service is salvation. We are saved by grace and it follows that our walk, our conduct and our service must be on the same principle. All true service is the outcome of salvation and life, but there may be service which flows from mere profession. This is supposed in the case of these labourers who agreed to serve the householder for a certain pay. They entered a profession, the pay and not the work was the first thing with them, that such a thing is possible is clearly proved in Luke 12: 45-48.

True servants of Christ have drunk of His grace and are controlled by the desire for His glory and the blessing of their fellow men, being filled with gratitude for the grace that permits them to serve such a Master, as is the Lord, our Saviour. The holy and estimable privilege of serving Him would be utterly lost if we bargained with Him about it. The legal principle of bargaining for so much pay shows that in this parable the Lord had the kingdom of heaven in its widest aspect in view and that of course includes profession.

Devotedness to Christ will not lose its reward, neither here nor hereafter but that devotedness is fed so to speak by communion with the Lord in the blessedness of the new life and nature and in the power of the new relationship. The Gospel of Mark presents our Lord as the Servant-Son and the service of believers seen in its proper dignity is the service of sons. To work for the Lord because of future reward is mercenary but to work in the power of holy affections puts the stamp of heaven on the service and brings us out in the likeness morally of Him whom we serve. Reward may be promised while in the service but it is not the motive power. If we contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ in His service we learn how to serve.

Of the various groups of workers employed by the Master the first only made a stipulated agreement. This surely is Law and makes God to be man's debtor. But whoever makes the bargain will get his due and proper reward in righteousness, though it leaves him discontented and finding fault. There is nothing of this with the rest. Those hired at the third hour had borne the burden of the day much more than the eleventh-hour men but there is no mention of complaint: they were evidently on the line of grace. The parable is only found in this Gospel and has a dispensational bearing, but we must remember that although the Gentile was brought in on the principle of grace, Christendom has long ago departed from the truth and indeed has gone further on the legal principle and on the line of bargaining than Judaism. The Lord had introduced the parable with the words: — "Many first shall be last, and last first." but closed it with the reverse; evidently referring in the first to the way the servants

conducted themselves but in the last to the work of God.

On the way up to Jerusalem for the last time the Lord speaks afresh to His disciples about His death. "The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and to the scribes and they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge and to crucify Him and the third day He shall rise again." The deep and solemn events connected with the end of His pathway was bearing on His blessed spirit as the time was drawing nigh. Just then there came to the front the hidden arrangement between two of His disciples and their mother.

This is indeed a humbling picture. Peter had asked the Lord: — "What shall we have," James and John go further and ask what they want, but in doing so they employ their mother. All this be it remembered from the men who belonged to the inner circle of the Lord's disciples and at a time when His blessed heart was distressed with thoughts of the darkness of Calvary. The folly and vanity of fallen flesh is indeed amazing, in spite of the fact that we know it so well in ourselves. We may see in it the weakness of a fond mother for the public aggrandisement of her sons and on their part seeking preeminence by taking advantage of their fellow-disciples in a dishonourable way. It made the others angry, can we wonder? No, indeed when we think of what human nature is. And yet it was but flesh, petty fallen flesh meeting the same in their brethren. Ah, but Jesus was there. The Lord of glory: the One Who is above all and in Whom every glory centres and in the presence of the foolish aspirations of His disciples He is on the way to the Cross. It gave occasion for a display of His wisdom indeed but far beyond that, it showed the lowliness and deep self-renunciation of the Man Christ Jesus. It put all concerned to shame and flooded the whole scene with peace and quiet. It was one of those moments in the history of our Lord when the combined features of supremacy and subjection, authority and obedience come out in such a way as to put not only the disciples but every one of us at His blessed feet in adoration.

What child of God could behold this scene without being deeply moved? The precious peerless Son of God with all the glory of pre-eminence, supremacy and majesty yet within the shadow of betrayal, scourging, mocking, taking the lowest place and strewing His poor disciples not merely by His words but by His ways what was their true place as followers of Him. Note His answer, "To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give but whom it is prepared of My Father." He then proceeds to show the character of His Kingdom. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so with you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (servant) and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant (bondman). Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many."

The two disciples were real in their desire. They said they were able to follow Him to death. They are two of the most honoured names of the New Testament. They gave up all to follow the Lord, James was the first of the twelve to die a martyr's death and John was the last to die, after his sufferings on the lonely isle of Patmos. They will indeed have a great place in the Kingdom glory of their Lord. John was used by the Spirit to put on record the most sublime words ever written. They had the common weakness of fallen humanity and for the moment dropped beneath their level. They had a Master that knew them better than they knew themselves and their fall like that of Peter's later was used by Him for nobler work and a greater place in His testimony than they had conceived or their faith had yet laid hold. In saying a word on their failure we must not forget that their desire was to be near their Master and Lord and without doubt they will be near and with Him in the day when with their fellow-disciples they sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel.

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We are permitted to follow the Lord in the Gospel of Matthew and see Him (Matt. 11), while here on earth in His own divine relationship as the unknown and unknowable Son of the Father and on through the many varied features of His glory right on through death, resurrection and ascension and to His coming again to be the adored Centre of a creation every part of which will ring with His praise and every part of which will bring its own quota to complete the glory for God's deepest delight.

May we connect for the reader the foregoing with some of the Epistles written for saints from among the Jews as following the Book of Acts. First and Second Peter with Hebrews connect closely with the Gospel which has Israel and her King in view. The remnant of Israel which gathered round the Lord seen as wisdom's children are brought through the Book of Acts transferred from Jewish to Christian ground. These are addressed as in the Kingdom established at Pentecost, and in chapter two of the first Epistle called living stones in the new living structure which the Lord said He would build. The Lord spoke both of building and administration in Matthew 16, and both are seen here in 1 Peter. The Kingdom is still, of course, seen in mystery. But in the 2 Peter it is no more mystery, for the transfiguration of Christ in the Mount is there referred to as portraying the Kingdom in glory (Matt. 17: 1-8).

The Epistle to the Hebrews goes further, bringing out the deeper glories of the Lord as covering the ground we are on here in Matthew. Opening with His sublime grandeur as Son, the Creator, we are taken back to eternity to behold Him constituted Heir of all things. How exquisitely beautiful is the link with Matt. 11: 25-27. The unknown Son of the Father is the Creator and upholder of all things: the One Who is the brightness of Godhead glory, the express image of His substance, and Who upholds all things. So also He is constituted Heir of all things and in Matthew 11 we as it were see Him taking these all things from the Father. Again in Hebrews we get Him Son of Man under whose feet all things are put. Who of us in writing to Hebrew Christians would have passed beyond the Son of David to the Son of Man? But the Epistle goes beyond this to the utmost bounds of the creation (see Hebrews 12: 22-24). In this way the Spirit brings out the glory of Him whom man refused, linking up those blessed features given in Matt. 11 - 17, with all that is intrinsic and eternal down to His Incarnation, humiliation and death, then on to the establishing the Kingdom in its present form and going on to the full manifestation in glory.

The Spirit, while bringing out the full glories of our Lord does not go on to the fuller and richer place of the Church as the Body and Bride of Christ. The truth of the Mystery as belonging to eternal purpose was given through Paul. While Peter's Epistles and Hebrews were written for those from the circumcision, all that belongs to them as there brought out is shared by those other sheep which the Lord brings in from the Gentiles: and such are the inner intimacies of life and nature in the present economy of grace that all the deeper things of eternal counsels communicated to Gentile Christians are shared by those brought from among the Jews.

The Entrance into Jerusalem. Matthew 21, Matthew 22.

With His entrance into Jerusalem there begins the last week of the Lord's life on earth and the events occupy more than one fourth of the whole Gospel. Seeking divine aid we would look at it not so much in the way of exposition but to follow His footsteps which led only to the cross and gain thereby a deeper sense of His glory who suffered all its woe and passed through it into resurrection triumph.

The entrance into Jerusalem gives a foreshadowing of the coming glory of the King. The two

blind men (Matt. 20: 30) own Him as the Lord, the Son of David, and receive their sight. What a time of joy and wonder it will be for Israel when they look on Him whom their father's crucified and own Him as their Lord and Saviour God. Psalm 118 and Zechariah 9 are brought in to complete the picture. When the KING comes Who is just, having salvation, then shall be heard the shout "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed be He who cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." But it can only be a picture for the moment for all must be founded upon His death. While the two texts recalled from the Old Testament record His royalty in Israel the two men that received their sight combine that same royalty with His Omnipotent glory as God the Son.

But the Temple scenes go further as bringing out the opposition to His authority and leading Him to the holy activity of judgment. Amidst the many events at this point of the history there are two solemn scenes of Judgment; the cleansing of the Temple and the sentence on the fig-tree.

Let us note the detail here. Two blind men are made to see, two disciples are sent for the colt, two animals brought, one to accompany the other upon which the King is seated Twice was His praise proclaimed, on the way up to the city and by the children in the temple; two texts cited from the Old Testament to celebrate the King and two solemn acts of judgment by the King. In the first of these He combines two texts from the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah as descriptive of the state upon which His judgment came. In each case the Divine Human Personality of the King is in evidence while in certain of them His Deity overshadows all. As already remarked Omnipotence was at work upon the blind men, prescience in sending for the colt and glory and majesty in His entering His city on an unbroken animal: a colt upon which never man sat, but the two acts of judgment recall the mystic cloud and its flaming fire of the prophet Ezekiel. In the act of cleansing the temple we indeed anticipate the time when the King shall be seen in His fury, when He shall gird His sword upon His thigh with glory and majesty and ride prosperously because of truth and righteousness and His right hand shall do terrible things.

It appears from the record in Mark that the cleansing of the Temple and the cursing the fig-tree were on the second day. The one refers to the place of Israel as committed to the privileges and responsibilities of the House of God, the other her place among the nations politically. In the latter there was plenty of outward appearance but no fruit, and the time had come to end that state of things. As is now well known the words "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," have a deep moral significance as referring to the close of man's moral history as a responsible agent before God. We have already seen that Christianity is anticipated in the Gospel, see Matthew 9: 16, 17, where the Lord refers to new creation in figurative language. In the sentence on the tree the Lord shows that which is preparatory to the introduction of Paul's gospel. The Apostle was the witness to the grand truth that God had ceased to look for response from man as a responsible creature, that now instead of being tested by law, Christ in glory is presented as Saviour on the ground of free grace for every man. This serves to explain the apparent severity of the Lord's dealings by bringing out the wisdom of His ways in relation to the bearing of divine testimony throughout the ages.

"And when He was come into the Temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching and said, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?" They felt that something must be said but the question exposed themselves; the divine activities of this blessed Person declared Who He was. The Lord answered them with a question about His servant John the Baptist which served further to bring out both the hostility of these men to what God was doing and their absolute incapability as shepherds for God in the midst of His people. The parable that follows showed His estimate of His servant and their guilt in refusing his message. The two sons refer to the two classes in Israel of which they His opponents were the second. The other class

were the publicans and harlots who though open in their defiance yet were reached by the ministry of the Lord and His servant John.

The next parable spoken by the Lord goes much deeper bringing home to this apostate class their guilt and condemnation. They were the offspring morally of that class which all along the line of history had treated the gracious overtures of Jehovah with hatred and had persecuted and killed His messengers, and they were about to consummate their guilt in the murder of the sent One of the Father, the Father's only-begotten Son. "This is the Heir, come let us kill Him and seize on His inheritance." By His question the Lord in solemn majesty draws forth from these men the sentence of God on themselves as to where they were and what they were doing at that moment. All this He supplements by reference to Himself as the Stone that these builders rejected. (See Acts 4: 11-12). From a topical point of view this expression of a Stone is most fruitful and would yield a rich fund of blessing but all is judgment here "He that falls on this Stone shall be broken." This exactly describes what Israel did. By refusing Heaven's richest favour in the presentation of the Son the Messiah they were broken to pieces and remain so till this day. But "On whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." Here the Gentile is in view, it connects with Daniel 2: 34, 35-45. where we are shown that Christ as Stone will fall on the whole imperial system of Gentile supremacy and grind it to powder.

Matthew 22.

This chapter opens with the parable of the marriage of the King's son. It calls for care. It is not now the Messiah King of Israel but the Son of God. Besides this the parable gives in figure the transition from Judaism to Christianity and follows on to the figurative presentation of professing Christendom at the close. The servants went forth to call those that had been bidden, evidently those who had been invited during the Lord's ministry appealed to again by the preaching in Pentecostal days. Verse 1-7 anticipates the book of Acts right down to the governmental judgment of God in the Roman sedge of Jerusalem and the terrible price Israel had to pay for their refusal of Christ when on earth and also the testimony of the Holy Spirit to His ascended glory. At verse 8 we pass in the parable to the work of grace among the Gentiles or perhaps more properly mankind in general. The wedding was filled with guests but there was one present who refused to answer to the King's conditions. The man is a specific case and doubtless refers to that class which take up the profession and enter upon the privileges of Christianity without submitting themselves to Christ. The Lord knoweth them that are His and the eye of God detects the state of every heart and judgment is bound to follow. But here it is deeper than the governmental judgment upon the Jew spoken of in verse 7. Israel was cut off to be restored again but Christendom will go down under judgment never to come up again. Then said the King to His servants (Angels here the providential agents of Judgment) bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This parable is different from the great feast of Luke 14. There the guest of Luke 15 is also a specific case representing all that are Christ's. The son who returned from the far country came into new creation by reconciliation and into the deepest and richest accompaniments of the counsels of God. The parable there anticipates the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians which is New Creation. No one could possibly enter the feast of Luke 14 without the best robe, that is to say the place necessitates a corresponding state, nor could it be possible for any to be there and be cast out. Here in Matthew the wedding garment refers to the soul's acceptance of Christ as Saviour, there it is Christ formed in the soul. Here it is Christ for righteousness and the person is seen as justified having peace with God: there in Luke it is the believer made the righteousness of God IN CHRIST. Inside in this parable refers to the circle of Christian profession where there are both real and unreal, whereas to be inside in Luke 15 is to

be within the sphere where all things are of God and where Christ is everything and in all. (See 2 Cor. 5: 17-18. Col. 3: 11). There God rests in the unclouded blessedness of His own nature having Christ and those that are His before Himself for His own complacency. As it is said "That we should be holy and without blame before Himself in love" (Eph. 1: 3, 4).

Matthew 22 and Matthew 23.

From verse 15 the wickedness of the enemies of the Lord came definitely to the fore, they took counsel to entangle Him in His talk. They were as subtle as they were wicked, these Pharisees, and their uniting with the Herodians showed that their hatred of Christ overrode all political enmity. Their question was cunningly planned, it was calculated to put the Lord in opposition to Caesar and so into collision with the civil authority; or else set the people against Him who hated Caesar's yoke. But a greater than Solomon is here, and in one short sentence He goes to the root of the matter, exposes the true condition of the nation, and puts them to silence. "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Had they owned God's supreme claim and yielded themselves to His holy will they never would have been under the Roman yoke.

The same day came the Sadducees, and their question went beyond life in this world to resurrection and the life beyond death. We are thankful that they were allowed to bring forward their cavils, and had the Lord's answer been understood the denial of the resurrection could not have found an entrance into the Corinthian Assembly (see 1 Corinthians 15). On another occasion He had said, "I am the resurrection and the life," here He goes beyond the question of the Sadducees and establishes the truth of the immortality of the soul as well as resurrection and life in the resurrection world. As He had exposed the Pharisees so now He lays bare the ignorance and folly of the Sadducees. He honoured the Word of God, which they did not know; and the power of God which shows itself in resurrection when all man's power is laid low in death, and in a few words described life in the glorified state. Then by the reference to Exodus 3, He proves the immortality of the soul and shows that all, even in the unclothed state, live unto God. How full of comfort this is, and how deeply thankful we are that in meeting the opposition of His foes He brought out the full truth for faith to rest upon.

The Pharisees gathered together and put forward one of their number, a lawyer, determined to find some way of overthrowing Him whose presence in grace among them ought to have laid them prostrate at His feet. Again the Lord's answer goes beyond the question and brings in both tables of the law, first that which is due to God and then our obligation to our fellow men. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two hang all the law and the prophets."

Having silenced each class the Lord puts forth His question which at first seemed easy to meet, but in reality was beyond the reach of any of His opponents. His reference to Psalm 110 could but close the mouths of all. The Psalm was known and held by these men to be Messianic but they would not own their Messiah. When He asked them concerning His servant John (Matt. 21: 29) they would not own that John's ministry was; from heaven nor, because of their fear of the people dared they deny it. Here the very truth that formed part of their Rabbinical creed condemned and closed their mouths. Unhappy miserable and apostate, they were dumb, condemned but not subdued after all their efforts to condemn the Lord of glory. That David's Son is David's Lord hangs upon the mystery of the Incarnation and like His word from the glory in Revelation 22: 16, "I am the root and offspring of David and the bright and morning star." It shows Him in divine human Personality as Lord of all.

Matthew 23. The stern words of this chapter leave little to be said by way of comment. Having met all their questions and put His own which they could not answer the Lord Himself has the last word. It is peculiarly solemn, searching and penetrating and like the flaming sword of old it turns every way as guarding all that was of God in His Person and displaying supreme authority in Him on whom they were ready to pour out all the hatred of their hearts. Judgment is a necessity of the moral nature of God and being fully revealed there is of necessity an answer in the creation to all that He is as revealed. The lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy? The Lord God hath sworn by Himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city. Amos 3: 8; Amos 6: 8.

The Lord addresses the people in verses 1-12. Moses' seat is occupied by the Scribes and the Pharisees: all things therefore, whatever they may tell you, do and keep. But do not after their works, for they say and do not, but bind burdens hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of men, but will not move them with their finger. In their ostentation and love of pre-eminence they scruple not to use the legal code to crush the people. Coming back to the law of His Kingdom the Lord asserts that great truth that he that will be greatest must be servant of all.

From verse 13 to 36 He addresses the leaders and in language unsurpassed for solemn denunciation pronounces eight woes of judgment upon them. They shut the kingdom of heaven against men; they were callous; devouring widows' houses and for a pretence made long prayers, they were blind and were completely void of the sense of what was sacred whether the temple, the altar or heaven itself. With an exterior of sanctity that compelled the servile homage of their followers they show themselves to be the children of their fathers by perpetuating their guilt. Verses 34 to 36 mark the transition of thought to the people in general and prepares for His lament over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" And then with what pathos and distress of heart: — "Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth. till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Before proceeding to the prophetic sketch of the next two chapters (Matt. 24, Matt. 25) we would reflect upon the glory of the Lord as seen in what has passed before us. The royal entry right from the Jordan through Jericho may well remind us of the nation's entrance upon their inheritance in earlier days. Then acclaimed by the people on the way up to the city and by the children in the Temple the blessed One broke down in sadness, Well He knew that the words of Psalm 118 sung by the people must be used by Himself against them (comp. Matt. 21: 9, Matt. 23: 39, Luke 19: 41). It was the last solemn test of the nation during His life here below and it was in every way complete.

To the opened eye He was there in full mediatorial capacity making known the heart of God on man's behalf for grace and blessing. Every movement pre-supposes that both God and Man are there in One Person and consequently depicts Deity shining through the Human Veil. Omnipotence, Omniscience, Prescience in effulgence and refulgence everywhere are seen yet withal a Man: a gracious tender Man whose dignity combined with lowliness, greatness with simplicity and was such as to set Him forth in a holy refinement which was so far beyond others as to be difficult to understand. One Who honours Scripture fulfils Scripture while He is the blessed centre around which the light of the whole sacred Volume radiates.

He does what He does because He is what He is and in doing what He does shows Who He is. He tells and foretells because He both knows and foreknows, and does these because He is Who He is.

"Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." He opens up the future both for blessing and for judgment, all hanging upon Himself as the divine Centre of the whole moral arena.

In the parable of the King's son he anticipates the governmental judgment on Israel, the refusal of God's claims in Christendom later while the fulness of the gospel is supposed all the time. The parable indeed lays the ground for the expansion that comes out in the scheme of prophecy in the second sermon on the mount which is recorded in Matthew 24, Matthew 26. He is moving in an atmosphere of murder but no man can take His life from Him: yea, rather, He had come there to lay it down. But before doing so all must come under His eye to be measured by His standard and exposed in the light of the perfect judgment of Him whose moral measures are divinely perfect.

He claimed the Messianic rights as being the perfect answer to every divine prediction of God's Anointed and at the same time brought to the most delicate adjustment the wider claims of all mankind. Although the difference between Jew and Gentile was great He stood in relation to both and at the same moment was available as a Saviour for all, and indeed He stood as Son of God beyond each, Who would build His assembly which brings in another company taken out from both Jew and Gentile which would be for His own eternal delight

What a glorious Person for our contemplation, adoration and praise is the Lord Jesus Christ There is mystery, majesty, magnitude and depths that command and control us; yea that overwhelm yet draw us; draw us on to richer strains of joy and praise. Jesus Lord we can but prostrate our souls at Thy feet in holy fervour and profound amazement, Thou Who was rich but for our sakes became poor that we through Thy poverty might become rich. Thou hast enriched our souls for eternity and put us under a debt we can never pay but we shall live to serve and adore throughout that eternity where God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit shall shine in light divine and glory never failing.

"For ever our still wondering eyes shall o'er His beauties rove; to endless ages we'll adore the riches of His love."

Matthew 24, Matthew 25.

These two chapters may be called the second sermon on the Mount. They belong to the grand scheme of prophetic truth which has an important place in the Scriptures and particularly in the New Testament. We have been permitted to listen to the glorious anticipatory chant of Psalm 118 in combination with Zechariah 9: 9, and been drawn still nearer to contemplate Him as the sent One of the Father, as those that are robed in righteousness at the marriage of the King's Son, we have now to behold by faith His glory as Son of Man which is destined to fill both heaven and earth.

This address includes in one long chain of testimony the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God, and so comprehensive is the range of divine dealings that it runs down to eternity, as may be seen in the judgment of the sheep and goats which is final. The Saviour Son of Man is the Centre around which all these events blessed or fateful revolve, all being made to hang upon His Incarnation. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Well we know that the work of redemption necessitated Manhood for the Son, but there is more, for the Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." He is seen here in relation to earthly saints, both of Israel and the nations, and heavenly saints who form His Assembly, as well as those glorious beings which are the Ministers of His pleasure to men.

But let us note well His judicial aspect as Judge before Whom the different classes of rebels

connected with these three dispensational companies must stand, and from Whom they must receive their sentence for eternity. All this it should be noted shows Him in Mediatorial capacity in relation to the great conflict of good and evil which is raging in the creation and takes in the whole arena of heaven and earth and hell. Yet, and here we touch the cross, that which surpasses all, that which in its fulness of mercy, love and kindness bows our souls before Him in praise, worship and adoration. We touch the cross which on our side shows both guilt and malice combined with both helplessness and hopelessness, while on the side of God it speaks of all that He is in righteousness and holiness with His pity, mercy and love. The Mighty One Who spoke and taught here as never man speaks in the beauty of holiness and the fulness of these glories as connecting Him with the various phases of God's moral creation was just about to stand before the tribunal of the creature and be judged by men as a blasphemer, and between two malefactors, nailed to a cross and crucified.

The Sermon depicts evil come to its height; close indeed to which we are to-day. To such an extent has it arisen that it has to be said, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." It depicts the time of the great Tribulation. The righteous must flee for the devil has come down in great fury to swallow up all that is of God upon the earth. (See Revelation 12). Such is the triumph of evil that apart from a divine intervention there would be no flesh saved, a state of things as never had been nor shall be again on the earth.

To Matthew 24: 14 the teaching is general. By which we mean that the Lord so orders His words that they may apply to others as well as those spoken to. It seems clear that we come to a definite prophetic landmark at verse 15. The taking away of the daily sacrifice and setting up the abomination of desolation — what ominous words for a Jew — is the sign for the righteous to flee. It is a time of unprecedented suffering when the furnace of affliction is heated one seven times more than it was wont to be heated, when the beast and the false prophet are allowed to work their terrible ways after the working of Satan with all power and lying wonders, when the blood of the righteous shall flow, and when they shall cry in agony of soul, "How long, O Lord" (see Rev. 13). We cannot wonder at the apparent break-up of all ordered government which seem symbolised in verse 29, a point reached which leads to the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens which is the answer to the second part of the question put by the disciples in verse 3.

From this point on to verse 44 contrary to what we might have expected the Lord goes back to what preceded His coming to warn His disciples both by parables and from history with regard to the terrible state of things yet to come. Foreseeing the dreadful storm the blessed One adds emphasis to His solemn Forewarnings by saying, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." These are the words of a faithful and well-known love. Could they or we doubt Him? His words are the guarantee that evil shall be permitted only so far as divine wisdom sees fit for the working out of its own wise decrees. "Hitherto shall thou come and no further and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." He concludes this part of His instruction with the words of verse 44, "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

At verse 45 the Lord comes still further back to the times preceding the catching away of the Assembly according to the words of 1 Thess. 4: 13-18. He speaks of faithfulness to Himself in His absence during the Church period. His instruction is given in three parables which run down to Matthew 25: 30, after which He resumes His future connection with the earth and the Gentiles. From this it will be seen that the part between Matthew 24: 44 and Matthew 25: 30 may be read parenthetically. Taken in this way the discourse falls into three distinct parts; the first dealing with Israel, the second with the Church and the third with the nations of the earth, each being viewed in relation to His coming. As in all of Scripture there is here perfect moral order. In the Book of nature

around us everything fills its allotted place in the great scheme of Creative wisdom; every forest leaf and every blade of grass; every drop of water and every grain of sand. So in this the Book of Revelation, every word and every letter is divinely chosen to bring out the mind of Him who is in complete control of the moral order in relation both to His eternal counsels and to His time ways in Christ His well-beloved Son.

It is not difficult to see in the closing verse of Matthew 24 a description of conditions to-day. There is, thank God in spite of all the unreality a faithful witness to Christ. We rejoice in the thought that in the very world out of which our Lord has been cast there are ransomed hosts whose delight it is to serve, honour and adore the rejected and crucified One. Alas, there is the evil servant also who says, My Lord delays His coming and begins to smite his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunken. How deeply solemn it is for such, for, the Lord of that servant comes at a time he thinketh not and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him a portion with the hypocrite; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Continuing His instruction concerning His second coming the Lord uses the well known parable of the ten Virgins. The illustration is that of an eastern marriage. Keeping in mind what has been already said it will be seen that the Church as the Bride of Christ is not seen here nor is the secret catching up of the saints when the Lord comes into the air (1 Thess. 4). The parable describes a condition of things which would obtain at the close of the dispensation, the virgins representing the whole Christian profession as it is seen in Christendom to-day. The words, "THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom," seem not only to denote this but also the remarkable awakening concerning the coming of the Lord which marks the present time. The expression "Behold the Bridegroom" (N. Trans.) may go further and include the precious unfoldings of Scripture in relation to the Person and glory of the Lord which have been so blessedly ministered in connection with the movement of the Holy Spirit relative to the Philadelphian letter of Revelation 3.

While the call found all in a condition which could but be described as sleep there began to come into evidence the marks of heavenly and divine vitality in the recognition of the presence of the Spirit of God. This and the fact of a glorified MAN in heaven are the two main marks of the dispensation if such it may be called. However much the line of demarcation between the righteous and the wicked may be effaced today the Spirit of God makes the distinction and like the figs strewn to Jeremiah (see Jer. 24: 1-3), the good are very good and the bad very bad. Whatever was their place in the profession the foolish virgins had not the Spirit and the solemn outcome of it was that they were left outside. "Watch therefore for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh."

The third parable (verse 14-30) sets forth the responsibility of trading with the Master's property. The talents here are different from natural qualifications which put certain persons beyond their fellows in this life. The talents are gifts bestowed by a departing Lord. A distinction exists too between what is here and the parable of the ten pounds in Luke 19, and both must be kept clear from the gifts to His Assembly by Christ the exalted Head in Ephesians 4. The latter shows the Assembly in corporate relations. There, gifts are given for the perfecting of the saints "for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come . . . to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The passage before us in Matthew as well as that in Luke has clearly Christendom in view as favoured by the light of Revelation beyond masses of their fellowmen in heathen lands. Faithfulness in the first two doubles that which had been committed to them, and draws forth both commendation and reward, while the third is left by failing to trade with the talent, in a worse position than if he got

nothing. The one who hid his talent in the earth is like the man who entered the feast disregarding the condition; both were marked by insubjection.

At verse 31 we enter another department of glory in the prophetic scheme, and consequently have to contemplate another phase of the glory of our Lord. Here it is the Son of Man coming in glory with His ministers of state to hold an assize of discriminating judgment. We have had His coming in relation to Israel which was a divine intervention at a time of unprecedented suffering; then His coming in relation to that part of the earth where heaven's richest gifts have been bestowed: here it is the same coming in relation to the nations of the earth which have just been tested by the gospel of the kingdom. In the first it was as Son of Man, the second as a thief in the night; here in the third it is the King upon His throne and all nations gathered before Him. The final test of these nations was the gospel of the kingdom and this great event shows the result for each individual for eternity. "He shall separate the one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand. Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . . for I was an hungered and ye gave Me meat . . . I was in prison and ye came unto Me. Then shall He say unto those on the left hand, Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered and ye gave Me no meat . . . sick and in prison and ye visited Me not. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

The disciples had asked, When shall these things be, and what is the sign of Thy coming and the end of the age? All is answered with a perfection that fits in each part of Scripture with every other part and the blessed Person Who is the Centre of all stands forth imparting completeness to all. Each of the three great lines of truth are seen to converge upon Himself in such a way that the whole prophetic scheme can be seen in its completeness. What is said of Israel involves the fulfilment of the promises in the judgment of their foes: what is said of the church age involves the translation of the Assembly and the judgment seat of Christ on high; the marriage of the Lamb and His coming forth in warrior judgment when in Solomonic splendour He shall sit upon His throne and the Gentile come into the blessing of eternal life.

There yet remained in the mystery of His ways a deeper unfolding of His love in the supper chamber and what followed: truth concerning the Father's gift to the Son and the Son's coming forth to die for these and all that will come into the great scene of eternal bliss. John 13-17 brings out the deepest and richest things of eternity, but withal nothing can detract from the grandeur of this sermon where we see our Lord Jesus Christ as the Sun and Centre of all the ways of God in time.

The prophetic address being finished the Lord now turns to the circumstances connected with His betrayal and death. He turns to meet the whole source of evil, and Satan himself as the hidden source of all evil, and beyond all the stern judgment of sin. First of all desertion, denial by His friends, next a mock trial with smiting, scoffing and spitting by His people, the Jews, and then every coarse and brutal indignity at the hands of Gentile soldiers. Along with this the whole power of Satan pressing death as the judgment of God on His spirit in the garden, and last of all the meeting God about sin. This last stands alone in its solemn majesty, a mystery of mysteries which forbids at once and for ever all creature power to apprehend. The Holy One must be there alone. Alone, stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He must in that hour of deepest extremity know what it is to cry in agony of soul as the forsaken one and not have an answer because He is bearing sin, made sin for us. He who knew no sin must be made sin, and be engulfed in the darkness and horror of that darkest of all hours with none to pity or no one: to help. He must be led as a Lamb to the slaughter to suffer and to die. We rightly say no created being could endure what He endured, but let us add, there is no creature that can form an

estimate of what took place there. We gaze with wonder and amazement and worship and adore while we share in the fruits and blessings of that stupendous work but into the depth of what our Lord Jesus Christ suffered or the measureless distance into which He went under God's judgment of sin no creature shall ever be able to conceive.

In turning to the circumstances which led up to all this it is striking how the events seem to fall into a certain order which seem to admit a kind of a threefold classification. Matthew 26 opens with a gathering of His enemies, followed by the supper in the house of Simon the leper. and then the coming together with His disciples to celebrate the Passover. In the first were the priests, the ecclesiastical rulers, the scribes, the learned of the nation; and the elders as those marked by age and maturity. There were the heads of that nation which had been for long under the public culture of Jehovah; to whom pertaineth the adoption and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God and the promises; whose are the fathers. and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen (Romans 9: 4, 5). There they were gathered together "Consulting that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill Him." What a sight! Enough, indeed, if such be possible, to make the angels weep. Weeping, indeed has been theirs and their children's; a weeping that still goes on and will continue till the blessed One whom they were about to kill comes back again to put an end to all their sufferings; but for the moment it is *His* time of weeping. The blessed Saviour Who wept over Jerusalem is now nearing the agony of Gethsemane when in the agony of that sweat of blood He will pour out His cries and tears. But ere that moment comes He, the adorable Centre of all these scenes must be feasted, for the Father has prepared for Him a feast. This leads to the act of the woman who came with her alabaster box of very precious ointment and poured it on His head as He sat at meat.

At a time when various classes are showing their estimate of the Saviour the Father shows His appreciation of His beloved Son. He prepared one who did all that lay within her to glorify and honour Him and amidst the gathering gloom He is seen to be loved and appreciated in an act that none but Himself can measure. Where were the disciples? Where the ardent Peter and where the beloved John that could pillow his head on His blessed bosom? These two with James, belonged to the inner circle of intimacy, but they are left far behind by this woman. What of the rest of the disciples, and saddest of all, what of Judas Iscariot? "The Lord is a God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed." Giving to the poor has a large place, yea, with such sacrifices God is well pleased, but what is this world with all its charity and philanthropy compared to the Son of God. This woman anticipated the day of His glory when to Him shall be brought the wealth of the Gentiles, when the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts, when all kings shall fall down before Him and all nations serve Him. All this will be fitting in its time but the act of this devoted woman surpasses all; she lighted up the whole moral scene by anointing Him for His burial in that dark hour of His betrayal and dishonour and death.

It was the unerring accuracy of spiritual instinct that flows from personal occupation with her Lord. She spent upon Him her all. She did the proper thing in the proper way at the proper time, for she anointed Him for His burial: an act which stands alone by one who can say nothing for herself, well knowing that He upon Whom the sacrifice was performed alone would estimate it and vindicate her. This world goes on with its charity and philanthropy, all right and beautiful in its place, but here is something which must be proclaimed through all time and in every land, an act which will be remembered to her credit through all eternity. "It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. The gold and crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold" (Job 28).

The third meeting (ver. 20-25) was with the twelve in the upper room to celebrate the passover.

He sought seclusion with His own in a touching farewell meeting. The time is near when He and they must be parted: parted indeed as after flesh and blood for ever. His heart goes out to them in the words, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." It was then that the Supper was instituted which would serve as a memorial a calling of Him to mind. His death being the basis of all, and around which revolves the deepest and richest feelings of the heart of God and the wealth of eternal counsel. Many things came out concerning His death and resurrection, and the Spirit's presence here consequent on Him being glorified on high as we learn from John; but even here while the storm of evil was rising outside there was that which brought deepest distress to His heart. One would betray Him (verse 25), another would deny Him (verse 34), and all the rest would forsake Him and be scattered.

The case of Judas is a tragedy beyond compare. Who can fathom the depth of our Lord's words, "It were better for that man he had never been here." And again when speaking to His Father: — "None of them is lost save the son of perdition." His was a place of richest favour, companying with the Son of God. May we not say that he was the product of His generation and the representative of fallen humanity? The way was opened in the act of disobedience in Gen. 3, which ended in the betrayal of the Son of God with a kiss. With Peter it was different: boasting self-confidence led him beyond his faith, and breakdown followed in the most deplorable way. Viewed from the place of intimacy in which he stood Peter's fall seems to go beyond even that of the Iscariot. Well for him however that his fall did not put him beyond the ground of mercy. Peter had to weep bitterly, but Judas, like Ahithophel of old (2 Sam. 17: 23), went out in the bitterness of remorse to end his own life. The forsaking by the rest of the disciples completes the humiliation of the Apostolic band, and the Holy One is left in the hands of His foes.

The Lord took occasion at the feast to transfer their thoughts from the type, that is the deliverance from Egypt and the Covenant at Sinai, to the commemoration of His death and the covenant of grace, a covenant which may be seen in its spirit and principle (Gal. 3: 14-18) long before the covenant given at Sinai. This new covenant though not yet made can be spoken of as eternal (Heb. 13: 20). It was promised in Jeremiah 31: 31-34, and is marked as springing from the nature of God coming to man on the principle of grace. It was necessary that the pattern of things in the heavens should be purified with blood, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these (Heb. 9: 23). The Blood of this New Covenant was shed at Calvary and is here spoken of symbolically by the Lord as the cup of the New Covenant in His Blood. That cup is later called the Cup of Blessing, indicating surely the whole range of divine blessing brought to us in the death and blood shedding of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is touching how He speaks of it at the time of the break up of all earthly associations in view of its renewal with them in the Father's Kingdom as connecting them with Himself in the highest and richest place in the heavenly order of things. It was at this moment, according to the account of John, that the Lord began to let His heart out to His disciples concerning their place with Him in that which is heavenly and eternal in a way which culminated in the sublime words to His Father in John 17.