

F.B. Hole

**Comments on
the Gospel of John**

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By F.B. Hole

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Chapter 1

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN was evidently written some time after the other three Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke had each told, in their divinely appointed way, the story of the birth, early years and entrance into ministry of Jesus Christ, and John takes their record for granted, since without it his opening paragraphs would be hardly intelligible. As the first century drew to its close, sufficient time had elapsed for the launching of attacks on the Person of Christ, as being the very citadel of the faith, and there were philosophic, semi-pagan notions floating about and attaching themselves to the doctrine, which would have been disastrous if they had not been met in the energy of the Spirit of God. Hence that energy was put forth in the writings of the Apostle John, about a quarter of a century, it would seem, after both Paul and Peter had finished their course.

The early Christians were much troubled by the so-called "Gnostics;" that is, the "Knowing-ones." We have been made familiar with agnostics, that is, people who deny that any certain knowledge of God and His things is possible. The Gnostics were at the opposite pole: they claimed to be initiated and have the superior knowledge, but their theories denied both the es-

sential Godhead and the true humanity of Jesus. Then there were those who separated Jesus from the Christ. The Christ was to them an ideal, a state into which man might graduate; whereas Jesus was the historic Man who appeared at Nazareth. The Gospel that John wrote meets these errors, and was designed to do so.

Before considering the opening words it may be well to read the two verses that conclude John 20, for in them the design before the mind of the Spirit in inditing this Gospel is stated. The miracles recorded are all "signs" that prove Jesus to be the Christ — so that there is no separation between the two. They prove Him also to be the Son of God; thus establishing His Deity. In the faith of these things life is found; while to refuse them is to abide in death. This is the objective of the Spirit of God in this Gospel and we shall need to keep it continually before us as we travel through it. We shall find it a very important key to the unlocking of its treasures.

The opening words of the first verse carry us back to the most remote moment that our minds are capable of conceiving: the moment when there began the first thing that ever had a beginning: the moment on the further side of which there was only

— GOD. In that moment of "beginning" the Word "was," that is, existed. He did not begin then; He existed then. His eternal Being is proclaimed, and we are carried back before the opening words of Genesis 1. Further He was "with God." Our minds are still back at that remote moment, and we discover that then He was possessed of distinct Personality. The Word is not a title of the Godhead in a general way, apart from any special distinction, for in being "with God" a special, distinctive place is definitely stated.

This being so, the reasoning mind would be inclined to argue: then we cannot speak of the Word as being God in any full or proper sense; even if He is not exactly a creature, seeing He existed before creation. Such reasoning is flatly contradicted by the closing words of verse 1, "the Word was God." Essential Deity was His. Attempts have been made to weaken the force of this great statement, and translate it, "the Word was Divine," or, "the Word was a god," based upon the omission of the definite article; i.e., it does not say, "the Word was the God." But we are told by those who know the Greek that there is in that language no indefinite article, and the word translated "God" is a strong one, denoting proper and absolute Deity; and had it

stated that the Word was the God, it would have confined Deity to the Word and excluded therefrom the other Persons of the Godhead. The words are chosen with Divine exactitude: the Word was properly and absolutely God.

Then the second verse carries us back to the first and second statements of verse 1. This distinct Personality which characterizes the Word is not something assumed at some subsequent point of time. Eternal Personality was His. In the beginning He was thus "with God," for this distinction of Personality lies in the very essence of the Godhead. Thus we have had four things stated of the Word. His eternal Being; His distinct Personality; His essential Deity; His eternal Personality. Whatever else we may have to learn about the Word, here are four things that should bow us in lowly adoration.

A fifth thing confronts us in the third verse: He is the creatorial Originator, and that in the fullest sense. Now we come to things that were made; that is, came into being. In verses 1 and 2 a different word is used. The Word did not come into being; He was, for His being was eternal. But He originated all that came into being, for He created "all things." To leave not the smallest loophole for an error, this is emphasized in the second part of

the verse. The language is remarkable in view of the modern "science falsely so called," so widely popularized, which endeavours to account for everything "without Him." Unbelieving minds cling to the theory of evolution, in spite of a pathetic paucity of facts to support it, and the supports, that are alleged, being of the most fragile description, because while glorifying man it eliminates HIM. But in truth He cannot be eliminated. Of all the untold things that originally received being, not one received it apart from Him.

Ponder this fact; for here we have the explanation of the heavens declaring the glory of God, and of the fact that God has been made known to some extent in creation, as is indicated in Romans 1:19-20. The Word created all things and hence in creation there is a true expression, as far as it goes, of God Himself and of His mind. We give expression to our thoughts in words; and the import of this great name, WORD, is that He who bears it is the expression of all that God is; and, as verses 1 and 2 show, He Himself essentially IS all that He expresses. Creation, as it sprang into being through the Word, was not a meaningless jumble but a declaration of the power and wisdom of God.

We reach a sixth great fact in the fourth verse. The Word has essential vitality. In Him life is not derivative but original and essential. Coupling this with all that has gone before, we perceive how fully the proper Deity of the Word is stated and guarded. The words used are of the utmost brevity and simplicity — every word in the first four verses except three is a monosyllable — yet they are charged with a Divine fulness of meaning, and like the sword of the cherubim in Genesis 3:24, they turn every way to keep inviolate in our minds the truth concerning the One who is the Tree of Life for man. This Gospel will presently show us how truly the life of the believer is derived from Him, but the point in verse 4 is not that but rather, "the life was the light of men." This is the point which is taken up more fully in the opening verses of John's first Epistle. The life has been manifested, and consequently the God who is light, has come forth into the light, and in that light the believer walks.

The light in which men are to walk is not merely that of creation — wonderful as that is — but in that which has been displayed in the actions and words of the Word. When the Word was manifested, the light shone, but the scene, wherein the

manifestation was made, was one of darkness. In Genesis 1 we read how by the Divine word the light of creation burst upon the darkness; and, lo! the darkness vanished. Here, we have light of a far higher order and it appears amidst moral and spiritual darkness, which could only be dispelled by a true apprehension of the light. Alas! that apprehension was lacking. Yet though the darkness remained there was no other light for men than "the life." There is no contradiction in these statements for, as so often, John is speaking here of things according to their abstract nature, and has not yet arrived at the historical relation of events.

But how came it to pass that the life in the Word did actually shine in the darkness and become light to men? The answer to this question is in verse 14. Before we reach that verse we have the important paragraph, verses 6-13, where we do begin to view things from an historical standpoint, and John the Baptist is introduced in order to throw into relief the supreme importance of "the true Light." This John was just a man who came into being as sent from God; his mission being to bear witness to the Light. It is true that he is spoken of as "a shining light" in John 5:35, but the word used there is "lamp" rather than "light."

John shone as a lamp and bore witness, but the true Light is He who, "coming into the world, lightens every man" (New Trans.). It is not that every man is enlightened, or verse 5 would be contradicted, but that He was not a partial light, but rather like the sun which sheds its beams universally. No one nation could have a monopoly of the true Light; so at once this Gospel carries our thoughts beyond the narrow boundaries of Israel.

In the remainder of this paragraph (vv. 10-13) we have further statements of an historical nature which amplify and clarify what we have been told in verses 4 and 5. We have already learned that the Word is a Person in the Godhead, that His life shone as light for men, though in the midst of darkness; now we find that the world was the seat of that darkness, that He entered it, and that, though He had made the world, it had become so alienated that it did not know Him. In this verse again it is not Israel or the Jew, but the world. Such light as was shed through the prophets might be confined to Israel, but not the shining of the true Light.

The Apostle John often mentions the world in his writings, and he always uses a word which we have adopted in English when

we speak of the "cosmos," meaning, the universe as an ordered whole, or sometimes, in a more restricted sense, just our world as an ordered whole. That is the sense of the world in this verse. As Creator He had made the universe as an ordered whole, and a wonderful moment arrived when He was found in that cosmos in a special way. He was there by entering this smaller restricted cosmos, which sad to say had become perverted and alienated by sin — so perverted that it did not even know Him.

Then, further narrowing down the point, He came actually to a rather obscure corner of that cosmos, where were found His own things such as had been indicated by prophecy, but His own people — Israel — with whom those things were connected, did not receive Him. He was rejected, for the darkness could not apprehend Him. But, though that was so, there were exceptions, as this Gospel will proceed to show us. Some did receive Him, believing on His Name. They were not of the darkness. Their eyes were open and they apprehended Him, as seeing and believing the glory of His Name. As a consequence these received from Him authority to become children of God, and not better and more enlightened Jews. The word here is

definitely "children;" another word that John uses habitually, rather than the word for "sons," which is used more by Paul. There is a shade of difference between the two. The same blessed relationship with God is in view, but as sons our maturity and position in that relationship is more in view: as children the emphasis is laid on the fact that we have been truly and vitally born of God.

That is the emphasis here, as verse 13 shows. The Jew boasted of having Abraham's blood in his veins, just as today a man may boast of being born of aristocratic or even royal blood. Those humble souls, who as exceptions to the rule received Christ when He came, were born of God. The will of the flesh never would have produced it, for the flesh is altogether opposed to God. The will of man, not even of the best of men, could have produced it: it is wholly beyond man's powers. Their birth was of God, as a Divine act; and the One whom they received in faith gave them the right formally to take the place that was thus vitally theirs.

How came it that the pious souls, of whom we get a glimpse in Luke 1 and 2, received the Christ the instant He appeared? Not because they had Abraham's blood: not because the flesh in

them was of so superior a type that it urged them to do so: not because they were influenced by the powerful will of some good man. Simply because they were born of God. It was a Divine act. When we reach John 10 we shall find the same basic fact stated in another way. When the Shepherd came to the fold He found there some who were "His own sheep," who heard His voice and were led out by Him. Many there were who were His sheep nationally, who were not His own sheep in the sense in which Mary Magdalene and the disciples and the Bethany family and Simeon and Anna were. These people born of God were the ones that received Him.

Now, in verse 14, we pick up the theme from verse 5, and find a seventh great fact as to the Word. He became flesh and tabernacled among us. Verses 1 and 2 tell us what He was essentially and eternally. Verse 14 tells us what He became. He became flesh; that is, He assumed perfect Humanity; and thereby all the other six great facts are revealed to us and become available for us. Only when in this manner He put Himself into relation with the creature could this absolute and self-existent One be properly known by men.

The fact that the Word became flesh guarantees not only that He possessed a real human body (which was denied by some of the earliest heretics), but also that having passed by angels and "taken hold of the seed of Abraham," He had become in every proper sense a Man. It is significant that it is in this Gospel, which starts with such a full assertion of His Deity, that He speaks of Himself as "a Man" (8:40). At last all that God is was revealed to men in a Man. He dwelt among us "full of grace and truth." The basis of all truth lies in the knowledge of God. Had that knowledge reached us apart from grace it would have overthrown us; but here was One full of both grace and truth, and dwelling among us.

In verse 14 there is a parenthesis, placed in brackets in our Bibles, but verse 15 is also a parenthesis, though not placed in brackets. The first tells us that the Apostles, and as many others "as received Him" (v. 12), beheld His glory, and it was "as of an only begotten with a father" (New Trans.), and not like the glory of Sinai. That was the glory attached to Majesty and righteous demand; this the glory connected with a dear and intimate relationship.

The second parenthesis briefly brings in John's witness, which is referred to more fully a few verses later, to show that he discerned the pre-existence and therefore the Divine glory of the One to whom he bore witness. Historically He came after him, both in His birth and in His entrance upon ministry, but He existed before him, and so took the first and supreme place.

Eliminating in our minds the two parentheses, we get, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and of His fulness have all we received." Again here is stated the result for the believing "we." Only "as many as received Him" can truly say, "we received" of His fulness; but such can say it, and all of them can, thanks be to God! Fulness of grace and fulness of truth are the portion of each, even of the feeblest though they will never have explored all the fulness thereof. Grace is specially emphasized. We needed it, piled mountains high — "grace upon grace." Through Moses the law was given, formulating God's demands but establishing nothing. Grace and truth came into being down here and were actually established by the advent of Jesus Christ.

At last John has definitely identified the Person, known amongst men who is the Word. The Word was made flesh,

dwelling among us, full of grace and truth: and, lo! this fulness is in Jesus Christ. This magnificent preface to the Gospel has led us straight to JESUS.

Having arrived there, we are given a further glimpse of His glory. He is the revealer of the God whom no man had ever seen. As the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He could fully declare Him as the Father. In the word, "bosom," we have a human figure, but we must not use it in a human way. The figure is used elsewhere in Scripture as indicating closest union and completest intimacy. The Son is so wholly one with the Father and in the intimacy of His mind, that He can declare Him to perfection. Our verse does not say that He was, as though it were a place that He might have left, but that HE IS. It is an eternal is, — He ever was, He is, He ever shall be in the Father's bosom. So the Word becoming flesh meant the coming of grace and truth, and the full declaration of God as Father.

Verses 19-28 give us John's testimony, rendered while he was baptizing in Jordan; a wholly different side of it from that recorded in other Gospels. There was first the negative side, since the religious leaders were curious about him and wished

to know if he were the Christ, or Elijah, or the prophet of whom Moses had spoken. His testimony was steadfast; he was none of these but only the voice crying in the wilderness, of whom Isaiah had spoken. Then, when they questioned his baptism, came his positive testimony. There was One already among them whom they did not know, so much greater than himself that he was not worthy to unloose His sandal. By the use of this graphic figure John expressed his sense of the supreme glory of the One about to be manifested.

This was the beginning of John's witness. It increased in definiteness and intensity as the succeeding verses show.

Some of the mighty implications of the incarnation come before us in the latter part of the chapter. We find in John's first chapter not only many of His Names and Titles, but also an unfolding of the varied offices and capacities that He fills.

The great ones of the earth fill various capacities. The Queen, for instance, appears on one occasion as a Commander-in-Chief, on another as a Patron, and so on. As Head of the State she fills these capacities, and more besides. It is not surprising therefore that the Word, becoming flesh, should assume offices

and fill capacities of immense range and eternal significance. As we read verse 29 and note John's further witness, we meet with the first of the series. He is "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

John said in effect, "Here is the one effectual, never-to-be-repeated SACRIFICE of eternal value." In the Old Testament the lamb had been specially marked as the animal devoted to sacrificial use: hence the title here. Jesus is the Lamb of God's providing, and if He takes away by sacrifice the sin of the world — not merely your sin or mine, or Israel's sin, but the sin of the whole "cosmos" — then there has been effected a work of such magnitude that the settlement abides to eternity. The thing is to be DONE, and here is the Doer of it. We usually think of sin in its manifestations and myriad details, but here it is regarded as one gigantic and terrible problem, meeting its complete solution and removal. God will have a cosmos — the universe as an ordered whole — totally and eternally purged from sin; and here is the One who by His sacrifice accomplishes this. He is the Sacrifice of the Ages, and in this we see the basis of all that follows. Were He not this, there would be nothing to follow in the way of blessing and glory.

John proceeded to identify Jesus as the One of whom he had previously spoken, and to declare that the object of his baptism was not merely the manifestation of the godly remnant in Israel, but the manifestation of the Lamb of God to Israel. Upon Him he had seen the Spirit as a dove descending and abiding — not descending and returning, like the dove that Noah sent forth. When commissioned John had been told that this was to be, as it were, the hall-mark on the One to whom he was to act as forerunner; the One who would baptize not merely with water, but with the Holy Ghost.

In saying this, John evidently presented Jesus as the great BLESSER. As the Sacrifice He takes away the sin of the world: as the Blessor He fills it with the light and energy of the Spirit of God. It is plain therefore that here we have two parts of one whole, and both statements are on broad, comprehensive lines. Each believer today has his sins taken away and he receives the Holy Ghost: a tiny item within the compass of the whole. But the point here is the whole, considered abstractly. We do not yet see sin wholly removed historically and the Spirit poured upon all flesh; but here was the One who brings both to pass.

John's conclusion, stated in verse 34, is of much importance. It verified to John the witness he bore in verses 15 and 27. Here was the Son of God, and to His Sonship he could bear witness. The Holy Ghost is a Person in the Godhead, and here is a Man who has this Divine Person at His disposal, so as to shed Him forth as a baptism. Who can this Man be? No one less than the Son of God, another Person in the Godhead. Thus we are at once conducted to the point which is the main objective of this Gospel (see 20:31). The Son was here in Manhood; hence such a thing could be. The Son of God and the Word are One.

The following day John bore similar testimony, only concentrating upon the Person Himself rather than His work. Still, it was the Person in His character as the sacrificial Lamb, and it is when He wears this character that He becomes specially attractive, as Revelation 5 shows. This attractiveness was felt here, for two of John's disciples heard him thus speak and they at once turned from John to attach themselves to Jesus. No truer service can be rendered to God than that which diverts the hearers from the human servant and attaches them to Christ. A very true servant was John the Baptist.

Jesus did not check the two disciples in their desire to be with Him; rather He encouraged them to abide with Him. He is not only the Sacrifice and the Blessor, but also the CENTRE to whom all must gather. The two disciples had discovered this by a kind of instinct, and their action suffices to set Him before us in this capacity. Presently we have the Lord saying, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me" (12:32) and in days to come this will be visibly accomplished. But amongst all the myriads Andrew and the other disciple will have the distinction of being the first to discover the Divinely appointed Centre in Jesus.

Verse 41 shows us that what had transpired had revealed to the soul of Andrew that Jesus was the Christ. Again we must think of that verse in chapter 20 — He was Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, therefore the Son of God; He was the Centre, appointed by God, therefore the Christ. Andrew's first action was to seek his own brother Simon and testify to him of his discovery, and thus "he brought him to Jesus." It has often been the case since, that the more forcible and distinguished man has been led to the Saviour by someone of very ordinary type. As far as we have any record, this is the most striking thing that Andrew did.

Simon was a ready talker, and amongst the disciples usually the first to speak, but when brought to Jesus he did not have the first word. Jesus at once showed that He knew his name and ancestry, and then gave him a new name. As we see with Daniel and his three friends, great kings asserted their ownership over servants and slaves by changing their names; in like manner when Simon came to Jesus He asserted His claim over him. But by giving him a name which meant "A stone," He did more than this: He annexed him for the building that He had in view, and of which at that moment Simon knew nothing. Simon indeed, as far as the record goes, had nothing to say. What the Lord had in view and what He said was of all moment.

We have only to turn to 1 Peter 2, to find that presently Simon did know, and had something to say to us about it. Coming to Christ, the Living Stone, he became a living stone in view of God's building, which is proceeding during the present epoch; and, as he shows us in that chapter, that which was true for him is true also for us, as we come to the Living Stone each in our turn. Clearly then, Jesus revealed Himself as the BUILDER of God's house by the way He met Simon, though Simon himself

and the rest did not know it at the time. This is another capacity that Jesus fills.

Jesus Himself took the initiative in finding Philip, as verse 43 shows, introducing Himself with the two words, "Follow Me." The two words evidently were sufficient. They presented Him to Philip as the LEADER, who rightly commands loyal obedience from each and all. Philip followed and became a seeker of others, though as yet he did not know much. To Nathanael he could only speak of "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph;" neither a very lofty nor a very correct designation of the One whom he had just begun to follow. It had the effect at the outset of slightly prejudicing Nathanael: still it sufficed to lead him to an interview with the Lord.

Again Jesus took the initiative and by His opening exclamation as to Nathanael revealed Himself as the Discerner of the hearts of men. Here was an Israelite, not without sin, but without guile; that is, without deceit or dishonesty. Here was a man who was straight and honest in his spirit before God; and Jesus knew this, as He showed by His answer to Nathanael's startled question, "Whence knowest Thou me?" The Lord was showing Himself to be the JUDGE of all, before whom all men are na-

ked and open, who can put every man in his proper place. Nathanael came to see Jesus of Nazareth, and he discovered One who knew all about him and read him through and through like an open book. Who could this Jesus be?

Nathanael's answer is given in verse 49, and we are carried on again to that verse in John 20. He is "the Son of God," and He is also "the King of Israel." As an earnest and godly Israelite he was waiting for the King, and would have been inclined to lay all possible emphasis there. But evidently in the presence of this Judge of men and Searcher of hearts all the emphasis lay on the fact that He must be the Son of God; and if that, then the King of Israel. Then note how in verse 50 Jesus accepted Nathanael's homage as not misplaced but as the fruit of faith. Hearing the words of Jesus he had believed, and his homage was the fruit of this.

In verse 50 there seems to be a contrast between hearing and seeing. Hearing induces faith, but a day is coming when we shall see greater things than we have heard. When the day arrives for sight we shall view the Son of Man as the great ADMINISTRATOR of God's universe of light and blessing. Angels will have their place of service, but their every movement

will be regulated and performed in reference to Him. This capacity He will fill as Son of Man in keeping with what is predicted in Psalm 8. That Psalm indeed speaks of Him as made "a little lower than the angels," but this was for the suffering of death, as Hebrews 2 informs us. It also speaks of His having dominion over Jehovah's works in earth and sea. Our verse in John 1 shows that the angels will be subject to Him, but Hebrews 2 carries it even further, saying that "all things" being in subjection means that there is "nothing that is not put under Him." The Son of Man will dominate the heavens as well as the earth.

Before passing from the first chapter let us note that not only do we have these glimpses of the various capacities that are filled by the Word become flesh, but also we get all His main Titles brought to light: — Jesus, the Messiah; the Christ; the only begotten Son; the Lamb of God; the Son of God; Jesus of Nazareth; the King of Israel; the Son of Man. The whole chapter is like a mine richly shot through with these veins of gold.

Chapter 2

THIS CHAPTER BEGINS, "And the third day." If we work back we find the second day was that on which Philip was found, and the first that on which Andrew and his companion found their Centre in Jesus. Viewing these things in a typical or allegorical sense, we may say that the first day is that in which the church is gathered to Christ; the second that in which He is recognised as Son of God and King of Israel by the godly remnant in Israel; the third that of millennial blessedness and joy as the fruit of the Son of Man being set over all things.

On the occasion of the marriage at Cana no external glory marked the presence of Jesus. His disciples were there and His mother also, but He soon showed, by the answer He gave His mother, that the initiative was His and not hers; and also that His hour was not yet come — neither the hour of His suffering, nor the hour of His glory, when "all things" will be at His disposal. However, He quickly manifested His glory by showing that water was at His disposal, and that He could make of it that which He pleased. He turned the water of purification into the wine of rejoicing. This was the beginning of His miracles or signs, and as a sign it looked on to the ultimate result of His

work. There can be no gladness of an abiding sort save on the basis of a purification which He brings to pass, and the gladness which will spring forth when at last the marriage day comes for a cleansed Israel, will be the best of all. The "good wine" is kept until that day. This sign, demonstrating His glory, confirmed the faith of His disciples, and may well confirm ours.

After a short period still in Galilee, He went up for the Passover to Jerusalem. All these things transpired before John was cast into prison, and therefore before His more public entrance upon ministry, as recorded by the other Evangelists. The scene in the Temple, recorded here, took place therefore right at the beginning of His ministry. He was at the heart of things when He arrived at the Temple, and here at the very heart the need for a work of purification was most strongly manifest. The house of God, His Father, had been turned into a house of merchandise — a place of trading and worldly profit.

This illustrates how the kindly provisions of the law could be and were corrupted to serve man's covetous ends. There was instruction on this point in Deuteronomy 14:22-26, and they might plead that they were only doing what the law allowed.

The law told them to bring their money and purchase what they needed, but did not countenance the covetous practices they had introduced, turning the house of God into a money-making centre. The same thing in principle can be seen in our day; such as Romish shrines with shops attached where the devotees buy candles and other paraphernalia at high prices!

The Lord did not yet disown the Temple. He treated it as God's house, and He was filled with zeal for it. No one could resist Him and His scourge of small cords, and the evil-doers had for the moment to go. The Jews, however, challenged what He did and demanded a sign, as though the irresistible authority of His action was not sign enough. In reply He gave them the great sign of His own death and resurrection, only couched in symbolic language. The fact was that the Temple, as God's dwelling-place, was about to be superseded by Himself. His body was a far more wonderful "Temple" than that which had stood on Mount Moriah. The Word dwelt among us in flesh, and hence "God was in Christ" in a far deeper and more intimate way. The fulness of the Godhead was dwelling in Him. The Temple had served a certain capacity in Israel, but He was now filling that capacity in an altogether new way.

From the outset of this Gospel He is viewed as rejected. So here Jesus takes their deadly animosity for granted. His words were a prediction that they would set their hands to His death; destroying, as far as in them lay, the temple of His body. They would destroy, and in three days He would raise it up. Mark how He says that He would do it. It is equally true, of course, that God raised Him from the dead, but in John 10 He again speaks of His resurrection as His own act. This is in keeping with the Gospel which presents Him as the Word who was God and became flesh. Of all the signs He showed, His own resurrection was the greatest.

At the moment no one, not even His disciples, understood Him. This is another characteristic feature of John's Gospel. He is continuously misunderstood, by friends as well as by foes. It was only after His resurrection and the consequent gift of the Spirit that the real meaning of these things dawned upon the disciples. But this again is not surprising. If the Word becomes flesh, He will speak to us in human accents it is true: but He will also speak of the lofty things which He knows as in the bosom of the Father. Hence His utterances are bound to have in

them a depth utterly beyond any plumb-line which man possesses — depths which only the Holy Ghost can reveal.

When the Lord spoke figuratively of His resurrection His words were not understood by any, yet the works of power that He did had their effect on many minds. The verses which close the second chapter show that miracles may produce a "belief" of a certain kind. Many in Jerusalem at that time would have subscribed to the dictum that "Seeing is believing;" yet the belief that springs from the sight of facts, which cannot be denied, is not the God-given faith which saves. It is merely intellectual conviction which, when tested, easily collapses, as we see in the sixty-sixth verse of chapter 6.

For the moment things in Jerusalem must have appeared quite promising, but Jesus saw beneath the surface and the Evangelist seizes the opportunity to tell us so. He makes the twofold statement that Jesus "knew all men" and that He "knew what was in man." He makes again a very similar statement in John 6:64; but this in our chapter is the first of a series of similar remarks which disclose to us the omniscience of our Lord, and are very much in keeping with the character of this Gospel. Knowing these men Jesus did not commit Himself to them. The

word translated commit is the same as that translated believed in the previous verse, which helps us to see that true faith is not a mere mental conviction, but the committal of oneself in simple trust to the One in whom one believes.

Chapter 3

THIS CHAPTER REALLY begins with a word, which may be translated, But, though it is omitted in the Authorised Version. Nicodemus was amongst those impressed with the miracles, but in his case something further existed. The signs he had witnessed had led him in his thoughts to God, and after God he sought. The orthodox way of seeking God was to go to the Temple, and that Nicodemus would have done by day. He chose the unorthodox way of seeking an interview with this "Teacher come from God," who was not popularly accepted; hence he did it by night. He himself was a leader and teacher in Israel, and he assumed that all he needed for himself was further instruction. It was no small thing for this proud Pharisee to take the place of a humble scholar!

The Lord met him at once with that great and emphatic pronouncement concerning the absolute necessity of the new birth.

Without it no one even sees the kingdom of God. He may see the miracles and signs, but he does not see the kingdom. Nicodemus needed the new birth and not teaching for at once he showed himself quite incapable of understanding the Lord's words, and thereby he illustrated their truth. He could not see anything in them but a mystifying reference to natural birth. This called forth a second emphatic pronouncement in which the matter is carried a step further. The kingdom is not only to be seen but entered, and the birth for this must be of water and of Spirit.

What is imperative is not merely new behaviour or new principles of action, but a new birth, and this signifies an entirely new origin. The origin and pedigree of Nicodemus was of the best, since he came of true Abrahamic stock. Moreover he had acquired all possible culture in the Jew's religion. If he, a cultured son of Abraham needed a new birth then it shows that all flesh, even Abrahamic flesh, is condemned before God. The fact that new birth is universally needed puts the sentence of condemnation upon us all. By our first birth we found our origin in Adam, partaking of his life and nature. Only by experi-

encing new birth, which brings us into another life and nature, can we see or enter the kingdom.

The Lord's words in verse 5 are clearly a reference to the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:24-32, which foretells the deep and fundamental cleansing which will reach Israel in the beginning of the millennial age, when God will "sprinkle clean water" upon them, giving them "a new heart," and putting within them "a new spirit," and then putting His Spirit within them. As a result of this they will be so cleansed in their very being that they will loathe themselves as in their former corruptions, and then they will be blessed of God. This passage does not give us the full truth of the matter, but it gives so much that Nicodemus ought to have felt no surprise at the things he had just heard. As a master in Israel he should have known what Ezekiel had said.

A good deal of sprinkling was enjoined under the law, generally of blood, but sometimes of water, as in Numbers 8 and 19. By sprinkling the blood or water was applied. Water is the great cleansing agent. Ezekiel used these familiar figures to teach that God would apply His cleansing agent to Israel for their spiritual renewal. His spiritual cleansing agent is His word, as is indicated in Psalm 119:9.

So here we find the Lord in His earliest utterances linking His teaching with what had been made known through Ezekiel, and at the same time clarifying and expanding the truth. Yet more is revealed to us about it in the epistles, and we must remember that what we read as to it, in John 1:12-13, were written by the apostle John years after full light had been granted on the subject. To Nicodemus Jesus stated that new birth is an imperative necessity for every soul that would see or enter the kingdom; that it is of the Spirit as the active Agent, and of the water of the Word as the passive agent. Such is the state of all men that nothing less fundamental and drastic than a new birth will suffice.

He also stated that flesh always remains flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit partakes of His nature and remains spirit. Verse 6 makes it very plain that the two natures are altogether distinct and never merge into one another. The phrase, oft repeated in Genesis 1, applies — "after his kind." There is no more trace of evolution here than there is in Genesis 1: by no amount of cultivation or natural selection can flesh be transmuted into spirit.

A good deal of reasoning and controversy has taken place as to the new birth which might have been avoided if verse 8 had been duly noted. The Greek word for "wind" and "Spirit" is the same. Like wind the Spirit is invisible, and only to be apprehended by hearing Him in the word He gives, or feeling the effects of His operations. Like the wind, too, He is not subject to our control, and His actions beyond all our thoughts. The same thing applies to all those who are spirit as born of Him. There must therefore be about the new birth, and about those born again, elements that are incomprehensible to us; consequently our reasonings may easily be futile or even erroneous.

In verse 11 we get the note of special emphasis — "Verily, verily," for the third time in this chapter. Nicodemus was specially to note that the Lord was not speaking as a mere prophet. He had inward conscious knowledge of the things of which He spoke: He had actually seen that concerning which He testified. He was ever "in the bosom of the Father," as before intimated. Nevertheless His witness was not received by man, apart from the operation of the Spirit of God. And of what did He bear witness? He had spoken of things intimated by Ezekiel as necessary for earthly blessing in the millennial age, giving an ex-

pansion to Ezekiel's prophecy, and here was Nicodemus full of hesitancy and doubt. He had yet to speak of things related to God's purposes for heaven; were these things then likely to be received in faith?

Heavenly things in their very nature must be wholly inaccessible to men. Their feet tread the earth and they have a familiarity with it, but to heaven they have never come. But here was One wholly competent to reveal heavenly things. An astonishing paradox greets us. He came down from heaven, yet He was in heaven. If however we remember how the Gospel started, the paradox disappears. Here is the Word who was God and became flesh. In becoming flesh He certainly came down from heaven: yet He never ceased to be God who is in heaven. But He said, "the Son of Man which is in heaven." Yes, and evidently we are intended to learn thereby that we are not at liberty to dissect in our minds His person, as some are inclined to do. We must not say, In that position He is wholly as God; or, That He did altogether as Man. We may distinguish of course, but we must not divide. Even when in Manhood His personality is one and indivisible. Hence the Son of Man is the completely

competent Spokesman of heavenly things. How different from all who had gone before!

Having mentioned heavenly things, the Lord at once proceeded to foretell the great event that must take place before they could be available for men, and the full revelation of them be made. The event had been typified by the brazen serpent in the wilderness — even the lifting up of the Son of Man on the cross. This is the work wrought for us, outside of ourselves. New birth is a work wrought in us. As to both Jesus used the word, MUST; for both are imperative if we are to have to do with God in blessing. The sacrificial death of the Son of Man is the only possible way of eternal life for man; a way that becomes effective for "whosoever believes in Him;" that is, by faith.

Verses 16 and 17 both begin with "For," and thus are connected closely with verses 14 and 15. We discover that this Son of Man, who came down from heaven, yet is in heaven, who was lifted up on the cross, is the only begotten Son whom God gave. How strikingly all this fits in with Romans 8:3, where also is set forth the truth typified by the brazen serpent. Just as Moses made the brazen serpent in the likeness of the fiery ser-

pents that were the source of the mischief, so God had sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that sin in the flesh might be condemned in His sacrifice for sin. Sin was resident in our flesh, dominating and corrupting our old life. Believing in Jesus, the Son of God, eternal life is ours; but it rests for its basis on God's condemnation of sin at the cross. There the governing power, active in our old life, was condemned, the pledge that ultimately it will be removed for ever. On that basis eternal life is given.

In the gift of the only begotten Son the love of God is revealed; a love which embraced not Israel merely, but the world. The way in which the grace made known in this Gospel overleaps the narrow boundaries of Israel is very striking. In the opening verses we saw that "the life was the light of men," not of Israel merely; as also that the true Light "lights every man." So here, "God ... loved the world," and the gift of the Son is the measure of the love. Further the term, "only begotten," expresses the supreme and exclusive place He holds in God's love. The type of Abraham and Isaac helps us here. Hebrews 11 tells us that Abraham offered "his only begotten son," though as a matter of fact he had Ishmael at that time and subsequently many more

sons. Isaac however stood solitary and alone in God's purpose and in Abraham's affection. After this striking fashion the term is used of the Son of God, and it is intended to enhance in our minds the greatness of God's gift. God gave the One supreme and unique in His affections.

Verse 17 furnishes a further thought. Perishing is at the end of the course the world pursues, as verse 16 indicates. Now we find that judgment and condemnation lies ahead of it. To perish is to lie eternally in utter alienation and separation from God; that is, in a state of eternal death. Life is consequently an urgent necessity for men and the gift of the only begotten Son has made it possible for the believer in Him to have not merely life of some sort, but "eternal life," life of that Divine and surpassingly wonderful quality. So too, the coming of the Son into the world was not for the purpose of condemnation; the law of Moses had already brought that in very effectively. He came to save. The godly in Israel expected the raising up of "an horn of salvation" in the house of David, that would save them from their enemies (see Luke 1:68-71), but this is something much greater. The salvation is from sin and its effects, and the scope of it is the world.

Still though the Son of God had not come to earth with the object of condemning, His presence here did incidentally bring in condemnation, inasmuch as He was the Light, and light makes everything manifest, and so brings all men to the test. Light acts in illumination and manifestation, and in its presence man reacts in one of two ways. If he is a doer of evil he loves darkness and hates light because it reproves him. If a doer of truth he welcomes the light and comes to it. These verses (18-20) assume that "he that believes on Him" is the doer of truth; whilst "he that believes not" is the doer of evil. The one comes to the light and there is no condemnation for him; the other remains in the darkness, and this is sufficient to condemn him. The light has appeared in the coming of the Son of God and he has not believed. That is enough, and there is no need to wait until the arrival of the actual day of judgment. He is condemned already.

Verses 22-24 make it quite clear that the foregoing things transpired before John was cast into prison, which is the point from which the Lord's public ministry started according to Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:20. For a short time baptism was being administered by both the Lord — through His disciples (see John 4:2) — and John. Certain Jews took occasion to apprise

John of this activity of the Lord, as though they would stir him to jealousy. If this was their object, they wholly failed to achieve it.

With real humility and fidelity John kept his place as a servant of God who had nothing but that which he had received from heaven. They had to bear witness that he had never claimed to be the Christ. He had claimed to be the forerunner of the Messiah; he was also the friend of the Bridegroom. In this second claim he evidently spoke figuratively by way of illustration. Truth, such as we have in Revelation 19:7, was not yet revealed, but doubtless he was inspired to express himself in terms which exactly suit that truth, when revealed. He had no link with the bride, but as the friend of the Bridegroom he had in Him the deepest interest and affection. To hear the Bridegroom's voice filled up his cup of joy to the brim.

Then John uttered words which should be graven upon the heart of everyone who loves the Lord Jesus — "He must increase, but I must decrease." For the third time in this chapter we get "MUST." In verse 7 it is connected with man's great need; in verse 14 with God's great love; here with the devotion of the true-hearted servant. Like the sun, Christ was to rise to

his zenith with increasing glory; thus, like the moon, John was to fade out and disappear. He knew it and rejoiced, for at that moment in his thoughts Christ was all. He knew Him as One coming from heaven and not of earth at all. Being such, He spoke in a way impossible to all others. He was in touch with the full range of heavenly things in a way impossible to the greatest of the prophets, such as John.

John's words came true, and soon he had to decrease and drop out of sight in prison. In this he was no exception to the rule. It is the rule for all the servants of God: in one way or another they decrease and depart. It was so with Moses in the Old Testament, and with Paul in the New. Great servants as they were, we must not think too much of them. Paul had his day as an ardent evangelist and founder of churches. But then came prison for him, and failure in the churches, and so he drops out of our sight. Paul decreases, but only to increase the supreme excellence of Christ. So it must be for all of us, and we should rejoice in it, as John did.

The opening words of verse 33 appear to contradict the closing words of verse 32, but the paradox is a purely verbal one, and based upon one of those abstract statements which appear so

repeatedly in John's writings. Man in his natural condition is wholly dead and unresponsive to the Divine testimony. The fact is stated abstractly at the close of verse 32. But then on the other hand God works by His Spirit in the hearts of some; and so from a practical standpoint we do find those who receive the testimony, and by so doing set to their seal that God is true. At the beginning the devil impugned the testimony God gave to Adam, and thus sin was introduced. Faith vindicates the truth of the testimony, and thus life and salvation are brought in.

Testimony from God had existed from the time that God spoke to Adam about the trees of the Garden, but now it was reaching its climax in this One whom God had sent, who knew by observation the heavenly things of which He spoke, who uttered them in "the words of God," possessing the Spirit without any measure or limit. At last therefore there was a testimony of infinite range and incomparable fulness. Of course it wholly transcended the powers of the natural man, yet the simple believer can accept it, attaching his seal to it as the truth of God.

Verses 35 and 36 appear to be a separate paragraph in which the words of the Baptist are supplemented by the Evangelist, who could speak in the full light of all that had been revealed

in the Word become flesh. The Son having been manifested, the Father had been made known, together with the relations between these Divine Persons. Three great facts concerning the Son meet us here. He is the Object of the Father's love. By the Father's gift all things are in His hand, to be disposed of as He sees fit. He is the Object of faith, and therefore the test of every man. To believe on Him is to become possessed of life eternal. To refuse the subjection of faith to Him is to be excluded from life and lie under the wrath of God.

Thus quite early in this Gospel do we discover that the Son is not only the Creator of all things and the Revealer of all things as the Word, but He is also the Operator in all things, the Disposer of all things, and finally as the Object of the Father's love He is manifested amongst men, becoming the Criterion for all. We notice that, in verse 36, life is to be possessed and also to be seen, which shows how comprehensive a term "eternal life" is: and further, that the antithesis to seeing life is abiding under the wrath of God. Here again things are stated abstractly, but the language is such as to negative both the theories by which men endeavour to escape the solemn fact of eternal punishment. The words, "shall not see life," negative universal recon-

ciliation, which declares that in some way or other all shall ultimately see it. The theory of conditional immortality, which means the annihilation of impenitent unbelievers, is negated by the fact that the wrath of God "abides" on such — therefore they exist abidingly. At this point let us again recall John 20:31. This Gospel is written that we may be amongst those who believe and have life. The terrible alternative to this is put before us very plainly here.

Chapter 4

THE CLOSING PARAGRAPHS of the third chapter spring out of the intermeddling of the Jews in the matter of John's baptism, and his reaction to it: this chapter opens with the Lord's reaction to their interference. John gladly took the place of decreasing that his Master might increase. The Master withdrew Himself to Galilee lest rivalry should be instituted, which would be so hurtful to His servant. Such was His thoughtful care for John. Moreover the Lord himself would have been belittled if treated thus. It would have put Him beside John as a kind of party leader, akin in principle to the error of the Corinthian saints who coupled the name of Christ with Paul, Apollos and Cephas. This must never be.

The direct route to Galilee lay through the district of Samaria so "He must needs go" that way as a geographical necessity. But there was also a necessity connected with the grace of God which imposed upon Him a road which brought Him to a particular city of Samaria, called Sychar. Jesus, the Word made flesh, was wearied with His journey, a testimony this to the reality of His Manhood: and not weary only, but hungry and thirsty too. He sat on the well-side about midday, as the time of greatest heat approached. Nicodemus sought Him by night. He sought a Samaritan sinner at midday. John's Gospel specializes in the record of His conversations and dealings with individuals. It also records His conversations — usually of a controversial nature — with groups of persons, but not once does it put on record His more formal preachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount or the parables of Matthew 13. Many of us would own that it takes more spiritual skill to deal rightly with an individual than to address a crowd, and makes a bigger demand upon our courage. A perfect example of personal dealing is presented to us here.

Jesus began by requesting a drink of cold water. The Word made flesh takes the place of a humble suppliant before a very

sinful specimen of His creatures! A marvellous sight indeed! Regarding Him merely as a Jew, the woman felt He was belittling Himself; but in the light of the true situation we can see how truly He had made Himself of no reputation and emptied Himself. But this very lowly and humble approach to the woman gave a most advantageous start to the conversation. If we, who aim at serving the souls of men today, could always approach them with humility, we should be wise indeed.

The woman, awakened to astonishment and curiosity, could not resist asking how such a request came to be made. The answer of Jesus in verse 10 set before her three things. First, the fact that God is a Giver. She had known a little of the law, but this set Him before her in a new light altogether. Second, He indicated the mysterious greatness of His own Person, since He was the Dispenser of God's gift. She saw in Him but a Jew who asked for a drink of water. When she knew Him she would discover that He was really the Giver of a Gift of surpassing value. Third, He indicated the Gift to be "living water," thus turning her thoughts from the natural to the spiritual. Both Nicodemus and this unnamed woman were alike in having at the outset no conception of the meaning of the Lord's words, let

alone the things of which He spoke. Yet here again, there had been some indication of these things in the Old Testament. Twice in the Book of Jeremiah, for instance, Jehovah had presented Himself as "the Fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13; Jer. 17:13).

The misunderstanding of the woman led to further unfoldings contained in verse 14, which again seem to range themselves under three heads. First, the one who drinks of the living water as the gift of Christ will have it "in him," abiding in his very being. Then, it will be in him as a "well," or "fountain," of water, "springing up into everlasting life." A fountain of life within, which springs up to the level of its Source! Lastly, the drinking of such water and the possession of such a fountain will produce abiding satisfaction. The Lord used a very strong expression — "shall never thirst for ever."

By "living water" the Lord indicated the Spirit of God as is quite evident when we reach chapter 7:39. In the previous chapter the only begotten Son is God's gift to the world but in this chapter, the Spirit of God is God's gift to the believer, but a gift which is administered by the Son of God; who was the Speaker, seated on Sychar's well. By the Spirit we have the life

within — He is spoken of elsewhere as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2) — and by Him the life within springs up to the Source of the life above. In this way did the Lord indicate the life of communion and worship and satisfaction which He was about to make available for the believer. As a result, the believer today may anticipate the millennial joy, set forth figuratively in the beginning of miracles at Cana of Galilee: and not only anticipate, but also know it in truer measure and a more spiritual way.

Before proceeding with our chapter let us note the remarkable sequence of the teaching since the record of that first miracle. We have had the work wrought in us — new birth by the Spirit and the word. Then the testimony rendered to us, receiving which, we set to our seal that God is true. Thirdly, the gift of the Spirit bestowed upon us, to be in us as an ever-flowing fountain, springing up to the eternal Source. Here we have presented to us in a germinal way great realities which find expansion in the Epistles.

Pursuing our chapter we notice that though the woman was still in the dark as to the significance of "living water," the Lord's further words had at least sufficiently stirred her desires to lead

her to ask for it. Before He gave it, her conscience had to be reached and conviction of sin produced. In bidding her call her husband the Lord put His finger upon a specially sore spot in her life, and followed this by letting her see that her sad story lay like an open book before His eye. On her side she at once saw and confessed that He was a prophet; thus by implication pleading guilty to His indictment; yet as is so often the way when a wounded conscience exists, she endeavoured to side-track the conversation into a religious discussion, thus eliminating the personal element.

The place where worship was to be offered to Jehovah had long been a burning question. Had Gerizim displaced Moriah, as the Samaritans claimed? The Lord seized the opportunity to show the woman not only her personal sin but also the futility of the "worship" in which she and her people had engaged. In saying, "Ye worship ye know not what," He disowned it; and in saying, "Salvation is of the Jews," He convicted her of her unsaved condition. She stood amongst the Gentiles — "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). So even in discussing the question of

worship she was not beyond the reach of rapier-like thrusts at her conscience.

The Lord, however, lifted the whole matter of worship on to a far higher plane. He spoke of worshipping Jehovah in the light of the revelation that He was bringing — even as "the Father." This at once lifted it out of that ceremonial order of things which connected it with a holy place on earth. The law had tied people down very strictly to a holy place where Jehovah's name was set; hence the prolonged dispute between Jew and Samaritan: He lifted her thoughts to God who is a Spirit, revealing Him as Father.

This new revelation was ushering in a new "hour," which had indeed already begun. The worship which is to characterize that hour must be in keeping with the revelation that has formed it. God who is Spirit is seeking that worship as Father, so now worship to be acceptable must be "in spirit and in truth." Notice this further "MUST." Worship is not something optional, or to be varied as suits our tastes. God must be worshipped in the way He Himself prescribes. All else that may claim to be "worship" is no worship at all.

True worship is "in spirit"; that is, not in flesh, not in bodily posture. This word of our Lord negatives the ritualistic and ceremonial line of things which has been a snare to so many. Our capacity to offer worship in spirit lies in the possession of the Spirit of God — the Fountain of living water springing up into everlasting life — as is also indicated in Philippians 3:3. The Spirit of God may engage our spirits in true worship at any time and in any place; not merely in some sacred shrine as in Judaism.

Then again worship must be "in truth"; that is, in the light of all that God has revealed Himself to be in Christ. This negatives the rationalistic line of things, which is also so common. Men speak, for instance, of worshipping "the great First Cause" in the light of the beauties of nature, while ignoring or refusing the truth concerning Him, as made known in Christ. Only in Him do we know the Father who is to be worshipped. If we do know the Father thus, our hearts are bound to be filled with worship of that spiritual nature which is acceptable to Him.

The Father seeks worshippers of this sort. He has made Himself known in order to produce this response. The downward flow of His love, in the revelation made to us, produces the up-

ward flow of responsive love in worship. This is acceptable to Him and He seeks it.

The Samaritan woman knew of the promise of the Messiah, and these wonderful words of the Lord, coupled with the inward conviction of sin that had reached her, turned her thoughts to His advent. Her response seems to indicate that she felt a Messiah-like character about the Lord's utterances. The Lord at once and with the utmost plainness revealed Himself to her as the Christ. That revelation she evidently accepted at once; and going back to the city, in her words to the men, she divulged what lay behind her ready faith. He must be the Christ, for had He not told her all things that ever she did? Not in detail, of course, but rather He had shown to her as in a flash that all she had ever done was to be summed up in the one word — sin. It is just the same today. Faith in Christ goes hand in hand with true conviction of sin.

The beautiful paragraph, verses 31-38, comes as a parenthesis in the story. The Lord's words to the disciples, in verse 32, have been rendered, "I have found food to eat which ye do not know." He was labouring for "fruit to life eternal," as He indicates in verse 36, and to see this end being reached in the be-

stowal of blessing on the Samaritan sinner was delectable food for Him. It was "the will of Him that sent Me," said He, to do this. The light He brought was to shine for every man, as we learned at the beginning of this Gospel, so here we see it shining upon a sinner outside the bounds of Judaism. The will of God, the work of God, and life eternal for man go together here; and how blessed for us it is that they do. Further, the Lord indicated to His disciples that in their turn they were to have a share in this most blessed work, whether by sowing or reaping. In this case the Lord Himself was doing the sowing. When the reaping time came, recorded in Acts 8, the harvest was very great.

The paragraph, verses 39-42, concludes the story. The men came to Christ as the result of the woman's testimony, and reached for themselves the same conviction. Many believed because of what she said, and many more as the result of listening to Him. They believed and they greatly desired His company.

In their confession they went even further than the woman. He was not only the Christ but also "the Saviour of the world." Mere religious pride might have made them boast that here was the Saviour of the Samaritan equally with the Jew; but only

faith could have led them thus to seize God's large thought for "the world," according to John 3:16. They had heard, and they knew; and beneath both hearing and knowledge lay faith.

In relating all this the Evangelist has led us to the fact that Jesus is the Christ. The next chapter, as we shall see, conducts us to the fact that He is the Son. Putting both together, we are again brought to the point indicated in the last verse of his gospel (John 20).

In the last paragraph of this chapter, we find the Lord back again in Galilee, and it brings us to the second of the miraculous signs that John mentions. In Galilee He met with a reception that had not been accorded to Him in Jerusalem, and this second sign also had a connection with the town of Cana of Galilee.

The first sign prefigured the time predicted in Isaiah 62:4-5, when Israel's marriage day shall have come, and from the purifying water the wine of gladness will be produced. The second sign presented the Lord as the One who can bring life and healing when death seems imminent. This Jewish nobleman did not exhibit the strong faith that marked the Gentile centurion of

Matthew 8. His tendency as a Jew was to demand signs and wonders before believing; and belief of that sort is not genuine faith, as we saw at the end of John 2. Still, though feeble, faith was there in this man's heart.

It manifested itself in two ways. First, it persisted in its appeal, when at first the Lord's answer seemed unfavourable, fully exposing the desperate need of the son. Second, when the answer he received was a simple command to return because his son lived, he took Jesus at His word without any sign before his eyes. Here indeed are the marks of true faith; it persists, and it takes God at His word without signs or wonders or feelings.

The Lord verified His own word, and the next day the man saw that his confidence had not been misplaced. Jesus had said, "Thy son lives;" the next day his servants met him saying "Thy son lives," though they had not heard Jesus speak. Life granted even at the point of death is evidently the leading thought. And this is just what man in general needs, and Israel in particular: not just healing but life. This was the second sign, and we shall find much instruction about life — about Jesus as its Fountain Head and Giver — in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 5

BUT FIRST WE are brought back again to Jerusalem that we may consider a third sign that He gave in the healing of the impotent man at Bethesda. The Jew reading this Gospel might say, "Well we are as a nation sick to the point of death, and need life; but we have the law. Ought we not to find healing there." The third sign furnishes us with a reply to this.

A way of blessing was brought within man's reach by the law of Moses. Only one thing was necessary on man's part, but that one thing was wholly lacking. It demanded that he should have power to avail himself of the benefit provided. The case of the impotent man by the pool aptly sets forth the state in which every man lies, if tested by the law. Sin has destroyed our power to do the necessary thing which the law demands. This was so obvious in the case of the man that he made no reference to his own powers, which had vanished, but only acknowledged that no one was available to do for him what he could not do himself. "I have no man," said he.

Yet by his confession he acknowledged his desire to be made whole, and complete soundness was granted to him at once by the word of the Lord. What the law could not do for him, inas-

much as it was weak through the impotence of his flesh, was accomplished in an instant as the work of the Son of God, now present on earth. The man was able not only to walk but also to carry the bed which formerly had witnessed to his helplessness. The Lord bade him do this though it was the Sabbath.

The law of the Sabbath was very strict. All kinds of work were prohibited, even to picking up sticks and lighting a fire. The Jews therefore were up in arms at once when they saw the man carrying his bed. He had however a ready and sufficient answer. The Man who had healed him had told him to do it; and a little later he was able to name that Man — Jesus. Their zeal for the Sabbath was such that from that moment He became the Object of their hatred and persecution.

The Lord uttered no word of apology or even explanation; He simply asserted that which cut at the root of this legal institution. Under the law of Moses the Sabbath was instituted as a sign between Jehovah and Israel, as is made clear in Exodus 31:12-17, though it was based upon His rest when creation was finished. As far as it concerned Himself Jesus brushed it aside. Since the creation had been invaded by sin His Father was

working not resting, and He was working in communion with His Father, and not keeping Sabbaths as linked up with them.

This pointed declaration stirred up the Jews to murderous hatred for the two reasons stated in verse 18. He had broken the sign of the covenant in which they boasted, and He had coupled with His action the assertion that God was His Father; thus claiming equality with God. Verse 18, be it noted, is John's explanation of why the Jews sought to kill Him, and not his record of the explanation furnished by the Jews — though of course it may have been the explanation which they gave. It is therefore the comment of the Holy Spirit through John, and proves that in the Sonship of our Lord there is no thought of any kind of inferiority to the Father. On the contrary it is the assertion of equality.

The answer Jesus gave to their murderous hatred, in verse 19, is very striking. The Son, who was here in Manhood, had taken the place of carrying out in perfection all the Father's will and work. Hence He could do nothing "of Himself," as originating it independently of the Father: but rather He acted in all things as directed and ordered of the Father. But this is intended to conduct us, we believe, to the still deeper truth that this neces-

sity was rooted in His perfect oneness with the Father. Though Man He was so wholly and perfectly and altogether in the unity of the Godhead that it was impossible for Him to act apart from the Father. In that sense, "The Son can do nothing of Himself;" and therefore this saying far from being any confession of impotence or even inferiority is an assertion of His unqualified Deity.

"The Father loves the Son." These five words occur as the statement of the Evangelist at the end of John 3. They now occur in verse 20 as the voice of Jesus Himself. The Son, now on earth in Manhood, was in full cognizance of all the Father's actings, and was to engage in works greater than any yet manifested. He would act as the Giver of life and as the Executor of judgment. To quicken is to give life; and in this the Son acts according to His sovereign will, though of course His will is ever in complete harmony with the Father's will.

Raising the dead and quickening are distinguished in verse 21. The wicked dead are to be raised, but it is not said that they will be quickened. Again, quickening takes place when resurrection is not in question, as verse 25 shows. The Son will raise the dead, as He states in verses 28 and 29, but the point in verse

21 is that He gives life just as the Father does. In the opening verses of the Gospel we viewed Him as having life inherently, and as displaying that life so that it should be the light of men. Here we go a step further: He is the Giver of life to others. In this He acts with the Father.

But in the matter of judgment He acts for the Father, as verse 22 states. There are things which the Son disclaims, such as the fixing and revealing of "times and seasons," as we see in Acts 1:7, Mark 13:32; here we find that the Father disclaims all judgment, committing it into the hands of the Son. These facts, however, must not be used in any way to detract from the honour and glory of either Father or Son. This is specially pointed out as regards the Son in verse 23, inasmuch as the fact of His assuming Manhood lays Him open to unwarranted depreciation in the minds of those who neither understand nor love Him. He will be honoured by all in the hour of judgment; and not to honour Him today is to dishonour the Father who sent Him. The Father evidently will accept no honour save that in which the Son is honoured conjointly.

In this wonderful discourse the Lord made three statements on which He laid special emphasis, expressed by the words "Ver-

ily, verily." In verse 19 He emphasized His essential oneness with the Father in all His works, as we have seen. In verse 24 the emphasis again lies on His connection with the Father. As the Word became flesh He was the sent One of the Father, and in His word the Father was made known. So He did not just say, "He that hears My word and believes it," but, "believes on Him that sent Me." We believe on the Father through the word of the Son; so that presently Peter writes to saints, "who by Him do believe in God" (1 Peter 1:21). Now here He announced that such simple hearing of faith produced three amazing results: the possession of life eternal; preservation from judgment; passage out of death into life.

How many ten thousand times has this great verse been used to bring light and assurance to the souls of anxious and enquiring sinners! May it yet be used many thousand times more! The authoritative assurance it breathes lies on the very face of it. We are well rewarded, however, when we look a little more closely into its depths. The Son gives life to whom He will and He executes all judgment. He speaks the life-giving word which conducts the soul in faith to God, and at once the life is ours and into the judgment we shall never come. We have become the

subjects of the first of those greater works of which He has spoken, and into the second we never enter. He laid emphasis on the positive side by speaking of life in a twofold way. It is not only that which the believer possesses, but that also into which he passes out of the realm of death.

If we speak of life as connected with this lower creation, we deal with something which defies our analysis and definitions, yet obviously the word on our lips has more senses than one. We contemplate, for instance, not only the vital spark in man or beast but also the conditions needed for that spark to exist. There is no fish life without water; no human life without air. Even so there is no spiritual and eternal life without the knowledge of God; and no knowledge of God without the revelation which reaches us in the word of the Sent One and the faith which receives it. Because of this, we believe, Jesus spoke not only of the believer having eternal life but of his passing out of that spiritual death which is marked by utter ignorance of God into the realm of life which is filled with the light of the knowledge of the Father. No wonder He laid such emphasis on this wonderful statement.

And in the next verse He emphasized the further statement that a period of time was then dawning in which this great life-giving work of His would specially be carried on. In this verse we view the work more from the side of His own sovereign action, and faith is not specially mentioned, though of course no one does "hear the voice of the Son of God" apart from faith. This "hour" has lasted till the present moment, and through the centuries multitudes have heard the voices of the preachers of the word without hearing His voice in the word. Only those who have heard His voice have lived. They have lived because, as the next verse tells us, the Son now come forth in Manhood, has life in Himself, as given of the Father. Life was in Him essentially, for the statement, "In Him was life" (John 1:4), is connected with His eternal existence, and His incarnation is not mentioned till verse 14; but here we see that in Manhood the Son is given of the Father as the Fountain Head of eternal life for men. We possess it derivatively, whereas only that which is possessed inherently and essentially can be communicated to others. This great life-giving work is His alone and now is the time of His so acting. In the deep-seated silence of innumerable hearts His voice has sounded: they have heard and lived. We must not invert the order of the words, as some have been in-

clined to do. It is not, "they that live shall hear," but, "they that hear shall live."

But further, the Son of God is also the Son of Man, and so He is not only the Fountain of life but also the authoritative Judge of all. As Son of Man He was to be "lifted up" as under man's judgment. Presently we shall hear the people saying, "How sayest Thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" (John 12:34). Well, in the coming day they will know who He is to their irretrievable ruin! Though at first sight it seems most marvellous that all judgment should be vested in A MAN, yet we are not to marvel. Another hour will strike when the voice of the Son of Man will be heard, and this not only by some but by all — whether good or evil.

Only those who heard the voice of the Son of God and lived had the power to do good. The life expressed itself in the good, as its product and proof. The rest simply did evil. The voice of the Son of Man will lift out of the grave all without exception, for there is a resurrection of judgment as well as a resurrection of life. They are distinguished here, though we have to go to other scriptures to discover that a wide interval of time separates them. Both however are in the future, for the words, "and

now is," do not occur in this connection. The words in verses 22, 24, 27, 29, translated variously, judgment, condemnation, damnation, are fundamentally the same. It is well to bear this in mind.

But though all judgment is in His hands, He does not even in this act independently or apart from the Father. Having taken up Manhood, He does not leave the place He has taken but carries it out in perfection. Had He said, "My judgment is just; because I am the Word who became flesh," He would have stated what is absolutely true; but He based the assertion on this — "because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent Me." All judgment may safely be committed into the hands of a Man of this order, and in this sense He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing."

In Matthew 20:23, Jesus uttered the actual words, "Not mine to give." In Mark 13:32, He said in effect, "Not mine to know." Here He says in effect, "Not mine to do." All three statements are made in view of the lowly place of dependence which He took for the glory of the Godhead and our salvation, and they do not in the least militate against His supreme place in the unity of the Godhead. They show us something of what is

meant by His making Himself "of no reputation," or, "emptying Himself," according to Philippians 2, and thus we get a glimpse of the true "kenosis" of which the Scripture speaks, and we find it far removed from the evil "kenosis theory" formulated by unbelieving theologians, which attributes fallibility and error to our Lord.

The truth was that, though Himself so great, He was here wholly for the will of the Father, and all His judgments were according to the Father's thoughts. Even as regards witness to Himself all was left in the Father's hands. It is customary among men to advertise themselves, but thus it was not with Him.

The first witness, John, was just a man. Jesus needed no such testimony, yet He mentioned it, if thereby some might listen and be saved. In verses 33-35, Jesus is really bearing witness to John, who had borne witness to the truth as a burning and a shining lamp. John's witness was marked by both warmth and light, yet he was only a lamp — for that is the word the Lord used — whilst Jesus was the true light, like the sun shining in its strength. Now the sun needs no witness from a mere lamp, even though it burns and shines.

The works, which the Father had given Jesus to finish, were like beams of light thrown off by the sun; they were a greater witness to Him than anything that John could say. They were so obviously Divine that they proved Him to be the Sent One of the Father. And then, in the third place, the Father Himself had borne witness to Him — notably at the time of John's baptism — but they, being utterly carnal, had no appreciation of it. They wanted something which would appeal to their natural powers of sight or hearing, and knew nothing of that word of the Father, which brings spiritual illumination.

Lastly, there were the Holy Writings. These did indeed testify of Him, and they searched them. They thought they had eternal life in the Scriptures, but Christ is the Giver of it, and to Him they would not come. If by searching the Scriptures men are conducted to Christ, then indeed they have eternal life through the Scriptures, otherwise they merely gain knowledge of a technical, theological sort and remain in spiritual death. These words are most illuminating as to what the true function of Scripture is.

The Lord proceeded to show that He thoroughly knew His opponents. He was here in His Father's name, and hence the hon-

our and glory that man can offer was nothing to Him. They had nothing of the love of God in them, and hence were greedy for honour, one of another, instead of seeking that which comes from God. In their minds they glorified men, and this was as ever an effectual barrier to faith, and they could not believe. Jesus came in His Father's name; which means He was seeking His Father's glory. All that was foreign to them, and they refused Him. Another would come in his own name, and therefore seeking his own glory; that would exactly suit them and they would receive him. In these words the Lord predicted the coming of antichrist, in whom the false glory of man will reach its climax.

In these words also were exposed the evil motives lying deep in the hearts of His opponents, yet He was not their accuser. Moses was that through the law that had been given by him. They boasted in Moses, because they felt that great man conferred some honour upon themselves, but they did not really believe him. Had they done so they would have received Christ. Verse 39 applies to all Old Testament scriptures: they "testify of Me." Verse 46 alludes specifically to the early books written by Moses; and he "wrote of Me." This, then, is the key

which unlocks all the Old Testament — the main theme is the Christ, who was to come.

The way in which the Lord linked His words with Moses' writings is very striking. If men refuse the earlier testimony through the servant, they will not receive the Son, when He speaks. And so indeed it is. The men today, who disbelieve the books of Moses and even deny his authorship, do not believe the words of Jesus. This is perfectly clear, inasmuch as He endorses here the very thing they deny. We must make our choice between the rationalistic modernists and Christ. They have stepped into the shoes of His Jewish opponents: that is all. The two questions, "How can ye believe?" and, "How shall ye believe?" are very striking. As the love of God is in us, as the glory of man fades in our eyes, we shall accept and believe the Holy Writings, and they will lead us in faith to Christ.

Chapter 6

THIS CHAPTER BRINGS US back again to Galilee, and we read of another of the great "signs" which Jesus did. The miracle of feeding the five thousand has evidently a special importance, since it is related in each of the four Gospels. Our

chapter gives us the teaching, based upon it and relating to it, which makes apparent its significance. The miracle itself is described in such a way as to emphasize the Lord's resource and foreknowledge.

Jesus first addressed Himself to Philip. Now this was the disciple who did believe Moses' writings, as we saw in John 1:45; yet when tested here he did not look beyond the purchasing power of money. Jesus Himself "knew what He would do." In such an emergency the best that could be said of other servants of God would be that not knowing what to do, they looked to God for direction, and got it. But here was One, who knew what to do, and knew He had the power to do it. Before Andrew spoke of the lad with his small loaves and fishes, He knew about them. To have such knowledge, and wield such power as to know with absolute certainty what one will do, is the prerogative of Deity. Statements such as this are common in this Gospel: see John 2:24-25; John 13:3; John 18:4.

Though His knowledge and power were such, He did not disdain the small supplies which the lad offered, nor did He ignore the disciples with their small understanding and feeble faith. He made them the distributors of His bounty. The original food

supply was the lad's; the hands that distributed it were the disciples'; the power and grace were His, and His alone. So manifest was this to the men that partook of the bounty, that they connected it with heaven, and declared that He must be the Prophet that should come into the world, as Moses had said. People were led to that conclusion on a number of occasions — see, John 4:19; John 7:40; John 9:17 — yet to be lasting it had to be a stepping-stone to deeper conclusions. In John 4, it led to the conviction that He was the Christ: in John 9, to the conclusion that He was the Son of God.

With these men the loaves and fishes had acquired too much importance, and desiring a continuance of supplies so easily procured, they took counsel to force kingship upon this Prophet. Now we have just heard Him say, "I receive not testimony from man," and again, "I receive not honour from men," so we are not surprised to find that He will not receive a kingdom from the hands of men. The glory of the greatest earthly kingdom, that man can erect, is but tinsel before Him. So He departed into the solitude of a mountain, while His disciples set out to cross the lake. Matthew 14:22, tells us that He constrained His disciples to enter the ship while He dismissed the

crowds by Himself. John's account explains His actions. They would easily and enthusiastically have fallen in with the proposals of the people, but He thoughtfully removed them from the scene of temptation.

But though He would accept no earthly kingship by democratic vote, He showed Himself to be complete Master in other spheres, though the display of this was for the eyes of His disciples only, Both wind and sea can display a force in the grip of which man is but a toy and a plaything, but over which He is supreme Lord. The disciples in their day, and we in our day, need to apprehend Him in this light. An earthly kingdom with plenty of food easily appeals to a carnal mind. The spiritual mind is formed by knowing Him as the Master of both wind and wave, and the powers they represent. Revealing Himself thus to the disciples, their fears were dispelled, and they found themselves conducted at once to their destination, when they willingly received Him into the ship. Ponder this incident with care, for we very specially need to know Him in this way. He is today not dealing with an earthly kingdom, but proving Himself supreme above adverse forces, while conducting His saints through them.

The crowd knew nothing of His miraculous crossing of the sea, yet they sensed that something unusual had happened, and they sought Him on the further side, wishing to satisfy their curiosity as to the mode of His transit. The Lord did not satisfy it, but rather at once showed them that He knew the unspoken thoughts of their hearts. The seeing of miracles is not enough, as we learned in John 2:23-25, but even that was in their minds supplanted by the food that perishes: He, the Son of Man, sealed by the Father, was the Giver of food that endures to life eternal. They should seek that.

His answer to these men bears a strong resemblance to His approach to the Samaritan woman, in John 4. There water was in question, here bread; but in both cases the well-known material substance was turned into a symbol of great spiritual reality, and the hearer brought face to face with that, though there is no evidence of these men receiving blessing as the woman did. The "living water" was the Spirit, that He would give. The "living bread" was Christ Himself, come down from heaven, the food of eternal life for men. That food can only be received as a gift in which the whole Godhead is concerned, since it comes

from the Son of Man, sealed by the Father — and that seal, we know, was by the Spirit.

The woman no more understands at first the import of the Lord's words than did these men, but her response was, "Sir, give me ..." whereas theirs was, "What shall we do that we might work ...?" A tell-tale difference this! The men's question at once drew forth the assertion that faith in the Sent One of God is the very beginning of all work that is according to God. If men do not believe on Him whom God sent, in no proper sense do they believe in God, and they remain in spiritual death, since life is presented to them in Him. Alas! they did not believe, as verse 30 shows, but instead they demanded a sign, suggesting that if it were spectacular enough it would create faith in their hearts. And then, anticipating that He might refer them to the sign of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, which they had just witnessed, they attempted to discount that by referring to the miracle of the manna, ministered to their fathers in the wilderness through Moses for the space of forty years.

This called forth the emphatic statement of verse 32. It was not Moses but God who gave that bread from heaven, which was

only a figure of the true. The true bread out of heaven is the gift of God, and He was now being revealed as Father by the One who was that gift. He had Himself come down out of heaven as the Giver of life to the world. In natural things bread only sustains life and in no sense gives it; but the spiritual always transcends the natural. The material figure serves to direct our thoughts to the Divine fact, but can never contain its fulness. Jesus was here as both the Giver and the Sustainer of life; and this in relation to the world and not merely to the small Jewish nation, amongst whom He moved. We have noticed this feature before: the Word having become flesh, He cannot be confined in His light and life-giving powers to any circle less than the world.

Their response to this, in verse 34, looks more encouraging, yet in it there was no faith, as verse 36 shows. It led, however, to the Lord very definitely and plainly presenting Himself as the bread of life, and stating that in coming to Him in genuine faith every desire would find its satisfaction. The gift from Him of the Spirit leads to heart satisfaction in John 4. Here, the reception of Himself in faith leads to the same blessed consummation. In the knowledge of Himself all the fulness of the God-

head is revealed to us, and may be appropriated by us. This it is that satisfies. These men showed no sign of coming to Him, but the Father was active in His purposes and grace, and hence a response there was going to be.

In this setting stands that great and assuring gospel statement, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." In John 3, we saw that though "no man receives His testimony," yet some did receive His testimony. Now, for the first time we discover what lies behind the paradox. There is the sovereign grace of the Father, which has given certain to the Son, and these without any exception come to Him. These happy individuals are impelled towards Him, as far as their own consciousness is concerned, by a variety of things, differing in almost every case; yet beneath all, as the ultimate explanation, lies this gift of the Father to Christ — a love gift, we may call it.

All that the Father has given come, and none that come are cast out by the Son; and that not only because of His own grace and personal love for such, but because they are the Father's gift, and because the very object of His coming down from heaven was to carry out the Father's will, and thus reveal the Father's heart. The Father gave them in order that, coming to the Son,

He might be to them the Giver and the Food of life and thus, the Father made known to them, they might be satisfied indeed. There is no possibility of any slip between the Father's gift and the Son's reception. As we observe thus the context and bearing of the passage, we see how rightly and happily the evangelist directs the anxious soul, who is turning towards Christ and about to come to Him, to the golden words, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Then again, the Father's will is not only that the Son should receive in life-giving power the one who comes to Him now, but that all should be consummated in resurrection at "the last day." The Jews had the light of the Old Testament, and looked forward to the time of Messiah's presence and glory as the last day. The Lord's words here amply confirm the thought and show that though we may have the life now in a world that is marked by death, we are to know the fulness of it in the age that is to come. How delightful is the connection between verses 37 and 39 — no one will be cast out now, and nothing will be lost as we move on to the day of glory; and both in keeping with the Father's will.

Verse 40, while expressing the same truth as verse 39, amplifies it somewhat. The same persons are in view, but described first as, "all which He has given Me," and then as, "every one which sees the Son, and believes on Him." The first describes from the viewpoint of Divine purpose; the second shows the corresponding action of faith in our responsible lives here. This "seeing" the Son is, we believe, as much faith as believing on Him. Many there were who saw Jesus as He walked on earth without "seeing the Son" in any true sense. But where eyes were spiritually opened, and they saw the Son and believed on Him, eternal life was received in the present (see also 20:31), and the world of resurrection life will be entered at the last day.

The Jews promptly displayed themselves as being wholly without faith. They only did see the Man Jesus, thinking they knew His parents; that He was the Son, come of David's seed according to the flesh (see Rom. 1:3), was utterly unperceived by them. Thereby they made it plain that they had no part nor lot in this matter. They were strangers to that drawing of the Father, apart from which no man actually does come to Christ.

Verses 39, 40, and 44, each end with resurrection. They set before us the Father's gift to the Son according to His purpose,

His drawing to make the gift effective, and the resultant faith on our side, which leads to the present possession of eternal life, and the certainty of its fulness in resurrection. The Lord found in Isaiah 54:13, a forecast of this inward work of the Father; and He knew that what He is going to do in Israel's children, who shall be redeemed and restored when the age to come dawns, He was doing then, and He is still doing today. No man has seen the Father in a natural way. Only those who are "of God" see Him, and that by faith.

Verses 40 and 46 are linked together by the two expressions, "sees the Son," and "sees the Father." Faith is needed for both, and the Father is only seen if the Son be seen. Let us beware, therefore, of theories which tamper with the Sonship of Jesus. The Divine and eternal Fatherhood cannot be retained if the Divine and eternal Sonship be discarded.

The murmuring of the Jews called forth another of those weighty statements of especial emphasis, which are frequent in this Gospel. Jesus is the bread of life, and those who appropriate Him by faith have life eternal. This great fact stands, without any reservation or qualification whatever. The manna in the wilderness had been recalled by the Jews; the Lord now

uses it as in sharp contrast with Himself. Their fathers were dead, though they partook of the manna. He was the bread come down from heaven, and to partake of Him meant deliverance from death. Their fathers were dead spiritually as well as physically, for they had not faith (see Heb. 3:19) though they ate the manna. The man who eats the bread come down from heaven never dies spiritually, whatever happens to him physically.

In verses 50-58, the Lord speaks of eating Himself or His flesh as the living bread no less than seven times, and of drinking His blood three times. His language is figurative, yet really very simple. That which we eat and drink we appropriate in the fullest and most intense way. It is wholly and irrevocably ours, and ultimately becomes part of ourselves. It is consequently a very appropriate figure of faith, for that is just what faith effects in a spiritual way. By incarnation the Son of the Father was amongst men, truly come down from heaven, and thereby all that was revealed in Him was made available for men, but only to be actually appropriated by faith. Hence men must eat of that bread, and eating they live for ever.

The latter part of verse 51 brings in a further thought. This "bread" is His flesh, to be given not for the Jewish nation only but for "the life of the world." Here the Lord indicates that His incarnation was in view of His death. Wholly blinded, the Jews plunged into arguments among themselves, and this brought forth another statement of extreme emphasis. Apart from the death of the Son of Man, appropriated by faith, no one has any spiritual life in him. The Son having come in flesh as Son of Man and died, life depends upon faith in Him. Before He came there were many who believed in God, according to the testimony He had given, and they lived before Him. But now that the Son of God is come, He is the testimony and everything hinges upon Him.

The tense of the verb, "eat," in verses 51 and 53, is worthy of note. Darby's "New Translation" renders, "if any one shall have eaten ..." and "unless ye shall have eaten ..." respectively. It signifies an act of appropriation, once for all accomplished. This act there must be if a man is to live toward God — no life without the faith-appropriation of the death of Christ. This, however, does not militate against eating as an habitual thing, which is set forth in the four occurrences of the word in verses

54, 56, 57, 58. The life that is received has to be nourished and sustained; hence the one who has eaten still eats; in other words, he who has received the life by the original appropriation of faith now lives on the same principle — "The just shall live by faith." He has believed, and he goes on believing.

The habitual eater has eternal life and, in verse 54, for the fourth time resurrection is brought before us. What underlies this fourfold mention undoubtedly is that eternal life is to reach its fullest expression and fruition in resurrection at the last day. It is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament: "life for evermore" (Ps. 133:3), "everlasting life" (Dan. 12:2), and in both cases Messiah's day, which is "the last time," is anticipated. Daniel 12 speaks of a national resurrection for Israel, how they shall rise up from amidst the dust of the nations; but in our chapter we have individuals in view, and the resurrection is not figurative but vital and real. When Paul mentions eternal life he usually has in view its future fulness in resurrection; for instance, "the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22). In John it is habitually presented as a present reality though, as the Lord's words here show, its fulness in the age to come is not excluded from our thoughts.

He who thus eats and drinks not only has the life but he "dwells" or "abides" in Christ, and Christ in him. Moreover, as verse 57 shows, he is put into the same relation with Christ as He was in with the Father. As the Sent One of the Father, commissioned to reveal the Father, the whole life of Jesus was lived on the Father's account, as drawing everything from Him. Just so, in regard to Christ, shall live the one who appropriates Him habitually by faith; and so living he abides in Christ and Christ in him. One can only exclaim, What a marvellous character of life is thus opened to the simple believer, and how little we have entered into it experimentally! This is indeed, in contrast to the manna, the true bread that came down from heaven; and the life, into which by eating we are introduced, abides for ever.

These remarkable teachings of our Lord had a very testing and sifting effect upon His disciples, and many were offended. His saying was "hard" to them; but wherein did its hardness consist? In that it cut at the roots of their national religious pride. To be told, "Ye have no life in you" except there be this eating and drinking, was intolerable to them. Why, they took it for granted that life was theirs as the nation owned of God, and

they had not abandoned that idea though they thought they had found the promised Messiah in Jesus. Now He knew "in Himself" that these disciples were thus objecting under their breath, since He knew all things, and as a consequence He proposed to them an even greater test.

That of which He had spoken had involved His incarnation, by which the fulness of the Godhead had been brought down to us, and His death, by which life has been made available for us: now He speaks of His exaltation and glory. If they stumbled at the thought of the Son of God coming down, what would they say to the Son of Man going up? In our chapter then we have the first and last items in that "mystery of godliness" of which 1 Timothy 3:16 speaks — "God was manifest in the flesh ... received up into glory." Note that He ascends as Son of MAN. It was a wonder that God should descend to earth: it was no less a wonder that Man should ascend to heaven. Jesus of Nazareth is in heaven (see Acts 22:8). And He is "where He was before." A striking witness this to the fact that His Person is one and indivisible, however much and rightly we may emphasize the force and meaning of His various names and titles, as well as distinguish between what He ever was and what He

became, as we did when considering the opening verses of this Gospel.

The teaching of this chapter is completed by verse 63, where the Holy Spirit is brought in. Nothing proceeds from the flesh that profits in this matter: it is the Spirit who gives life. The Father is the Giver of the true bread of life: the Son is that bread, and as Son of Man gives His flesh for the life of the world: the Spirit quickens. All is of God, and nothing proceeds from man. How dead man is this chapter shows, for the Lord's words, which are spirit and life, were only an occasion of stumbling to them. The Evangelist interrupts his record in verses 64 and 65, to tell us that Jesus spoke in the full knowledge of this, and that not only did He know in Himself what they thought and said, but also who believed and who did not, from the very beginning, and who should betray Him.

It was at this point apparently that many of those spoken of in John 2:23-25, revealed themselves in their true character. Vital faith was not theirs, and they disappeared. Jesus then tested the twelve, and Peter, their spokesman, uttered a fine confession of genuine faith. He recognised the Sent One of God, who had the words of eternal life. Mere men may have the words of science

or the words of philosophy, and occasionally words of wisdom, but only the Son of God has words of eternal life. So there was no alternative, no possible rival upon the horizon of Peter's faith. Christ was unique and alone. Surely, by the grace of God, He is that for us too. Yet He was not that even for each of the twelve, and the Lord took the occasion to show that the heart of Judas Iscariot was completely open to His eye. He had not placed him amongst the twelve under any misapprehension of his true character. At this time Galilee was still the scene of the Lord's ministry, and in a remarkable way the hearts of all men were being manifested. We have seen spurious disciples going back, a genuine disciple making the confession of faith, the traitor disciple being unmasked.

Chapter 7

HERE WE FIND the Jews of Jerusalem adopting an attitude of murderous hostility, and then His brethren according to the flesh are seen in a sceptical frame of mind. They really did not as yet believe in Him, they did not understand His methods and His avoidance of ostentatious publicity. They wished Him to display His powers in the capital city in a way that would capture the world for Himself. Their advice the Lord refused. The

world could not hate them, for they were not as yet in any way separated from it. It hated Him because from the outset He was essentially separated from it and testified against its evil works.

Moreover, He only acted according to the Father's will, and hence His time was not yet come. They acted according to their own thoughts, and hence any time was their time, according to the spirit of the world. If we read 1 John 3:12-13, we see that the situation in which the Lord was found had been typified by that of Abel. His righteous works in His Father's name testified against the evil works of the Jews and they were aiming at His death, and would encompass it when His hour was come. At the appropriate moment He did go up to the feast of Tabernacles, while many were seeking Him and discussing Him in private. This shows us that the mass of the people, though not identified with the leaders who wanted to kill Him, were all too indifferent. They were full of curiosity and questions, and they argued their varying opinions, yet they were not sufficiently moved to reach decision. How like the situation today! Some murderously opposed, some sceptical, false disciples prepared to sell out, the masses indifferent, but some, like Peter and the ten, discovering the Lord of life, who is without a rival.

In the midst of the feast Jesus appeared and taught. At once the power of His words was felt and enquiry raised. He had not been through the schools of men yet He spake thus! How was it? He answered their question by saying that His teaching proceeded from the One who sent Him. He had come forth to utter His words and was doing so to perfection. Any difficulty that His questioners felt sprang from their own attitude. If only they had a real desire to do the will of God they would have recognised that His teaching was of God. If we desire to do God's will we are of necessity marked by sincerity and subjection, and our convictions become clear and correct. The mists of doubt shroud the minds of those who are merely triflers or curious.

Jesus was indeed speaking not from Himself but from God, and thus His truth and righteousness were manifest. He had come to seek the glory of God instead of seeking His own by speaking as from Himself. If it had been unrighteousness for Him to have sought His own glory, though all glory was rightly His, how much more unrighteous is it for any of us who serve Him to seek our own glory, seeing that rightly we have no glory at

all. A very searching and convincing thought for all of us! The standard that the Lord set is the test for us.

For the people, however, Moses was the test, and judged by that all were guilty. Jesus knew they sought to kill Him, and here was a most flagrant violation of Moses' law. The crowd repudiated what He said, and it is possible they were ignorant of the devices of their leaders; but they showed their animosity by the terrible charge that He had a demon. Jesus replied by referring to the miracle of John 5, performed on His previous visit to Jerusalem, and by showing them how unrighteous and superficial their judgments were by their practices in regard to circumcision. Others intervened at this point, and by their remarks corroborated the Lord's assertion of their murderous intent and overthrew the people's repudiation of it. Yet they did not believe in Him; they were stumbled by imagining they knew His human origin. Still the reality of things was made clear by these men thus cancelling each other out.

Knowing their words, Jesus took them up in His teaching in the temple, to show that while they knew Him and knew He had come from the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, they did not know the One that sent Him. They had some knowledge of the hu-

man side, but to the Divine side they were wholly blind. Yet there were those impressed by His miracles and inclined to believe that He might be the Messiah. The Pharisees and chief priests remained in implacable hostility and sent to apprehend Him, but His hour was not yet come. They had no real power against Him, and verses 33 and 34 show this. When His hour was come very shortly, He would go to Him that sent Him, and pass into a region that they would never enter — a region in which He ever dwelt. He spoke thus of His death and resurrection from a very exalted standpoint. Verses 35 and 36 reveal to us once more their utter incapacity. They had not the smallest inkling of the meaning of His words.

The eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles was to be "an holy convocation," according to Leviticus 23. On that day, when the gladness of the people was supposed to reach its climax, Jesus made His second great pronouncement about the "living water." He knew that none of these Jewish festivals slaked men's thirst, and that there were some who were conscious of this. So He invited them to come to Him and drink, since through faith in Himself the Spirit was soon to be ministered. He had spoken to the woman of Samaria of the Spirit indwelling as a Fountain;

now He speaks of that same Spirit causing the flowing forth of rivers. Out of the inward parts of the believer these rivers are to flow. The significance of the figure seems to be that the Spirit is to be not only received but spiritually assimilated if the out-flow is to take place. Out of the "belly" and not out of the head the rivers will flow.

This is to take place "as the Scripture has said" that is, it is not the quotation of a written statement, but rather something indicated in a more general way. For instance, Ezekiel 47:1-9, had predicted that waters should flow from the Millennial Temple, and that its waters should be living since, "everything shall live whither the river comes." Further, "the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there" (Ezek. 48:35). The living waters will signalize the fact that the living Lord is in their midst. But the Spirit was to be given when Jesus was glorified on high, long before the Millennial Day is reached, and He signalizes His presence and His indwelling of believers by the outflow of the living waters in a spiritual and not a material way. The Scripture thus had spoken of these things. Again and again we see verified the fact that what Israel will

enjoy in a more material way in that age is to be known by the believer in a spiritual way in this age.

Verse 39 is important as clearly defining the relation between the glorification of Jesus and the shedding forth of the Spirit. By that act the church was to be formed, and as the body united to its Head. Jesus was here incarnate but, before as Lord and Christ He takes up that intimate headship, four further steps were necessary — death, resurrection, ascension, glorification. Then the Holy Ghost was shed forth, and the living waters began to flow in Jerusalem and elsewhere. Looking forward, the Lord Jesus promised this, and attached no qualifications to "he that believes on Me." It was not for the apostolic age only but for us also. Why are the rivers so little seen? Is it because our inward parts have been clogged with other things, and but little open to the operations of God?

Verses 40-44 show us the people still hesitant and mystified. Some expressed one opinion and some another. Some would have apprehended Him yet no one did so. It appeared to end in futile discussion; but it revealed the presence of a deep rift of division. There are many ways of being against Christ and only one way of being for Him — the way we saw Peter take at the

end of John 6. The rift, like some great canyon of Colorado, exists today, and all other cleavages among men are but shallow ditches compared with it. There is still a division among the people because of Him.

At the end of the sixth chapter, we had Peter's tribute to the supernatural power of the Lord's words; they were "words of eternal life." We now find that the same power was felt by men who were on the opposite side of the deep cleavage that ran through the nation. The religious leaders had sent men to arrest Him but they returned without Him. The only explanation they gave of their failure to touch Him was, "Never man spake like this Man." They did not understand what He said, but they felt that no mere man ever spake as He did; that His words placed Him in a different category altogether. They might be ignorant, but their sensibilities were not wholly deadened.

Their leaders, who had sent them, lacked not only sensibilities but scruples also. They did not lack an immense conceit of themselves; so much so that they were sure that their own rejection of Jesus was incontestable, and so final that everybody ought to accept it. If the crowd, or any of them, did not, it only showed them to be ignorant and accursed. So these false shep-

herds just cursed the sheep, and left it at that. Yet their own ignorance began to peep out, for the effect of their triumphant question as to whether any of the rulers or Pharisees had believed in Him, was spoiled by Nicodemus who was both a Pharisee and a ruler. Though not yet prepared to come out as a definite believer, he revealed by his question that he did not conform to their unbelief. Further, their sneer as to Galilee only revealed their ignorance as to whence Christ had come.

The scene presented to us, in these closing verses shows what an astonishing likeness exists between the present-day, modernistic religionist and these men. True, the written Word of God is more in question now, rather than the Living Word as then, but there is just the same triumphant assertion of the supreme place of human cleverness and knowledge. The modern phrase is, "All scholars are agreed ..." agreed in denying or even ridiculing the Word of God. But now as then all scholars are NOT agreed, and the dissentients are not just a unit like Nicodemus in the Sanhedrim, as also their faith in Christ and His Word is far clearer and more definite than his. Moreover, like the ancient religionists, our modern specimens are just as wrong in their basic facts. Christ was not "of Galilee" as they

ought to have known; but they did not trouble to look beneath surface appearances. Modern unbelief is wealthy in speculations, guesses, fancies, and sadly bankrupt in solid facts.

Chapter 8

HOWEVER, THEY FELT that they had decisively settled the point, and they retired to the comfort of their own homes, whilst Jesus, the Word made flesh, without a home, spent the night on the Mount of Olives. Returning early in the morning to the temple, He was confronted by some of these very opponents with a case which, they hoped, would impale Him on the horns of a dilemma. The crowd might be ignorant of the law and cursed; they knew the law right well and thought themselves blessed by it; they also knew the kindness and grace of Jesus. So they set the sinning woman in the midst and quoted the law of Moses against her. The result was not what they expected. The Lord turned the law like a searchlight upon them, and its convincing power reached even their hardened consciences. These double-dyed, religious hypocrites, who talked glibly enough of the curse coming on the crowd, now saw the curse of the law looming up against themselves, and they disappeared.

The action of Jesus in stooping down and writing on the ground is very significant. Here was, if we may say so, the finger that once wrote the law on two tables of stone — the law that wrote a sentence of doom against Israel. The same finger had written a sentence of doom against a proud Gentile monarchy in the days of Daniel, upon the plaster of the wall. The writing substances are striking. The inflexible law written on inflexible stone; hence the despiser of Moses' law "died without mercy," since the law cannot be twisted as rubber is twisted. Plaster is friable and easily broken, like the strongest and proudest human kingdoms. Jesus wrote on the ground. What He wrote there we are not told, but we do know that He was going "into the dust of death" (Ps. 22:15), where He wrote a full declaration of the love of God.

In Revelation 5, the book of judgment is produced, and a strong angel with a loud voice issues the challenge, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Jesus issued just that challenge, though in different words. The result of the challenge then will be that "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth" was able to open or even look upon that book; just as here every accuser slunk away. Then the

"Lion" who became the "Lamb" is left to execute the judgments alone. Here "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst;" yet it was not the hour of judgment but of grace, and so the One who had the right to condemn did not exercise it. He was "full of grace and truth." He turned the searchlight of truth on the hypocrites, and extended grace to the sinner, with a view to her deliverance from the sin.

Out of this incident sprang a solemn controversy between the Lord and the Jews, and the account of it fills the rest of the chapter. His opening words, in verse 12, refer to the incident and are the key to what follows. In the beginning of the Gospel we saw that the Word was the Originator of life, and was the Light which shone in the darkness. John 3-7 have presented Him to us as the Source of life eternal. Now He comes before us as the Light, and at the end of John 12 the result of that presentation is summed up for us. Jesus is the light not of Israel only but of the world, and the one who follows Him will have the light of the life manifested in Him, no matter whence he may have come. The one who did not follow Him remained in darkness, even though he were the most orthodox Jew imaginable.

In John 5 the Lord had pointed out how ample was the witness borne to Him, so that He was not in the position of coming to them with self-produced credentials. The Pharisees now seized upon the words He then used and attempted to convict Him on the ground of verbal inconsistency. He neither withdrew His words nor explained them. He simply appealed to things of a far higher nature which convicted them of ignorance and error. In mere men their self-knowledge is small. What is behind them and what is before, both are shrouded in a veil of impenetrable mystery. There was no such limitation with Him. His self-knowledge was Divine and eternal. These Pharisees were as ignorant of themselves as they were of Him. They were also in error, since all their judgments were formed by the flesh, in which no good dwells. In their fleshly judgment of His words they were wrong, though clever in pouncing upon what looked like a contradiction.

In the case of the woman the Lord had refused the place of Judge. It will be His in a coming day, but not today; and He disclaims it again to the Pharisees in verse 15. Yet in His disclaimer He again commits Himself to a verbal paradox, since He asserts the truth of His judgments, seeing He is so wholly

one with the Father who had sent Him. In the age to come all judgment will be His, yet He will execute it in fullest concert with the Father. So also in the matter of witness to Himself, the full weight of the Father's authority lay behind it. This reference to the Father on His part only served to bring to light complete ignorance on their part. The Father can only be known in the Son, whom they would not receive. If only they had known the Son they would have known the Father.

Verse 20 bears witness to the power of these words of our Lord as also to the power of His Person. His words made them wish to apprehend Him, but there was that about Him which hindered them, until the hour came when He gave Himself up to their will. The Lord however continued His witness to them.

He had been going their way and seeking them in grace. A moment was now coming when He would go His own way and they would seek Him fruitlessly and die in their sins. Then they would be cut off from Him and from God for ever. This complete turning of the tables would be not only just, but appropriate. Again in verse 22 we see complete ignorance with the Jews, and that their minds were sordid to the last degree. They were indeed "from beneath" in every sense of the words. This

led the Lord to draw the sharp contrast between them and Himself. First as to origin: they from beneath; He from above. Second, as to character: they of this world; He not of this world. Third, as to end: they were about to die in their sins and be excluded from God; He was going to the Father, as He had already inferred. Only faith in Him could avert their doom — the faith that would discover in Him, "I AM." There is no word representing the "he" in the original, hence it is printed in italics. In Exodus 3:14, God had revealed Himself as the great, "I AM," hence this statement of Jesus was virtually a claim to Deity.

The Jews had not discerned this for the moment but they evidently saw His claim was a great one, for they at once asked, "Who art Thou?" They received an astonishing answer, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (New Trans.). He was the truth, and His speech was a true and exact presentation of Himself. This could not be said of the best and wisest of men. If we would, we cannot accurately manifest ourselves in words. If we could, we should shrink from doing it, being what we are. His words were the true revelation of Himself; as we might expect when we know that He is the Word who became flesh. Let us

ponder this word of Jesus very deeply, for it carries with it the assurance that in the Gospels we have a real and true revelation of Christ. They give us what He did as well as what He said; but by His words alone we may truly know Him, though we never saw Him in the days of His flesh. What He said, that He is altogether.

Verse 26 shows us that all that He had to say concerning men was equally the truth, because all was spoken of and from the Father. They were wholly ignorant of the Father, and wholly unbelieving as to the Son present amongst them. When they had lifted up the Son of man there should be a demonstration of the fact that He really was "I AM," and that in every sense the Father was with Him. His lifting up was His death, and, that accomplished, resurrection would supervene, which would declare Him to be, "the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4). Then they would know, in the sense of having perfectly ample demonstration before their eyes. Some few did know, in the sense of being enlightened by the demonstration, but the mass deliberately closed their eyes against the light. Still the demonstration that He was wholly and ever pleasing to the Father was there for every eye to see.

The power of His words was felt and many took the place of believing on Him. The Lord tested them by telling them that one who was not a mere nominal follower but a disciple indeed is characterized by continuing in His word; that is, in the whole truth that He brought. Continuance is ever the test of reality, and where that exists the truth is known in its emancipating power. The devil enslaved by the power of his lie: Christ liberates by the power of God's truth. He did not flatter them by telling them that as God's nation they were free. He set before them that true spiritual freedom which is the result of the knowledge of the truth. That they needed, and so do we!

Many failed under the test, for their national and religious pride was wounded. They might be Abraham's seed after the flesh, but to claim they were never in bondage to any, while in complete subjection to the Romans, only proved their blindness. By His emphatic statement of verse 34, Jesus directed their thoughts to the slavery of sin. Men cannot practise sin without being enslaved thereby — a tremendous thought for every one of us. Now the place of the slave is outside, but in contrast to him is the Son, whose place is inside and that for ever. And the Son not only has that abiding place Himself but He can set free

the slave, introducing him into that which is liberty indeed. Thus he who is one of the "disciples indeed" becomes "free indeed."

In these words of our Lord, recorded in verses 32 and 36, we may surely see the germ of that which is more fully expounded in the epistles. Romans 6 unfolds our death with Christ, leading to our being "made free from sin," which in its turn leads to "newness of life." This answers to verse 32 of our chapter; while verse 36 finds its counterpart in Galatians 4:1-7, connected with 5:1. The redemption from under the law, wrought by the Son, coupled with the sending forth of the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, has brought us into the liberty in which we are to stand fast. The Son has set us free indeed.

In verses 37-44, the Lord very solemnly exposes the hollowness of their claim to be Abraham's children. There would have been some value in their claim if they had shown themselves to be his children in a spiritual sense by displaying his faith and doing his works. Actually they were marked by hatred and the spirit of murder. Cain had shown that spirit, and he was "of that wicked one, and slew his brother" (1 John 3:12); so, too, they were doing the deeds of their father, and thus manifesting

themselves to be of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning and had no truth in him. Hatred and lying are both fathered by the devil, and those characterized by these two things thereby betray their spiritual origin.

Jesus speaks of Himself, in verse 40, as "a Man that has told you the truth." Others spoke of Him as a Man, and saw no more in Him than that; but it is striking that in this Gospel, which presents Him as the Word made flesh, He should speak of Himself as a Man. Thus the truth is balanced for us, and both His essential Godhead and His perfect Manhood made abundantly clear. He set forth the truth, and those who had God for their Father would both love the truth and love Him. His opponents had an evil origin, and could not hear His word — the revelation that He brought. Consequently they were wholly unable to understand His speech — the words in which He clothed the revelation. This is what verse 43 tells us.

Notice how the Lord's words totally destroy the false idea held by so many concerning the "universal Fatherhood of God," though these Jewish religionists only went so far as to claim a universal fatherhood of Abraham, and therefore of God, for their nation. Jesus said, "If God were your Father ..." It was a

denial. The devil was their father. The Fatherhood of God is limited to those that believe, as Galatians 3:26 states.

Before these Jews stood One whom not even His bitterest foes could convince of sin, and He told them the truth. That truth honoured the Father and delivered men from death, yet they refused the truth, dishonoured Him, called Him a Samaritan, and said He had a demon. They gloried in Abraham though they admit he was long since dead. The Lord met them as One who knew He had come forth from the Father, was honoured of the Father, and was going to enter upon His own day, to which Abraham had looked forward, and which by faith he saw.

The Jews, as ever, utterly misunderstood His words. He spoke of Abraham seeing His day, and they thought it meant a claim on His part to have seen Abraham. Their mistake served to bring out the great and emphatic pronouncement, "Before Abraham was, I AM." At a certain moment Abraham "was." The verb used here is the same as in John 1:14, where we read that the Word "was made" or "became" flesh. The verb for "am" is the one signifying abiding existence, as used in John 1:18; the Son "is" in the bosom of the Father; and it is used in the past tense, as to the Word in the bygone eternity, in John 1:1 and 2.

Jesus therefore said, Before Abraham came into existence, I eternally AM.

This tremendous claim moved the Jews to attempt His death by stoning, and had it been false they would have been quite right. It surely moves our hearts to adore Him, and to adore the grace that brought Him into Manhood and so low for our salvation.

Chapter 9

THE MURDEROUS INTENTIONS of the Jews did not fail because they lacked fixity of purpose but because He was beyond their reach until His hour was come. Hiding Himself from them, Jesus left the temple, and as He passed on He encountered a blind man who was to bear striking witness to the leaders of Israel, and in his own person become another "sign" that here amongst them was indeed the Christ, the Son of God.

The question which the disciples raised may seem curious to us, but it expressed thoughts which were common among the Jews, finding their basis in Exodus 20:5, which speaks of the iniquity of the fathers being visited upon the children. The Lord's reply shows that affliction may come without there be-

ing any element of retribution in it, but simply in order that God's work may be manifested. It was manifested here in working a complete deliverance from the affliction. It may just as strikingly be manifested by complete deliverance from the depression and weight of the affliction, while the affliction itself still persists; and so it is often seen today. It was then the "day," marked by the presence on earth of "the Light of the world." Jesus knew that the "night" of His rejection and death was approaching, but until that time He was here to do the Father's works, and this blind man was a fit subject for the work of God, though he had made no appeal for it, as far as the record goes.

The action taken by the Lord was symbolic, as is shown by the name of the pool being interpreted for us. Jesus was the "Sent One," who had become flesh, and of His flesh the clay mixed with His spittle was the symbol. Now seeing eyes would be blinded if plastered with clay, and blind eyes rendered doubly blind. Just so it was for the spiritually blind; the flesh of the Word was a stumbling-block and they saw only the carpenter's Son. For us who believe in Him as the Sent One the reverse is true. It is by His revelation in flesh that we have come to know

Him, as 1 John 1:1-2 shows. His flesh is darkness to the world: it is light to us. We can adopt the language in a spiritual sense and say we "washed, and came seeing." The rest of the chapter shows that the blind man got the eyes of his heart opened as well as the eyes of his head.

Once his spiritual eyes were opened his measure of light increased. The very opposition he encountered served to produce the increase. The questioning of the neighbours sprang from curiosity rather than opposition, and it served to bring out the simple facts with which he started. He knew how his eyes were opened and that he owed it to a Man called Jesus, though His whereabouts he knew not.

His case was so remarkable that they brought him to the Pharisees, and here at once the antagonistic spirit prevailed. There was no difficulty in finding ground for their opposition for the miracle had been wrought on the sabbath. Again Jesus had broken the sabbath, and this at once condemned Him in their eyes. To fail in this matter of ceremonial observance was fatal: He could not be of God — a conclusion quite typical of the Pharisaic mind. Others, however, were more impressed by the miracle, and so a division was again manifested, which led

them to ask the man what he had to say of Him. His reply showed that the Man called Jesus was to him at least a Prophet. This was more than they would admit, so they questioned the truth of his miraculous cure.

The parents were now called into the discussion, only to testify that he was indeed born blind, so his cure was beyond question, though fear led them to refer all further enquiry to the man himself; and the fact comes out that the verdict of the Pharisees on the case was a foregone conclusion. Anyone confessing Jesus to be the Christ was to be excluded from all the religious privileges of Judaism. Thus their base motives stood revealed, and they pursued their examination of the man not to elicit the truth but to discover some possible ground for condemning either Jesus or the man, or both.

Would he ascribe the praise to God, while agreeing that the Man by whom God's power was exercised was a sinner? The man avoided this subtle trap by simply affirming again the one point as to which he was immovably certain. Like a skilful general who declines battle on ground chosen by the enemy and will only meet the foe in his own impregnable position, so he declined mere theological discussion, in which he was no

match for them, and took his stand on what he knew had been wrought in himself. The man's words in verse 25 are full of instruction for us. The unlettered plough-boy of today can humbly yet boldly confront the numerous counterparts of both Pharisees and Sadducees, if content just to testify of that which the grace of God has done for him and in him.

Next they attempted to extract from the man more exact details of the method Jesus employed, if perchance they might find a point of attack. By now, however, he had perceived their antagonism, and his question, "Will ye also be His disciples?" had in it a touch of sarcasm. This stung them to the point of losing their tempers, so much so that while declaring their adherence to Moses they committed themselves to a declaration of ignorance as to the origin and credentials of Jesus. They took the "agnostic" attitude, just as so many do today. This, however, was a fatal admission. The loss of their tempers was followed by the loss of their case from an argumentative point of view. The simple believer, if he sticks to the foundation facts as to which he can bear witness, will suffer no defeat when he encounters the agnostic.

These Pharisees, who posed as the supreme religious authorities of the day, not only professed ignorance as to this most vital question, but also demanded a verdict on the question wholly contrary to the evidence. Beneficent power had undeniably operated, working deliverance from evil: they professed ignorance of its source, yet demanded that He who wielded it should be denounced as a sinner. The man, however, had felt the action of the power; he knew it was of God, and the wicked opposition he encountered only helped him to the further conclusion that Jesus Himself was "of God" indeed.

Having lost their case and failed to corrupt the thoughts of the man, they resorted to violence and cast him out. As regards Judaism he was excommunicated: was there anything for the poor man except heathenism with its blank darkness? Yes, there was. Jesus Himself was morally outside it already, from the outset of this Gospel He has been so viewed, as we have remarked before; though He was not outside it in the fullest sense till He was led outside the gate of Jerusalem to die the malefactor's death. In verse 35 we see the rejected Saviour finding the rejected man and propounding to him the greatest of questions — "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The question

reached him in an abstract form. The man hesitated, for he wished the Son of God to be before him in concrete shape. Where should he find Him that he might believe? Thus challenged, Jesus plainly presented Himself as the Son of God. The man at once, and as plainly, accepted Him as such in faith, and worshipped Him.

So once more we are conducted to the main point of this Gospel as expressed in verse 31 of chapter 20. The man had been led step by step to the faith of the Son of God and to life in His name, and the opening of his physical eyes had been a sign of the greater work of opening the eyes of his mind and heart. In verse 39 we have the comment of the Lord on the whole scene. He had come into the world for judgment — not in the sense of condemning men, but as producing a discrimination that cut down beneath surface appearances and reached men as they really were. Some, like this man, had their eyes opened to see the truth. Others who professed to be the seeing ones, like the Pharisees, might be blinded and manifested as being blind. Some Pharisees who were present suspected that He referred to them, and their question gave an opportunity for their perilous position to be shown. Their sin lay in their hypocrisy. They had

intellectual sight yet were spiritually blind and their sin remained; whereas those really blind, and confessedly so, are rather objects of compassion.

Chapter 10

THERE IS NO real break where this chapter commences in our Bibles. The Lord's answer which commenced in the last verse of the ninth chapter, continues to the end of verse 5 of this chapter. He propounded to them the parable of the Shepherd and the fold, and it illustrated the point, inasmuch as there were not only "the sheep" but also "His own sheep." These last knew the Shepherd's voice and so recognized Him. The man of the previous chapter was one of "His own sheep."

The religious system instituted through Moses was like a fold. Thereby the Jews were penned up apart from the Gentiles awaiting the coming of the true Messiah. The door of entrance had been prescribed by the voices of the prophets: He must be born of a virgin, at Bethlehem, etc. Imposters had appeared, but lacking these credentials they had sought an entrance in some other way and thereby betrayed themselves. Now the true Shepherd had appeared, and entering by the door, it had been

kept open for Him by the providence of God. It had been said, "Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4), and that watchful eye and hand had prevented Herod from closing the door of entrance against Him. God saw to it that He had full access to the sheep.

But now comes what no one had anticipated: He enters the fold not to reform or improve it but to call an election from the mass — "His own sheep" — and lead them out into something new. Israel had been the elect nation but now it is entirely individual, for He calls His own sheep "by name," establishing personal contact with each of these. Further, He leads them out by first going out Himself: they follow Him because this contact exists and they recognize His voice and trust Him. In the beginning of this Gospel these elect souls were referred to as, "born ... of God," being, "as many as received Him" (John 1:12-13).

Christ's sheep do not follow strangers, not because they have a wide acquaintance with them and know their voices right well, but because "they know not the voice of strangers." They know the Shepherd's voice well and that suffices. As to all others they simply say, That is not the Shepherd's voice. We have here in parabolic form the same basic fact as John stated, when he

wrote to the babes in the family of God, saying, "I have not written to you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). As Paul also says we are to be "wise to that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom. 16:19). Let us cultivate this acquaintance with our Lord, for it develops a spiritual instinct which preserves against straying feet.

Blind as ever, the Pharisees understood none of these things; but that did not hinder the Lord pursuing His parable somewhat further. He was the door Himself; for all exit from the fold, and all entrance into the new place of blessing to be established, must be by Him. That new blessing we generally speak of as Christianity, in contrast with Judaism. Verse 9 begins to enumerate the blessings. Parabolic language is still used, as evidenced by the word "pasture," yet in saying, "if any man enter in," Jesus showed that He was speaking in accord with that great Old Testament chapter which ends, "Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men" (Ezek. 34:31).

The initial blessing of Christianity is salvation. It meets us as we enter by Christ the door. Most of the references to salvation in the Old Testament have to do with deliverance from enemies

and troubles. The spiritual emancipation which comes to us by the gospel could not be known then, since the work on which it rests was not accomplished. Let Hebrews 9:6-14 and Heb. 10:1-14 be read and inwardly digested, and this fact will be very plain. Only by the death and resurrection of Christ is the door opened into salvation in its fulness.

The words, "shall go in and out," indicate liberty. In Judaism there was no liberty of access to God since "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest;" nor had they permission to go out to the nations and spread any knowledge of God they had. They were enclosed within the fold of the law of Moses and its ordinances, and there they had to stay. As Christians we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and we may go out as did those early believers who "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). In both directions we are carried far beyond the privileges of the Jewish fold.

Then, thirdly, we may "find pasture." This may carry our thoughts back to Ezekiel 34, where we find a tremendous indictment of the former shepherds of Israel. These religious leaders fed themselves and not the sheep, and set so bad an ex-

ample, that the stronger among the sheep oppressed the weaker and had "eaten up the good pasture," and with their feet had trodden down "the residue of your pastures" (verse 18). Consequently for the poor of the flock there was no pasture at all. Jesus, the true Shepherd of Israel, leads His own sheep into an abundance of spiritual food.

In verses 10 and 11 we get the contrast between the thief and the Good Shepherd. These thieves and robbers were men such as those mentioned by Gamaliel, in Acts 5:36-37; self-seeking imposters who brought in destruction and death. The true Shepherd brought in life; laying down His own life in order to do so. If He had not come and died, there would have been no life at all for sinful men; having done so, life is made available, and it is bestowed in abundant measure upon His sheep. We live in the light of the abundant revelation of God which has reached us in the Word made flesh, hence we have life abundantly. The life given to saints in all ages may be intrinsically the same, yet its fulness can only be known as God is fully revealed. This is indicated in 1 John 1:1-4.

Next we have, in verses 12-15, the contrast between the hireling and the Good Shepherd. The hireling is not necessarily evil

like the thief; but being a man who works for wages, his interest is primarily a monetary one. The sheep are of interest to him in so far as they are the means of his livelihood. He does not really care for them to the extent of risking his skin on their behalf. It is far otherwise with the Shepherd, who lays down His life for them and establishes a link of wonderful intimacy. His sheep are men, and hence capable of knowing Him in an intimate way; so much so that His knowledge of them and their knowledge of Him can be compared to the Father's knowledge of Himself and His knowledge of the Father. And we must remember that it is by the knowledge of Him that we come to know the Father. Nothing at all approaching this had been possible in the Jewish fold before the Shepherd came.

The Lord's words in verse 16 add another unexpected development. He was about to find sheep who had been outside that fold. There was to be the calling of an election from among the Gentiles. We see the beginning of this early in the Acts — the Ethiopian in Acts 8, Cornelius and his friends in Acts 10. We have often dwelt upon the "must" which occurs several times in John 3: have we ever praised God for the "must" here? — "them also I MUST bring." Sinners of the Gentiles become the

subjects of the Divine work. They hear the Shepherd's voice and are attached to Him. Then, as a result of this two-fold calling — from Jewish fold and from the straying Gentiles — there is to be established one flock, held together under the authority of the one Shepherd. The word in this verse is definitely "flock" and not "fold." Sheep held together by outward restrictions: that was Judaism. Sheep constituted a flock by the personal power and attraction of the Shepherd: that is Christianity.

But for this not only death but resurrection also was needful. The Shepherd truly had to be smitten as the prophet had said, but it is in His risen life that He gathers His flock out of both Jew and Gentile. Jesus proceeded to show that His death was in order to His resurrection. Both are viewed here as His own act. His death was His laying down of His life: His resurrection His taking of it again, though under new conditions. In both He was acting according to the Father's commandment; and furnishing the Father with a fresh motive for His love to the Son.

The Lord's words, recorded in verse 18, are thoroughly in keeping with the character of this Gospel. As recorded in other Gospels, He spoke again and again to His disciples of how He should be delivered by the chief priests and rulers to the Gen-

tiles, that they should put Him to death; yet here He asserts that no man should take His life from Him, since both death and resurrection would be His own acts. Men did to Him that, which for any mere man, made death inevitable; yet in His case nothing would have had any effect, if He had not been pleased to lay down His life. His Deity is emphasized, but also the true Humanity which He assumed in subjection to the will of God, for all was in keeping with the Father's commandment. Life was in Him, and it was "the light of men" (1:4), even while He was here; but now He is to take up His life in resurrection, and thus He was to become the very life of His own in the power of the Spirit, as indicated in John 20:22.

By these parables the Lord had furnished the Jews with a condensed summary of the great changes that were impending as the result of His coming as the true Shepherd into the midst of Israel. The Divine programme was opened out to them, but God's purposes so cut across the grain of their self-sufficient thoughts that His words sounded to many like the words of a madman or worse. Others, impressed by the miracle on the blind man, could not accept this extreme opinion. As the succeeding verses show, they took the place of "honest doubters,"

yet wished to insinuate that His ambiguity lay at the root of their vacillation. The trouble lay, however, not in His words but in their minds, It was thus with their forefathers when the law was given and they "could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished" (2 Cor. 3:13); that is, they never saw God's purpose in it all. Now religious pride was lying as a veil on the minds of these Jews and they could not perceive "the end" of the Lord's words. In just the same way does "the god of this age" impose a veil on the minds of the unbelieving today; no matter how able and acute they may be in the ordinary matters of the world.

Their demand was, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus at once asserted that He had told them plainly, and that His works equally with His words had borne plain witness to Him. Then He told them plainly that their unbelief had put the veil over their eyes. The evidence was there plainly enough, but they could not see it; and what lay behind that fact was that though of Israel nationally they were not the true Israel (see Rom. 9:6): they were not "My sheep," though sheep within the Jewish fold, They were spiritually dead and hence unrespon-

ive. Thus Jesus told them plainly not only the truth about Himself but about themselves.

Having put a sentence of condemnation upon them, He added words of the greatest comfort and assurance for the benefit of His own sheep. On their side they hear His voice and follow Him. On His side He knows them and gives them eternal life. This ensures that they shall never perish as under God's judgment, nor can any created power seize them out of the Shepherd's hand. This assurance is reinforced by the perfect oneness subsisting between the Son and the Father. The Son had taken the subject place on earth and the Father remained "greater than all" in heaven, but this did not militate against Their oneness. Being in the hand of the Son involved being in the hand of the Father, and the purpose of the Godhead in securing the sheep is guaranteed by both the Son and the Father. The same glorious fact confronts us in that great passage, Romans 8:29-39.

These words moved the Jews to murderous intentions. They did not understand their drift, but they did see that in saying, "I and the Father are one," He was claiming equality with God. It might have been slightly less offensive had He put the Father first by saying, "The Father and I;" but no, it was "I and the

Father." This was intolerable to them, for there was no mistaking the drift of such words as these. To them it was atrocious blasphemy — a man making himself God. We accept His words in the spirit of worship, for we know He was truly God, yet had made Himself Man. We reverse the terms of their accusation and find in it soul-saving truth.

In His reply Jesus referred to His own words, "I am the Son of God," in such a way as to identify them with their accusation of making Himself God. He did not defend His claim by one of His own emphatic assertions but by an argument based on their Scripture. Those acknowledged as "gods" in Psalm 82:6, were authorities "to whom the word of God came." He who had been set apart and sent into the world by the Father was the Word Himself — "the Word ... made flesh." How vast the difference! It was not blasphemy but sober truth when He said, "I am the Son of God." Moreover His works bore witness to His claim, as being unmistakably the works of God. They plainly set forth the fact that the Father was in Him, livingly declared and revealed; and He was in the Father, as to essential life and nature. Once let that be known and believed, and there is no difficulty

in receiving Him as the Son of God; for both statements set forth the same foundation fact, though in different words.

But the moment was not yet come for their murderous hatred to take effect, and in His retirement to the place of John's baptism beyond Jordan the faith of a number was made manifest. John's witness was recalled and the truth of his words acknowledged. John was the last prophet of the old dispensation, and amidst its ruins miracles were not in season. They were in season, and in full measure, directly the Christ the Son of God appeared. Still John bore a true and faithful and unswerving witness to Christ, which was better than miracles. We too are at the end time of a dispensation, so let us not crave for miracles but emulate John in faithfulness of testimony. If it could be said of any of us before the judgment seat, that all things we have spoken of Christ are TRUE — that were commendation indeed!

Chapter 11

THE TWO VERSES with which this chapter opens indicate that this Gospel was written when the other Gospels were well known. In naming Bethany as the town of Martha and Mary, it is assumed that the readers will be more familiar with the wo-

men than the village. Again, in verse 2, Mary is identified by her action in anointing the Lord, though John does not tell us about this till the next chapter is reached: he evidently knew he could safely identify her thus, since the story was so widely known.

The brief message sent by the sisters indicates very strikingly the intimacy into which the Lord introduced His friends in the days of His flesh. It was a reverential intimacy, in which He ever held the supreme place, for they did not address Him, with undue familiarity as Jesus, but as "Lord." Yet they could with all confidence speak of their brother as "he whom Thou lovest." He had made the Bethany household quite conscious of His love, so that they could count upon it with confidence. That their confidence was not misplaced is confirmed by the comment of the Evangelist in verse 5. Jesus did indeed love them. He loved each individually; and Martha, whom, we might consider, He had least cause to love, is placed first on the list. Lazarus, whom most evidently He loved, as shown by this chapter, is placed last. Mary, whom we might have placed first, is not even mentioned by name; she is just "her sister." Let us learn that the love of Christ is placed upon a foundation lying far

deeper than the varying characteristics of saints. Proceeding from what He is in Himself, it is a wonderfully impartial thing.

In spite of it, however, the sisters' appeal did not meet with an immediate response. There was a deliberate delay, which gave time for the sickness to terminate in death; and death have time to produce corruption. Why was this? Here we have answered for all time this question which so constantly arises in the hearts of saints. Death was not the real end of this incident, but the manifestation of the glory of God and the glorifying of the Son of God. It was for the good of the disciples, as verse 15 shows: it was also to be turned into a great blessing to the sorrowing sisters, as indicated by the Lord's words recorded in verse 40. Hence what seemed so strange and inexplicable worked out for glory to God and good for men. There was a response of the highest kind in the apparent lack of response on the part of the Lord.

When the Lord did turn His steps again towards Judaea His disciples feared, for they were like men walking in the dark, and they had no light in themselves. But He, on the other hand, was like one walking in the day, for He was in the light — not indeed of this world, but of that other world where the Father's

will and way is everything. Hence He never stumbled, and now He went up to Bethany to do the will of God. The disciples followed Him thinking of death, as Thomas indicated; but He went up into scenes of death in the power of resurrection.

The action of the two sisters, when Jesus drew near, was characteristic. Martha, the woman of action, went out to meet Him. Mary, the woman of meditation and sympathy, still sat in the house awaiting His call. Both, however, greeted Him with the same words when they saw Him. Martha had genuine faith. She believed in His power as Intercessor with God, and in the power of God to be exerted in resurrection at the last day. Doubtless she was impetuous, but her impetuosity called forth one of the greatest pronouncements on record. Of old Jehovah had called Himself "I AM." Now the Word has been made flesh, and He too is "I AM," but He fills it out in detail. Here we have, "I AM the resurrection and the life." Since the point here is what He is in relation to men, resurrection comes first. Death lies upon Adam and his race, hence life for men can only be in the power of resurrection.

The fact itself is twofold, and there follows a two-fold application to the believer. If he have died he shall yet certainly live,

for his faith reposes in One who is the resurrection, and who consequently quickens with life beyond death. But then Jesus is also the life, and His quickening power reaches men so that they "live by the faith of the Son of God" — or, as the Lord puts it, "lives and believes in Me" — then such shall never die; that is, shall never taste death in its full and proper form. The earthly house of this tabernacle may be dissolved, but death is not for us; it is rather a falling asleep. The whole utterance was somewhat enigmatical in form, and wholly beyond any light that had hitherto been granted to men. He was not as yet revealing truth as to His coming again, to which He does allude when the opening of John 14 is reached, and which is expanded for us in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. But though not the primary interpretation of His words, we can see, when once the truth of His coming is revealed, a striking secondary application of them. At His coming for His saints there will be in fact the great public demonstration of the truth of His words, "I am the resurrection and the life."

When the Lord challenged Martha as to her belief she at once showed that it was all an enigma to her. Probably she viewed resurrection at the last day as being a restoration to life in this

world, in common with the mass of the Jews. So in replying she fell back, very wisely, upon what she did believe with certitude — that He was the Christ the Son of God who had been announced as coming into the world. She had already arrived at the faith to which this Gospel conducts us, and so possessed "life in His name." But mentally out of her depth as to other matters, she proceeded to call her sister secretly to go to the Master.

With Mary a special bond of sympathy existed. We do not read of Martha falling at the feet of Jesus, nor of her tears. The sorrow of death lay on Mary's spirit very heavily, as indeed it lay upon His. Though He was on His way to lift the weight of it for a season in this particular case, He felt its weight in a measure infinitely deep, moving Him to groaning in spirit and even to the shedding of tears. He wept, not for Lazarus, for He knew that in a few minutes He would recall him to life, but in sympathy with the sisters and as feeling in His spirit the desolation of death brought in by sin. The word used here is the one for the shedding of silent tears, not the word for vocal lamentations, which is used in Luke 19:41. But those silent tears of Je-

sus have moved the hearts of sorrowing saints for nearly two thousand years.

Death had drawn forth a groan in the spirit of Jesus, and again (verse 38) we find the grave doing the same. But now He was about to bring the power of His word into action and display. Verse 39 begins, "Jesus said." There are five striking couplets in this chapter which would serve to summarize the whole story. They occur in verses 4, 5, 17, 35, 39 — "Jesus heard," "Jesus loved," "Jesus came," "Jesus wept," "Jesus said." The sorrowing saint of today has to wait for the fifth to be verified in that "shout" which will raise the dead and change the living, and catch up all to be with Him. The other four are valid and efficacious for us at all times.

At the word of the Lord men could roll the stone from the mouth of the cave. This they did in spite of Martha's rather officious remonstrance, but their power stopped at that point. The display of the glory of God, which Martha was to see if she believed, was His work alone. Quickening and resurrection are wholly His work, though men may be used to remove obstructions. Yet the power that brought Lazarus back to life was only exercised in dependence on the Father. Full testimony was

rendered in the presence of the crowd to the fact that here was the Son of God in power and also to the fact that He was here on the Father's behalf and in full dependence upon Him.

He uttered but three words and the mighty sign came to pass. Death and corruption disappeared and Lazarus, still bound in grave-clothes, came forth. Now again human instrumentality came into play and Lazarus was freed from his bonds; just as today the servants of God may so preach the word as to remove spiritual obstructions and release souls from bondage while the life-giving work remains altogether in the hands of the Son of God. In this great sign, the sixth that John puts on record, the glory of God had been manifested, since the giving of life is His glorious prerogative. Brutish man can kill all too easily: only God can "kill and make alive" (see 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7). In it, too, the Son of God had been glorified, for His oneness with the Father in the wielding of this power had been displayed.

Taking place so near to Jerusalem this sign had a deep effect. It moved many to faith, and it stirred the chief priests and Pharisees to a fiercer resolve to slay Him. They had to admit that He had done many signs, yet they only considered the effect

these things might have on their own place in the presence of the Romans. God was not at all in their thoughts. The council they held gave occasion for the prophecy of Caiaphas.

God can lay hold on a false prophet like Balaam and force him to utter words of truth. But here was a man who, save for being high priest that year, had no pretensions to anything of the kind; a man who prophesied without knowing that he was prophesying. As far as he was concerned his words were sarcastic, filled with the spirit of cynical, heartless, cold-blooded murder; yet they were used by the Holy Spirit to convey the fact that Jesus was about to die for Israel, in a sense of which they knew nothing. Verse 52 gives us a further commentary on his words through the Evangelist. Israel was indeed to be redeemed through His death, but there was a further purpose shortly to come to light. Children of God existed, but as yet without any special bond of union. That bond was to be created as the fruit of His death. More light as to this will reach us in the next chapter.

Chapter 12

FOR THE THIRD time in this Gospel a Passover feast is mentioned. In Leviticus 23, it is spoken of as one of the "feasts of the Lord," but in John's Gospel it is always a feast of the Jews, in keeping with the fact that Jesus is regarded as refused by His people from the outset, and consequently they and their feasts are disowned by God. The religious leaders were now about to crown their infamy by using the Passover as an occasion for encompassing the death of the Son of God. Their guilt was not lessened by the fact that God overruled their action to the fulfilling of the type, and that thereby "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, so that all recorded between John 12:1 and John 20:25 falls into a brief period of seven or eight days — surely the most wonderful week in the world's history. In the home at Bethany dwelt the three who were objects of His love and who loved Him in return. A suitable opportunity had now arrived for them to testify of this. Behind them lay the death of Lazarus and His calling to life by the voice of the Son of God. Just ahead lay the death and resurrection of the Son of God Himself.

At the close of Luke 10 we see this household marked by some measure of disorder and complaint; but here, after the display of the Lord's resurrection power, all is found in order and harmonious. The simple proceedings of that evening centred in Christ. He was the honoured Object of each and all, for, "they made HIM a supper." We may indeed see a parable in this. When Christ is the supreme Object and His resurrection power is known, everything falls into its right place.

Martha was hostess and served Him. Lazarus had his part with Him at the supper table. Mary expressed her heart's devotion to Him by expending upon Him her costly ointment. Thus we see how the knowledge of Him and of His resurrection power led to service, to communion, and to worship. All was happily in order, and, just because it was, the voice of hostile criticism was heard, centred upon Mary's action. It originated with Judas Iscariot, though the other disciples echoed his words, as Matthew's Gospel shows.

The world is incapable of appreciating true worship, and in spite of his fair exterior Judas was wholly of the world. Ruled by covetousness Judas had become a thief; and not only a thief but a hypocrite, masking his self-seeking by the profession of

care for the poor. He posed as an eminently practical man, fully alive to the value of solid, material benefits for the poor, whilst Mary was in his view squandering valuable substance, moved by silly sentiment. The world is exactly of that opinion today. The religion which suits its taste is one which lays all the emphasis upon material and earthly benefits for mankind. And today, as much as then, carnally minded believers are very prone to be in agreement with the world and echo its opinions.

In saying, "Let her alone," Jesus silenced the hostile criticism. The three words may well be written upon our memories. True worship lies between the soul of the believer and the Lord, and no other may interfere. In Romans 14 the believer is viewed as a servant and the spirit of that chapter again is, "Let him alone." Further, the Lord knew how to interpret her action. He gave, no doubt, a fuller explanation of it than Mary herself could have offered; though she knew the hatred of the leaders and intuitively perceived His death approaching. It is significant too that Mary of Bethany did not join the other women in visiting His grave with the spices they had prepared.

Of Mary we may say that what she did, was done "for Jesus' sake only." With Judas it was "the poor," and even with the

other disciples, it was "Jesus and the poor." With many of the Jews who flocked to Bethany at this time it was "Jesus and Lazarus," for they were curious to see a man who had been raised from the dead. The Bethany household had concentrated upon Jesus their true affection. In contrast therewith the chief priests concentrated upon Him the deadliest hatred, which so blinded them that they contemplated slaying Lazarus, the witness to His power. They were most religious but most unscrupulous. They forgot the warning of Psalm 82:1-5.

The next day Jesus presented Himself to Jerusalem as Israel's King, just as Zechariah the prophet had said. No mere Sovereign of earth could afford to formally present himself to his capital city in such humble fashion; but to Him who was the Word made flesh all such glory, as was possible then, would have been loss, not gain. This occasion is recorded in each of the four Gospels, but John records two special details. First, there is the contrast between the disciples and their Master, who ever knew exactly what He would do (see John 6:6). They took part without any understanding of what they were doing. The significance of it all only dawned upon them when they had received the Holy Spirit, consequent upon the glorification

of Jesus. Second, there is the fact that the measure of popular enthusiasm manifested had been stirred by the raising of Lazarus, wherein His glory as the Son of God had been displayed.

We are next permitted to see the effect of all this in three directions. The Pharisees were bitterly mortified, attributing to the demonstration of the people a depth of conviction which was non-existent. But among certain Greeks who had come up to the feast there was a spirit of enquiry and their desire to see Jesus was the pledge of a day when "the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and king's to the brightness of Thy rising" (Isa. 60:3). And indeed now was the moment when He should have been received and acclaimed by His own people. The hour had struck when as the Son of Man He should have been glorified. As regards the Lord Himself, He knew well that as the rejected One nothing but death lay before Him — the death which would be the foundation of all the glory in days to come. Of that death therefore He proceeded to speak.

In verse 24 we find another of His great statements introduced with special emphasis. The life that abides and blossoms forth into much fruit is only reached through death. If fruit for God is to be ingathered — fruit which will be of the same order as

Himself — He must die. Emmanuel was here, the Word made flesh, and His intrinsic worth and beauty is beyond all words; but only through death will He "be fruitful and multiply," so that a multitude of others "after His kind" may be found to the glory of God. This was what filled His thoughts while others were still thinking of earthly glory.

Fruit for God, then, is the first result of His death which He mentioned. The second was the new order of life on earth, which thereby would be entailed upon His disciples. He was about to lay down His life in this world, all perfect as it was. Life in this world is for us wholly marred by sin, and under judgment. If we love it we shall only lose it. Seeing it in its true light we learn to hate it, and thereby we keep life — the only life worth having — to life eternal. This is for us an hard saying, but of extreme importance, as we may glean from the fact that Jesus uttered words of similar import on three other occasions, and these four sayings are recorded six times in the four Gospels. No other saying of our Lord is repeated for us like this. It is not too much to say that our spiritual stature and prosperity are determined by the measure in which this saying leaves its impress on our hearts and lives.

Verse 26 springs naturally out of verse 25. We can only really serve the Lord as we follow Him, and we only really follow Him as our attitude to life is the same as His. He did not love His life in this world when as the grain of wheat He fell into the ground and died. The Apostle Paul entered into the spirit of this, as we can see by such scriptures as 2 Corinthians 4:10-18 and Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14. And as a servant of Christ he greatly surpasses us all. The servant's reward is to be with his Master, and to be honoured of the Father.

On another occasion Jesus had said that every servant when perfected is to be "AS his Master" (Luke 6:40). Here we find he is to be WITH his Master. And there is yet something more. "If any man serve Me" — who is this ME? The humbled and rejected Son of God! Who serves Him in the hour of His unpopularity and rejection? Such are honoured of the Father, and the honours will be publicly theirs when the day of the great review arrives. The highest honours of the world are but tinsel compared with this.

John's Gospel makes no mention of the sorrows of Gethsemane, but we are permitted to see here how the weight of His approaching death lay upon His soul. His Deity did not miti-

ate His trouble; it rather gave Him an infinite capacity to feel it. He could not desire the hour that drew near: His perfect knowledge and infinite holiness caused Him of necessity to shrink from it, yet to be saved from it was not His prayer, but rather that the Father's name should be glorified in it. This desire was so perfect, so wholly delightful to the Father, that a voice was heard from heaven. The other Gospels have told us how the Father's voice was heard at His baptism and His transfiguration. These were more private occasions, and there seems to have been no difficulty in understanding what was said. Here in view of His death the voice was more public and intended for the ears of the people; yet they did not receive it, and explained the sound they heard either as the voice of an angel or a peal of thunder. God spoke to men audibly and directly, yet they made nothing of it! In man's fallen condition it would ever be thus.

The Father's response was that His name had already been glorified in the whole pathway of Jesus down here, and more particularly in the raising of Lazarus; and He would glorify it again in the death and resurrection of His Son. This then is another great result of the dying of the single "corn of wheat." There is the production of much fruit; which involves the en-

trance upon a new kind of life and service by the disciple: there is the glorifying of the Father's name. And there is yet more, for verse 31 brings both the world and its prince into view.

At the cross was the judgment of this world. Our language has appropriated both the Greek words used here. There came to pass the crisis of this cosmos at the cross. Cosmos signifies an ordered scene in contrast with chaos, but alas! this cosmos has fallen under the leadership of the devil. Now the death of Christ exposed the world in its true character, thus bringing it under righteous condemnation. It also broke the power and legally dispossessed the usurper, who had become its prince. It appeared to be his greatest triumph: it was really his utter defeat.

This wonderful unfolding of the results of His death came from the lips of the Lord, and characteristically He placed last its result as regards Himself. In mentioning this He signified crucifixion as the manner of his death. Now this was the Roman way of executing the death sentence, but seeing that all the animosity against Him was in the breast of the Jew, it signified that He would die a death of utmost shame, repudiated by both Jew and Gentile. He was lifted up from the earth in order that He might be contemptuously dismissed — the extinguisher

dropped, so to speak, upon His cause and His Name. And the result to be attained is precisely the opposite. He who once was crucified is to be the universal and everlasting Object of attraction! All who are drawn into God's mighty circle of blessing will be drawn by Him and to Him. Here we have in germinal form what is more fully expounded in Ephesians 1:9-14. Far from extinguishing His glory the cross becomes the foundation upon which it rests, the basis for its most perfect display, as is so movingly witnessed by Revelation 5:5-14.

The opening words of Jesus spoke of the Son of Man being glorified, and the closing words of His being lifted up. The Jews knew that the Messiah was to abide when He came, and the title "Son of Man" was not unknown to them for it is found in the Old Testament. The Son of Man who was to receive the kingdom according to Daniel 7, they knew, but who was this Son of Man who was to suffer? They had overlooked the Son of Man made a little lower than the angels, according to Psalm 8. This humbled Son of Man was the light of men. Except they believed in the light and became children of light, utter darkness would come upon them and they would be lost. With this warning Jesus withdrew Himself from them.

A summary of the situation up to this point is furnished by the Evangelist in verses 37-43. Jesus had done many signs before them, yet they did not believe on Him. The fact was this: their eyes were blinded. The blinding of the eyes of men is the work of the god of this age, as we learn from 2 Corinthians 4:4. Yet there are times when God specially permits it to take place in governmental retribution, and so it can be attributed to Him. Such was the case here; such it had been in the days of Isaiah; and such it was again some 35 years later, when the testimony to the glorified Christ was refused (see Acts 28:25-27). The unbelieving generation persists, and will still be found when the final judgment falls at the end of the age.

In Isaiah 6 the prophet records how he saw the King, Jehovah of Hosts. John tells us, however, that Isaiah "saw His glory and spake of Him;" evidently referring to Jesus. Again, verse 40 of our chapter is recorded in Isaiah 6 as "the voice of the Lord." In Acts 28 Paul quotes it as that which was said by the Holy Ghost. This casts a helpful light on the unity of the Divine Persons. We may not divide, though we may distinguish.

The effect of this blinding was that "they could not believe." Their minds were so befogged that faith had become a moral

impossibility. No matter how brightly the light shone before them, they had no eyes to perceive it. There were, however, some — and these among the chief rulers — who were not completely blinded in this way. Their minds were open to evidence and the signs displayed wrought intellectual conviction in them. Now intellectual conviction, though an essential ingredient of living faith, is non-living, if by itself alone. It does not fructify in works but it is "as the body without spirit" (James 2:26). Living faith conducts the soul to God through Christ. This was unknown by these rulers for had they experienced it they would not have loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. The same test applies today. He who really believes in his heart that God has raised Christ from the dead, will not fail to confess Him with the mouth as Lord. If men do not confess, they do not really believe.

In verses 44-50 we get the Lord's own summing up of the situation as He brought to a close His testimony to the world. In John 3-7 the prominent thought is life, and Jesus is seen as the Life-giver. From John 8 to this point light has been a great theme, and Jesus is seen as the Light-bearer. John 8:12 gives the Lord's opening pronouncement as to this, and John 12:46

the closing word. We only emerge from the darkness as we come into the light of Christ. But the light that shone in Him was the full revelation of God so that he who comes into His light believes on, and sees, Him that sent Him. Being the Word made flesh He was not less than the Father whom He revealed, yet He had come into the place of subjection in order to make Him known and carry out His every commandment.

At that moment the Father's commandment was not judgment but life everlasting, hence He had hidden Himself from His adversaries instead of breaking them by His power. Still judgment will come in due season; the Judge is appointed, and on the basis of the revelation He had brought will they be judged. The Lord now addressed Himself to the work immediately before Him, to "save the world," and to bring in "life everlasting." So He still continued to speak after the Father's commandment and also, as He declares in John 14:31, to do His commandment, which involved the cross as the necessary basis of both salvation and life. The immediate thing before Him was the gathering together of His disciples for the last time, that He might fully communicate to them the present purposes of the Father's love.

Chapter 13

THIS CHAPTER THEREFORE begins with a description of the spirit in which Jesus gathered His disciples together for the last Passover Supper. The other Gospels have told us all we need to know as to the surrounding circumstances; here we are made aware of the atmosphere of Divine love which graced the occasion. He was in the full knowledge of His approaching death, which is viewed as a departure out of the judged "cosmos" to the Father whilst He leaves behind in the "cosmos" a few who are recognized as "His own." He had spoken of these in chapter 10 as "His own sheep," indicating that He would lay down His life for them; now we discover how His love had been set upon them. He loved "to the end," which as regards this world was death; but since death itself is but the door into life eternal for them, the love abides to eternity.

The first three verses uncover to our eyes things which otherwise were only known to God. Who could adequately read the love that filled the heart of Christ? Who could discern the hatred and craft of the devil which led him at that moment to inject the fatal thought of treachery into the heart of Judas? And who else was privy to that which filled the mind of Jesus

in that sacred hour? We are permitted to know, however. As He faced the death by which He would depart to the Father, nothing was hidden from His eyes. He knew that He had come from God in order that He might carry to perfection both the revelation of God and the redemption of men. He knew that He was going to God in risen life as the firstfruits of a great harvest of blessing, the Head of a new creation. And He knew that though He was going forth to submit Himself to the hands of evil men, the Father had in reality given all things into His hands of perfect administration. Everything lies at His disposal, and the prediction of Isaiah, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand," shall surely be fulfilled.

In the full consciousness of all this He took the humble place of service in the midst of His gathered disciples. The pleasure of Jehovah is to prosper in the hand of "the Servant of Jehovah." In the coming day of glory He will cause that pleasure to prosper throughout a wide universe of blessing, but on the eve of His suffering He caused it to prosper by using His hands to wash the disciples' feet. In this He was the servant of the Lord as much as He will be in the coming day; and both forms of

service are alike wonderful. He was serving God in serving them.

Peter's impetuous remonstrance was overruled to make plain the significance of all this. The marvellous humility of it was very obvious to him, and it prompted his remonstrance. He was plainly told, however, that he did not know the real meaning of the Lord's action, but that when the Spirit was come he should know it. We should understand it too. What then was its significance? The words of Jesus, recorded in verse 8, provide us with the key. He spoke of "part with Me," and if we are to have the happiness of sharing with Him, He must render to us the service symbolized by feet-washing. By our feet we come into contact with the earth, and the dust and defilement which this involves must be removed from us.

The Lord's words in verse 10 throw further light on the matter. He used two words for wash, the first of which means to wash all over, or bathe. He said, therefore, that he who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, thus alluding very evidently to the twofold washing of the priests — the bathing when they were consecrated (Lev. 8:6), which was once for all, and the subsequent frequent washings of hands and feet whenever the

sanctuary was entered (Ex. 30:19). This once-for-all bathing is ours when we are born again. We are then born of water and the Spirit; and so, after reminding the Corinthians of the evils in which once they had been sunk, Paul could write to them, "But ye are washed," even though they were still mainly of a carnal mind. So here, the Lord said to the disciples, "Ye are clean," adding, "but not all" — with Judas in mind. In spite of all his profession no new birth had ever reached Judas.

This symbolic action of the Lord, together with His explanatory words, was the suited prelude to the marvellous chapters that follow. His communications to the disciples in John 14-16, so to speak, introduced them into the sanctuary while in John 17 we see Him going alone into the Holiest of all. When His death was accomplished and, having gone up on high, the Holy Ghost was given, we find that boldness to enter the Holiest is the common privilege of believers. But whether it was the disciples then, or ourselves today, this cleansing from the defilement of earth is needed, in addition to the new birth, if there is to be the enjoyment of part with Him in the sanctuary of God's presence.

This gracious service is still rendered to us by the Lord Himself just as we need it. It is part of His work as our High Priest and Advocate on high. Yet He is our Lord and Master, and therefore an Example to us that we should follow His steps in this. The Word is the great cleansing agent, as Psalm 119:9 has told us. It requires, we believe, more divinely given skill to use it as cleansing water than as a shining light or a cutting sword. If we acquire this skill and exercise it in our intercourse with saints we shall be happy indeed. It is easier to gain knowledge about this thing than to do it, as verse 17 indicates. Doing it, we should be restored and refreshed.

In keeping with this is the exhortation of Galatians 6:1, yet spiritual "feet-washing" would deal with defilements which, though touching the heart and mind, have not as yet led to being "overtaken in a fault." If we knew better how to do this thing we should often be instrumental in preserving one another from being overtaken and suffering a fall.

The moment had now come for Judas to be exposed in his true character. At the close of chapter 6 we find words of the Lord recorded which show that He thoroughly knew him from the outset. In His choice of the disciples He acted with Divine fore-

knowledge, and Judas was the man to fulfil the prediction of Psalm 41:9. Nevertheless he had been commissioned and sent by the Lord as much as the others and those who received him and them had received his Master, and God Himself, from whom the Lord had come. The personal unworthiness of the servant did not vitiate this great principle.

Yet the terrible fall of Judas was a real grief to the heart of the Lord, which was not lessened by His Divine foreknowledge, which enabled Him to see the end from the beginning. The Lord's emphatic pronouncement that one of the chosen twelve was about to reveal himself as a traitor also carried trouble into the minds of the disciples, and verse 22 bears witness to the fact that no suspicion of Judas was lurking in their minds. He appeared perfectly sincere to their eyes, so much so that the common purse had been entrusted to him. The craft of Satanic camouflage is well-nigh perfect. Has there ever been a more striking illustration of what is stated in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15?

"Who is it?;" that was the delicate question, and only one disciple was at that moment qualified to ask it. The bodily position of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was an index of the state of his mind. Peter felt this and prompted the enquiry. The

answer was given in a symbolic fashion. It was a mark of distinction for a guest to receive a dipped morsel from the host. But the honoured disciple was to prove the traitor.

We can discern three steps in his fall. First there was the unjudged covetousness which led him to become even a thief (John 12:6). Then came the action of Satan, putting it into his mind to recoup himself in part (John 13:2), since the three hundred pence which the ointment represented had not come into his hands; and he finally settled for ten per cent of this sum. Lastly Satan entered into him. The master spirit of evil took personal control, that there might be no slip in the arrangements that should encompass the Lord's death.

The Lord accepted the situation and bade him act quickly. It seems that even Satan could not freely move in the matter without Divine permission; but that granted, under the imperative control of Satan, Judas rose and left. He went out into the night, in more senses than one.

Within the upper chamber a sense of ease prevailed when Judas had gone out into the night. Relieved of his presence, the Lord at once began His farewell discourse, which shed Divine light

on all that was impending. At last He could speak with all freedom, though His disciples as yet had but little apprehension of His meaning. The first two sentences that He uttered present us with a marvellous summary. Each sentence furnishes two great facts.

The hour had just struck when the Son of Man should have been glorified in public fashion, as the prophets had said. Instead of that He was on the point of going into death. But — wondrous fact — in that very death He was going to be glorified, inasmuch as every Divine and human excellence, which was intrinsically His, would there be brought into brightest display. Connected with this is the second fact, that God was perfectly glorified in Him. In the first man and in his race God had been utterly misrepresented and dishonoured: in His death the perfect revelation of God was carried to its climax; His character and nature vindicated and displayed.

Then further, in answer to this glorifying of God, there is to be the glorifying of the Son of Man in God Himself. Christ is now hidden in God, as Colossians 3:3 infers, but He is hidden there as the glorified One. That the Son of Man should be glorified in this way had not been previously revealed. So this fact gives an

unexpected turn to events; as does also the second fact of this verse that this hidden glorification should take place straight-way. No waiting until the visible kingdom for this! But on the fact of this present and hidden glory hangs the shedding forth of the Spirit to indwell believers, and consequently all the privilege and blessing which is properly Christian.

The glorifying of Christ in this heavenly and immediate way involved, however, the severing of existing links upon an earthly basis with His disciples, for at that moment they could not follow Him into His new place. Here for the first time does the Lord address His disciples as "children," viewing them as those who had been introduced into the family of God, according to verse twelve of John 1. It is remarkable how much of John's first Epistle is based upon the Lord's words recorded in verse 34. We enter the Divine family by being born of God, and the very life of the family is love, for God is love. The Lord makes it plain that while He is in the hidden glory of heaven, the children, left in the world of darkness and hatred, are to prove their discipleship by manifesting love. Glory there, and love here, was the Divine thought. The former is perfect, but, alas! how imperfect the latter!

This approaching separation was a puzzle as well as a grief to the disciples, and Peter voiced their difficulty. His question drew forth the assurance that neither he nor any other could follow Him then, as He passed through death into His risen glory, yet ultimately they should be there. There was a special meaning in the remark in Peter's case, as we can see by turning to John 21:18-19; yet it surely has an application to all of us. He has made a way through death into resurrection that we all have to tread. Peter, not being content with the Lord's assurance only revealed his own foolish self-confidence. In that solemn hour the self-confident boaster was exposed, just as the traitor had been.

Chapter 14

THE WORD OF warning was at once followed by a word of exceeding grace. Jesus knew well that these disciples in spite of all their failures did really love Him, and the thought of His departure was a sore grief to them. Hence the words that open our chapter. It was beginning to dawn upon them that they were to lose His visible presence with them; that was the trouble that burdened their hearts. But then the invisible God had ever been to them real, as an Object of faith. Might not Christ from

henceforward be the same? He would indeed be so. As an Object of faith He would be a living, bright reality to countless millions, whereas He could only be an Object of sight to a few in one locality at a time, did He remain as He was. The first item of comfort troubled hearts then is this: Christ, as the risen Victor over death, the Object of simple faith.

And the second item is this: a place prepared and secured in the many abodes in the Father's house on high. Now the disciples were men who had staked all on their belief that they found the Messiah present on earth in flesh and blood. They had given up such place as they had possessed on earth and, if He was going to leave them, for what? As they learn here, for a place of nearer relationship, of far greater elevation, abiding eternally beyond the reach of death. What a marvellous exchange! The earthly Temple had been "My Father's house" (see John 2:16); this is now disowned, and the true "Father's house" is found on high, into which He was about to enter, In it there are many abodes, as had been indicated by the many chambers in the earthly type. Their particular place and ours was to be prepared by His entering in. He holds it for us as our Forerunner, as is shown by Hebrews 6:20.

Of necessity therefore a time must come when the saints enter into their prepared place; so in verse 3 we find a third item of comfort — His personal coming to receive us to Himself, that we may be with Him in the Father's house. The disciples must have known from the Old Testament that there was to be a personal coming of Jehovah: for instance, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives ... and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee" (Zech. 14:4-5). But they had not realized that "Jehovah" was "Jesus," and they knew nothing of this coming in order to receive saints to Himself, for it had not been announced. It was as much a new revelation as that saints should have a place in heaven or that the Messiah should be there as an Object of faith, instead of being visibly present on the earth.

We may say then that verse 1 gives us in germ that life "by the faith of the Son of God," of which Paul speaks in Galatians 2:20. Verse 2 gives us in germinal form the truth of the heavenly calling, more fully expounded in Ephesians 1:3-6 and in Heb. 2:9; Heb. 3:1. Verse 3 gives us the first intimation of the coming of the Lord for His saints, Their rapture into His presence above is more fully expounded in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-

18. There also, as here, this truth was made known to bring comfort to troubled hearts.

Jesus credited His disciples with knowing both where He was going and the way. Thomas was the disciple of materialistic and therefore of doubtful mind. His objection served to bring forth one of the Lord's greatest pronouncements. He is the way to the Father, the truth about the Father, the life, in the energy of which the Father can be really known. There exists no other avenue of approach than the Son. Moreover, being in the fallen life of Adam, we have no capacity to enter into the knowledge of the Father: such knowledge is only possible for those who are in the life of Christ. The more we meditate on these words the more we shall perceive the all-sufficiency of Christ; as also that they yield their tribute to the fact that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him (see Col. 1:19; Col. 2:9).

Philip's plaintive request in verse 8 shows that he too desired to have the Father displayed before his eyes in a material way. He was not wrong in this, but only in failing to discern the display that had been made in Christ, who was the Word made flesh. As John says in the opening words of his first Epistle, the Word thereby became audible, visible and tangible. The Father there-

fore had been perfectly shown forth. The words of Jesus were the Father's words, and His works were done by the Father who dwelt in Him. In verse 17 of our chapter we have an allusion to the fact that the Spirit was with them dwelling in Christ; and here it is the Father who dwells in Him: thus our thoughts are again conducted to Colossians 1:19.

His words and works corroborated the great claim which the Lord twice makes here. As to essential being and life and nature, He was "in the Father," as also the Father was in Him, in manifestation and display. The disciples should believe this just because His own lips stated it; but if not, they should receive the evidence of His works, which so plainly declared it. And more than this, the day was coming, as stated in verse 12, when similar and even greater works should be done through the disciples, and that because He was going to the Father, which as we have learned in John 7, meant the coming of the Spirit. At that day the disciples would discover themselves to be in Christ and Christ would be in them (see verse 20), and this doubtless explains the "greater works." Before His death and resurrection the Lord was "straitened" (Luke 12:50); but once that was accomplished and the Spirit given, He could

freely operate by the Spirit through His disciples. There was no day in the Lord's ministry when 3,000 souls were converted as on the Day of Pentecost; nor did His labours cover the mighty circuit of "from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum," as did those of Paul.

In verses 13 and 14 the Lord comforted His disciples with the power of His name. He indicated thereby that He was going to leave them to serve as His representatives. Their requests, if really in His name, would be certain of fulfilment. He would Himself act on their behalf though absent from them. His object in so doing would be not only the maintenance of His own interests, but that the Father should be glorified. Thus the Father would be glorified in His activities in resurrection and glory, just as He was also in the dark hour of His death.

No doubt this acting and asking in His name had special reference to His apostles, yet it surely applies to us all. We have to remember that we can only rightly use our Master's name in connection with His cause and interests. If we attempt to use it merely for the furtherance of our own personal desires, we are guilty of what our Law Courts call a misfeasance, to which ser-

ious penalty is attached. The promise here only applies, of course, where the prayer is genuinely in His name.

Thus far we have had five items of great comfort before us, calculated to assure the sorrowful hearts of His disciples that there was going to be great gain for them, in spite of the fact that they were to lose His presence amongst them. Let us recapitulate them: the fact that He would still be accessible to them as an Object of faith; that there was a place assured to them in the Father's house; that He would come again that they might be with Him in that place; that meanwhile the Father had been fully made known to them in Him; that they were to remain in the world as His representatives, with the authority of His name to give potency to their prayers. We now pass to a sixth item of equal comfort.

The coming of the Holy Spirit is definitely promised. The Lord only presumed one thing — that they really loved Him, for genuine love always expresses itself in obedience; and love is itself the Divine nature. Just that is taken for granted. And taken for granted, He would pray the Father when He ascended on high, and in response to His request the other Comforter would come. Now "Comforter" means, "One who stands along-

side to help." Jesus Himself had been this amongst them on earth, and would yet be it, though absent from them in heaven; for "Advocate" (1 John 2:1) is the same word. The Spirit would be this with us here on earth, and once come, He abides with us for ever.

The Comforter is also the Spirit of truth. Truth, together with grace, "came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17), and He is the truth, as we have just seen, presented to us in an objective way. The Spirit of truth is now to come, indwelling the saints, and thus bringing truth into them subjectively. Hence when we come to 2 John 2, we read the truth "dwells in us" by the Spirit as well as being "with us for ever" in Christ. The world does not share in this. It has not the Divine nature, nor does it walk in obedience; hence it cannot receive the Spirit. It neither sees nor knows Him, occupied as it is with material things.

All this was an assurance to the disciples that they were not to be left "comfortless," or "orphans," but that by the Comforter He would come to them, and thus His presence be a reality to their hearts.

The Comforter is given as the seal of love and obedience, and in keeping with this the full blessing of His indwelling is only enjoyed as obedience is perfected in us. Verse 15 had indicated that, being the fruit of love, obedience is the proof that the love exists: now we find that the fruit of obedience is a special place in the love of both the Father and the Son, together with a special manifestation of the Son, which must carry with it a special manifestation of the Father, inasmuch as we only know the Father as revealed in the Son. The objective manifestation is perfect, complete and abiding, but the subjective manifestation to each of us individually, in the power of the Comforter, depends on the measure in which we are characterized by obedience and love.

The question of Judas (verse 22) evidently was prompted by the fact that the thoughts of the disciples were wholly concentrated on the public manifestation of the Messiah, as announced in the Old Testament, and they did not as yet grasp the character of the dispensation about to dawn, in which the knowledge of Himself would be by faith in the power of the Spirit. The Lord answered by amplifying His previous words, speaking now of the keeping of His word — not "words," but singular,

"word," the truth that He brought viewed as a whole — as the fruit of love. Such loving obedience incites the appreciation and love of the Father, so that both Father and Son make their abode; through the indwelling Spirit doubtless, for these great pronouncements come in the section of the discourse devoted to the Comforter. Thus His sayings, in which His word is conveyed to us, become the test of our love. They conduct us to the word of the Father who sent Him. If we disregard them our protestations of love toward Him are proved to be vain and insincere.

This leads us to another function of the Comforter: being "the Spirit of truth," He is the Teacher of the disciples. We must not miss the contrast in verses 25 and 26 between "these things" and "all things." When, as the fruit of His work, Jesus should be glorified and the Spirit given, there should be a larger revelation of Divine truth. All things that come within the scope of revelation should be made known and effectually taught to the disciples by the Comforter. Much had been made known to them by Christ, present amongst them in flesh and blood: all should be made known to them in the coming day of the Spirit. Here we find promised as to revelation and teaching the same

expansion by the coming of the Spirit as we found stated in verse 12 as to works. In addition, the Spirit would bring to their remembrance all the things they had heard through Christ.

We are now in the happy position of seeing how literally and perfectly these things were fulfilled. The four Gospels were written as the fruit of things He said being brought to their remembrance; whilst as the fruit of the further and newer teachings of the Spirit we have the Epistles, ministering the full light of the Christian faith and of the counsels of God.

We had previously noted that the coming of the Comforter furnished the sixth item in the comfort which Jesus was ministering to His disciples. We now find the seventh and last in this chapter; namely, peace. In departing He left peace with them, bequeathed as the result of His atoning work. Further, He gave them that peace which He called peculiarly His own — the peace of perfect confidence in the Father, as the result of knowing Him, and of submission to His will. And all that He gives is out of His own fulness and linking them with Himself, and not according to the poor standards of this world.

Having thus unfolded to the disciples all these great items of encouragement the Lord ended on the same note as He began — "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Exactly the same word comes to us as we face the great difficulties of our day.

But the disciples were to know not only peace, but joy. This indeed they did when the Spirit was given, and even before, as Luke 24:52 testifies. They were grasping the fact that He was going away and they were to realize that nevertheless He was coming to them by the advent of the Comforter. Yet there was a further thing: He was going to the Father, and into all that would be involved thereby — infinite approbation and glory, in the Father's love. That would be exceeding joy for Him, and loving Him it would be for their joy as well. Have we not known that joy also? Is not the thought of His joy among the deepest of our joys?

The last words of this verse, "My Father is greater than I," have been made into an occasion of stumbling to some. But here we have speaking the Word made flesh, and He speaks in His estate as the lowly Man upon earth. Hence in position or station

the Father was greater than He, whilst as to being and nature He and the Father were one.

The Lord's words in verse 29 shed great light upon all that is contained in this chapter. The things of which He had been speaking had not yet come to pass, for the first there must be accomplished His redemption work. That accomplished, they would come to pass, and He was telling them now so that in the coming days they might believe. In saying this the Lord again indicated that our day is one in which faith is all-important. Israel's day had been characterized by things visible and tangible, but all the things of which He had just spoken to them are to be apprehended by faith and not sight. Both the peace and the joy reach our hearts by faith. So presently we find Paul speaking of "all joy and peace in believing ... through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13), and Peter saying, "though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

The Lord now indicated that His talks with the disciples were coming to an end. What lay before Him was the full accomplishment of the work that the Father had commanded. But before that end was fully reached Satan, the prince of this world,

was again coming, wielding the power of darkness but he would find no point of attack in Him. Satan had nothing in Christ because the Father had everything — all His love and obedience. He was meeting not man in a state of innocence, as was Adam in Eden, but Man in absolute holiness and righteousness, and withal the Word who was God. The great Anti-type of the Hebrew servant, depicted in Exodus 21:2-6, was found here saying, "I love the Father," the equivalent of "I love My Master ... I will not go out free;" just as in John 13:1 we had the declaration of His love to those typified by the wife and children in Exodus.

It would seem that the words, "Arise, let us go hence," mark their departure from the upper chamber, and that what we have in the following two chapters was spoken on the way to Gethsemane. The change in position was matched by a change in the themes and in John 15 Jesus contemplates His disciples as in the world with corresponding privilege and responsibility rather than as in their new place and state as before the Father, which was the theme in John 14. Just as there He gave them His place before the Father so now they are identified with

Him in His place before the world. He is the true Vine and they the branches.

Chapter 15

IN SPEAKING OF Himself as the Vine the Lord adopted a figure which in the Old Testament had been applied to Israel, notably in such passages as Psalm 80:8-18; Isaiah 5:1-7. In the Psalm the desolation of the vine is declared, but mention is made of "the Branch" and "the Son of Man," that "Thou madest strong for Thyself." In Isaiah the reason for the desolation is made plain. Israel as the vine brought forth nothing but wild and worthless grapes. There was no fruit for God. Jesus Himself was the Branch made strong for Jehovah, and He now presents Himself as the real Source of all fruit for God on the earth.

He was the Stem, His disciples were the branches, His Father the Husbandman. Each branch that was vitally in Him brought forth fruit. Branches in Him there might be whose connection was not vital, and these bore no fruit. The action of the Husbandman bore in each direction. Where the branch bears fruit He cleanses it that it may bring forth more fruit. Where no fruit

is borne He takes the branch away and the ultimate end is destruction, as verse 6 indicates. Of this latter class Judas Iscariot had just been a sad example.

The word in verse 2 is "purges," not "prunes." The Father cleanses the fruitful saint, though such are already clean through the Word. The Lord had indicated a double cleansing by His words recorded in John 13:10-14, and we meet with the same thought here. As the branch is cleansed by the action of the Father, obstructions are removed and the life of the Stem flows more freely, the production of more fruit being the result. The surest proof that we are in Christ is that we abide in Christ; and the surest proof that we abide in Christ is that we produce fruit in life and service, the very character and ways of Christ coming out in us. Without Him we can do nothing. Abiding in Him there is much fruit; we are brought into communion with His mind so that we ask with liberty and have our desires granted, the Father is glorified, and our discipleship is proved genuine beyond all question.

It is a great privilege, as well as a great responsibility, to be left on earth to bear fruit; it is even a greater privilege to know ourselves to be the objects of Divine Love. The love of Jesus

rested upon these disciples — and upon us also — just as the Father's love rested upon Himself. In the knowledge, the consciousness, the enjoyment of His love we are to abide. This abiding is maintained by obedience to His commandments. Do we not know only too well that the moment we disobey His plainly expressed word our consciences smite us, and we are out of communion with His mind and out of the enjoyment of His love. Walking in obedience, we abide in His love, we enter into His joy and our own joy is full.

Verse 12 is evidently connected with verse 10 in a very intimate way. Jesus spoke of keeping His commandments in a general way, but there was one commandment that He had already signalized in a special way (John 13:34), and He returns to it again. Love is to flow between His disciples after the character of His perfect love towards them. Love that springs from the possession of the Divine nature is to circulate amongst the Divine family. The flesh is in each and the diversities amongst us are innumerable; hence the opportunities for clashes and prejudices are endless. It is His commandment that the love of the Divine nature triumph over the antagonisms of our fleshly nature. How have we obeyed this commandment? Our failure

here accounts for the small measure in which we abide in His love and have His joy abiding in us. It also means poor discipleship and lack of glory to the Father.

Human love has its limit, as verse 13 states; but the Lord teaches His disciples to regard each other as friends because they are each and all His friends, as being marked by obedience to His commands. He was indeed going forth to lay down His life for them, but in Him was found a love which far exceeded all that was known among men. His love and not mere human love was to stamp its character on their love, one for the other.

From the first moment of their attachment to Himself the disciples had been His servants, but the Lord now indicates that henceforward He was going to treat them as standing on a higher basis of friendship. This friendship was a real thing, inasmuch as He had made known to them all that He had heard of the Father, as the Revealer of the Father's love and purposes. In saying this we believe the Lord had also in view the coming of the Comforter, who would endow them with the capacity to discern these things, as He had already told them. This privileged place is open to all believers today on the same simple ground — love and obedience. Hence we have the Apostle

John using the term in the last verse of his third Epistle. As the first century drew to its close Paul's prediction, as to men speaking perverted things "to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30), was being fulfilled, and Diotrophes was an example of such men. Yet there were found saints marked by love and obedience — shining contrasts to Diotrophes, and acknowledged as "friends." Some were with John, joining in the salutation: some with Gaius, to be greeted by name.

Though Jesus thus gave His disciples so exalted a place, He did not cease to be absolutely pre-eminent among them. Friends they were, but wholly of His choice and not theirs, and therefore His sovereign rights remained unimpaired. They were chosen as friends and appointed to bear fruit of a sort that should remain, in contrast with the transient world in which they were found. Then as friends and fruit-bearers a further happy result follows. They should have access to the Father in the name of the Son with the assurance of a favourable answer. It may be thought that "Whatsoever ye shall ask ... in My Name" covers a very wide range. So it does, but we must remember that "friends" are in view, who have had revealed to them all the Father's things. Those things have to do with the

Name and glory of the Son, and it is taken for granted therefore that, identified in heart with Him, every request will be in line with the Father's purposes, and hence be sure of an answer.

As a reminder of how intimately connected with these things is love among the disciples, the Lord, in verse 17, repeats His command that they love one another. The Lord foreknew how great would be the need of this word in the history of His people, so He utters this command no less than three times in these closing words before He suffered.

The command of our Lord, that love be manifested as the bond between His disciples, gains force from the fact of the world's hatred. Love circulating within and hatred pressing from without: this is the situation contemplated as the result of His rejection and death. Let us take this to heart for all through the centuries the tendency has been to reverse the situation; and as the hearts of believers stray into loving the world without and courting its favours, so do coldness, disintegration and even hatred find a place within.

Both the love and the hatred spring out of the intimate relation that exists between the disciples and their Lord. We have

already seen this as to the love and now we see it as to the hatred. The world hated Christ before ever it hated them, and it hated them because they had been chosen out of the world and hence were not of it. At the moment when the Lord spoke the hatred had only been manifested by the Jews to whom He had presented Himself, but as we have before noticed He is viewed as rejected from the outset of this Gospel, and the Jew is viewed as having consequently lost his distinctive place nationally. A Nicodemus with all his advantages needs to be born again as much as the degraded Gentile; and so here, in keeping with this, the Jews are just the world — the former distinctions swept away in the presence of the rejected Christ.

Moreover, hatred generates persecution, and so that is predicted in verse 20. The servants must expect just the treatment meted out to their Master, and all has ultimately to be traced up to the world's ignorance of God, and the fact that they hated Him when they saw Him revealed perfectly in Christ. This revelation brought all things to a clear issue. The Lord speaks of His words in verse 22 and of His works in verse 24; both combined to bring their sin to light in a way that was beyond all question and excuse. In seeing the Son they saw the Father: in hating the

Son they hated the Father, and all was without any cause as the Scripture had said.

There remained, however, one further testimony, that of the Comforter. Sent by the glorified Jesus, yet proceeding from the Father, He would complete the witness as the Spirit of Truth. The Son incarnate upon earth, had revealed the Father and His testimony had been refused. Yet the testimony would still be maintained by the Comforter, for proceeding from the Father He would now testify of the Son gone up on high and thus maintain the revelation that He had made. They could cast out the Son: they did so by way of the cross. But there was to come One that they could not eject in this fashion, and so an abiding witness would be secured. The Spirit's testimony is the last to be rendered. Hence the exceeding gravity of sin against the Holy Ghost or doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

Verse 27 speaks of the witness to be borne by the apostles and differentiates it from the testimony of the Comforter. They bore witness to all that they had seen and heard "from the beginning," as we see at the opening of John's first Epistle; in which the weight and value of this witness is revealed to us. They were also the appointed witnesses of His resurrection. Their

witness to the great facts and realities on which all is based is of the last importance, yet something more was needed, and it was supplied by the fresh testimony of the Spirit of Truth, which we have recorded in the Acts. That was specially given through Stephen in the first place, and then through the converted arch-persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul. We may express the difference by saying that the main witness of the twelve was to the great facts connected with the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ: the witness of the Comforter was to be concerning the significance and bearing of those facts; of the whole purpose of God established in them.

Chapter 16

FURTHER WORDS OF warning follow in the opening verses of this chapter, lest the disciples should be stumbled by being unprepared for persecution. Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:13, furnish us with a commentary on verses 2 and 3 of our chapter. Saul of Tarsus persecuted this way to the death, and he did it ignorantly in his unbelief. At that time he certainly knew neither the Father nor the Son.

Jesus was going to Him that sent Him, and the disciples had sufficient sense of the loss they would suffer to be filled with sorrow, but if only they had enquired more as to where He was going, and what would be involved in His presence with the Father, they would have seen things in a different light. His departure was going to be profitable for them. Loss there was going to be, but also gain which would outweigh the loss. This was a startling statement, but the Lord proceeds to support it by giving further unfoldings of the benefits which would flow from the coming of the Comforter, which coming was contingent on His departure. He speaks first of what His coming would mean as regards themselves.

Being come, He will, by His very presence and activity, be a standing witness against the world. The word "reprove" does not mean that He will bring such conviction to the world as would result in its conversion, but that His coming will bring such a demonstration of these three great realities as shall leave the world without excuse. He comes as the direct consequence of the going on high of Jesus, the One cast out by the unbelieving world. Perfect goodness embodied in the Son of God had been before their eyes and had been totally rejected. Here was

sin, an outrageous missing of the mark — and demonstrated by the presence of the Comforter, who came because He was gone.

But Jesus was going through death and resurrection and by ascension into the glory of the Father. Thus Divine righteousness would be vindicated and displayed. The point here is not remission of sins and justification for us, as it is in Romans 3, but of righteousness to be publicly established in every sphere that has been touched and marred by sin. Christ's death was the supreme act of the world's unrighteousness: His glorification was the supreme act of God's righteousness, and the guarantee that ultimately righteousness shall everywhere prevail, in keeping with Paul's words in Acts 17:31. Now the Spirit is come from the glorified Christ as the standing Witness to this. To have merely demonstrated sin would not have been enough: righteousness its antithesis, and that which will ultimately abolish it, must be demonstrated too.

The third thing, judgment, follows as the appropriate sequence. If human sin be dealt with in Divine righteousness, judgment cannot be avoided. Paul reasoned before Felix of "judgment to come" and the Roman governor trembled, but the point in our

passage is that the prince of this world has been judged by his attitude to Christ, and in the power of His cross. In John 12, Jesus had spoken of the judgment of the world and the casting out of its prince. These solemn facts are demonstrated by the presence of the Spirit, for if the prince and leader of the world is judged, the world that he controls is judged too. Satan is also called "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), as men ignorantly worship him in turning aside to all the things that they idolize: he is "the prince" as being the originator and leader in the world's great schemes.

Now it is indeed expedient and profitable for us that the Comforter should have come with plain demonstration of these things. To see the devil in a true light, to see the world as it really is, to have things brought to an issue as between sin and righteousness, are matters of the deepest moment. The witness truly is against the world but it stands for our benefit and instruction. Had it been more fully heeded by ourselves, and by the church all through its history, we should have kept ourselves far more unspotted from the world than we have done. The strong words that we read in James 4:4 are more easily understood in the light of the Lord's words here.

How profitable too is that ministry of the Spirit indicated in verses 13-15. It seems to fall under three heads — "He will guide you ... He will shew you ... He shall glorify Me."

He is to guide the disciples into all truth. In the previous verse the Lord indicated that there were many things yet to be revealed, but that they were not yet in the condition to receive them. When by the reception of the Spirit they should have that anointing, spoken of in 1 John 2:20 and 27 they would have the capacity to understand. So, when the Spirit of Truth was come, the Lord said through Him the many things He had yet to say, and all truth was revealed, and into that the Spirit guided them. The Apostles doubtless are primarily in view here, but as the fruit of this guiding into all truth, the Epistles were written, and thus the saints of all ages down to our own have had all truth brought within the circle of their knowledge. With what diligence have we given ourselves to these things so as to be guided into them?

Then He was to show the disciples "things to come." As the fruit of this particular ministry to the Apostles, we have the book of Revelation as well as certain passages in the Epistles, and thus this ministry has been made available to us. By these

prophetic writings the drift of things both in the church and in the world is made known to us, and hence we are not in darkness, though the rejection and absence of Christ has introduced an epoch in the world's history characterized as "the night."

Then, thirdly, the mission of the Comforter is to glorify the Christ who has been dishonoured by the world. This He does by announcing to us the things that are Christ's, so that we make the discovery that all the Father's things are also His. Let us not miss the tremendous scope of this great declaration. We have already heard twice that the Father has given all things into His hand (John 3:35; John 13:3), but that might carry us no further than the fact that, like Joseph in Egypt with Pharaoh's things, all administration is committed to Him. This does carry us further. All the Father's things ARE HIS! And this was said by the Son whilst on earth in His pathway of humiliation. That "ARE" is timeless: it breathes the air of eternity. The Father's things ever were His, they are, and ever will be. He who speaks thus lays claim to Deity, One in the unity of the Godhead. The acknowledgment of this by the ministry of the Comforter does indeed glorify Him.

The transition of thought from verse 15 to 16 may not be apparent at first sight, but we believe the Lord is still pursuing the thought of how profitable for them would be His departure because it involved the advent of the Comforter. Soon they would no longer see Him, and then again a little while and they would see Him. But this second seeing was to be "because I go to the Father"; that is, because then the Spirit would be given. In this remarkable statement the Lord used two different words: the first meaning to behold or view as a spectator, the second to perceive or discern. A little while and they would no longer see Him, beholding His ways and works as spectators; then another little while and the Spirit being given, they would see Him in this new fashion, perceiving Him by faith with the inward eye of their Spirit-filled hearts, in a measure unknown before. Blessed be God that it is possible for us too to say, "But we see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9).

This saying of His was dark at the moment to the disciples and therefore further explanation was given. The world was going to have its way with Him and His death was impending. It would rejoice in getting rid of Him, but for them the outlook was one of weeping and lamentation. Yet beyond death lay re-

urrection and His ascension to the Father. This would reverse everything. The travail of childbirth is used as an illustration, for not only does it set forth the idea of joy supervening on sorrow, but also that of new life springing up. Now their sorrow was just a reflex of His sorrow, and His was so deep and of such a nature as to be called "the travail of His soul" in Isaiah 53:11, whilst the previous verse predicts, "He shall see His seed," evidently in resurrection and in glory. They could not share His atoning sufferings yet they were dimly sharing His sorrow, though largely, without a doubt, in a selfish way. They should soon very really share His joy.

The context of verse 22 would indicate that the Lord was referring, not only to the gladness that would fill the disciples when they met Him in resurrection, but also to their joy when, by the Spirit given, they should have the knowledge of His glory. This is yet more plain when we consider verse 23, for "In that day" does not indicate merely the forty days during which they saw Him before Pentecost, but rather the whole period characterized by His absence and the Spirit's personal presence in the church. That day has not yet run its course, and it is still our

privilege to pray in the Holy Ghost, and thus to ask of the Father in the name of the Son.

The word "ask" occurs twice in this verse, but actually the Lord used two different words, which might be distinguished by using "demand" or "enquire" for the first and "ask" or "petition" for the second. The Lord had been meeting all their demands, and they had run to Him with all their enquiries, but now that day was closing. But He had revealed the Father before them, and directly the Spirit should be given that revelation would become effective in them. They would be empowered to take their place as representatives of the Son, and so ask in His Name. Asking thus under the direction of the Spirit, their prayers would be sure of an affirmative answer, as being according to the Father's mind. Striking instances of prayers of this kind are given us in the latter part of Acts 4, and again in Acts 12. Indeed the prayer of the dying Stephen, in the last verse of Acts 7, illustrates it; for the conversion of the man who presided, like an evil genius, over his martyrdom was an answer to the spirit of the request, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

The change that would be introduced by the coming of the Comforter is still the dominant thought in verse 25. It would af-

fect the very way in which the truth as to the Father was to be presented. He had been making known the Father by doing the Father's works. All the miracles, or "signs" recorded in this gospel, had been a setting forth of the grace and power and glory of the Father, in a parabolic or allegorical way. When we turn to the Epistles we read plain declarations of the Father, His purposes and glory and love, given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. All this came to pass in the day of which the Lord was speaking, when they should be able to ask with all freedom in His Name as knowing the Father's love.

The words in the latter part of verse 26 are no contradiction of the fact that Jesus is our Intercessor on high. They only emphasize the fact of the Father's love for the saints and the place of intimacy that they have in His presence. The attitude of the disciples to Jesus was, as verse 27 shows, one of love and faith. Is that our attitude? Then we too come under the benediction of the Father's love. Hence, though we deeply need Christ's gracious intercession for us, in view of our weakness and constant failure, as those in this place of love and favour, yet we have no need for intercession that we may be in this place. Souls brought up in the darkness of Romanism may imagine they

need just the kind of intercession that is precluded here, only so often they sink still lower by thinking that the Virgin Mary or some lesser "saint" must undertake it. Blessed be God, we need no intercessor of that kind at all!

The disciples believed that He had come forth from God, but as yet they had hardly risen to the thought of His coming forth from the Father, though, as their words show, they did not as yet realize their limitations. Until the Spirit was given they were limited in understanding, as verse 31 shows, and also in power and courage, as verse 32 shows. The very men who were groping in their minds here, and in a few hours' time were scattered and running away, were gathered with minds of clear understanding, and with hearts as bold as lions, when the Day of Pentecost was fully come. Understanding and courage: these two things should characterize us today. But do they?

Though the Lord had no support from His disciples in the dark hour before Him, He could go forth in perfect dependence on the Father and in the assurance of His abiding presence. Hence He confronted the world's hatred and opposition in perfect peace and wholly overcame it. Now all these communications the Lord had made that His disciples in their turn might have

peace in Him, just as He had possessed peace in the Father. His overcoming the world, moreover, was the pledge that overcoming power was also at their disposal. He had just been speaking of the world's hatred and persecution. To us perhaps its seductions and smiles are more dangerous. But, whichever it be, our safety lies in Christ. Only as begotten of God and as believing that Jesus is the Son of God do we overcome the world, as 1 John 5:4-5, tells us.

Chapter 17

WE NEED TO have in our minds the five words that close the previous chapter as we read the opening words of this chapter. He who had overcome the world "lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father." In the knowledge of the Father and in the light of heaven, what is the world worth? And what are its threats or persecutions? Here was the Son of God Himself in the absolute fulness of both, and hence the world was, so to speak, beneath His feet. He is now going to present Himself before the Father, and to present His disciples also; so that they, begotten of God, and knowing Himself as the Son of God, and the Father revealed in Him, might be kept from the world through which they were to pass. When Bunyan in his allegory

pictured a man with a crown of glory "before his eyes," he very rightly placed the world "behind his back."

In the fourth verse of the next chapter we have the Evangelist's testimony that Jesus knew "all things that should come upon Him." Here He addresses the Father in the consciousness that the hour, for which He specially came into the world, was come. In this matchless chapter we are permitted to hear the Son communing with the Father, and lifted thus into this Divine region, we view His great work as a completed whole and pass in spirit beyond the Cross. Here are words that defy all human powers of analysis and submerge all human powers of thought. Yet we may consider them. Let us do so, as we pass through the verses, by noting the things for which He made request of the Father, and also His emphatic statements as to what He had already accomplished.

His first request is, "Glorify Thy Son." The Son had been here as the Servant of the Father's pleasure and glory, to which fact this Gospel has borne special and abundant witness. So, in keeping with this, His first request is, that no longer in humiliation on earth but amid the splendours of heaven He may still serve and glorify the Father by exerting the power over all

flesh conferred upon Him in a way of peculiar wonder and blessedness. By-and-by He will exert that power over all flesh in the execution of judgment: at present He exerts it in the bestowal of eternal life to all that have been given to Him of the Father. Of that life He is the Source and Fountain for men. We have life and we have the Spirit from the glorified One, and the Father is glorified in this in a way that surpasses the solemn glory that will be His in the hour of judgment.

Now all life takes character from the conditions that surround it — from its environment. Eternal life can only be lived in the knowledge of the only true God as Father, and of Jesus Christ the Sent One of the Father. This it is doubtless that accounts for the fact that life of an eternal sort is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament, and then simply as hinting prophetically at that which will be enjoyed in the millennial age to come. It was promise rather than known and enjoyed blessing. The law offered life on earth. The age of life eternal began when the Son of God appeared, and having finished His work on earth He was glorified in heaven.

Ten times over in this chapter does Jesus utter the words, "I have," in declaring the fulness of all that He had accomplished.

The first two occurrences are in verse 4, where He urges the completeness of His work in support of His request for glory. He had glorified the Father, be it noted on the earth — that particular corner of the wide universe where He had been most signally dishonoured by the sin and breakdown of the first man and his race. That great work had been entrusted to Him, together with the parallel work of making propitiation for sin, so that there might be redemption for sinners. Passing in spirit beyond the Cross, He declared the completeness and perfection of His own work. No mere man could utter words like this. The work of the most eminent servants of God has been but fragmentary and incomplete. And had it been otherwise not one of them would have dared to approach God, the Searcher of hearts and ways, and pronounce on their own work, declaring its finished perfection, for it would have betokened impertinent presumption of the worst kind. But here the Son is speaking, and it was no presumption for Him.

Yet He was truly Man; and that is what strikes us as we read verse 5, where He repeats His request for glory — that particular glory which He had along with the Father before the world came into being. He is to be re-invested with that glory, only

now as the Son in Manhood — risen Manhood. Here is a fact of greatest wonder and weightiest moment: a Risen Man, Christ Jesus, is invested with the uncreated glory of Deity. In that glory is the church's Head, the Leader of the chosen race to which we belong. Who can measure the consequences that are going to flow from this great fact?

The chosen race come into view in the next verse. They are designated, "the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." So at the outset they are sharply differentiated from the world, as taken out of it by the Father and given to the Son. They were the Father's according to His counsel before time was, but they were given to the Son that He might bring them to the knowledge of the Father by manifesting His Name to them. At the end of His prayer Jesus speaks of declaring the Father's Name, which lays the stress upon His words. Here however it is manifesting, and that was accomplished more in His life and works; as He had said previously, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Of these men He says, "They have kept Thy word."

This was very touching, for think what these men had been, how slow, how obtuse, how unresponsive! And think what they were on the point of showing themselves to be. What cow-

ardice, what denials, in a few hours time! But the Son viewed them in the light of the Divine purpose, and He knew that the Father had power ultimately to effect in them all that He had purposed. So He credited them with the possession in fulness of that which they as yet only realized in a very feeble measure. And does He not treat His saints today, and intercede for them, in just the same way? He credits them also, in the next verse, with tracing up to the Father all that they had seen displayed in Him. All through this Gospel we find Him attributing everything to the Father. His words and His works were the Father's. He neither spoke nor acted as from Himself, though He was the Word and the Son. So real was the Humanity that He took: so real the place of subjection He assumed that He might manifest the Father's Name and glory.

In verse 8 He speaks not of "the word" but of "the words" that had been given to Him and handed on to the disciples. The one is the revelation, considered as one whole; the other the many and varied sayings in which He had communicated the word to them. These sayings they had received, and thereby had been directed to the Father Himself. They had indeed received them, but had they really grasped the tiniest fraction of their mean-

ing? How much have we grasped — we who have the Spirit? Yet it is no small thing if we implicitly receive and believe what He says because He says it. All that He has said will put us into touch with the Father who has sent Him.

Thus far we have heard the Son making His first and greatest request; that He should be glorified in His risen Manhood, in order that He might glorify the Father in a new way. We have also heard Him state four things which He had perfectly accomplished. He had glorified the Father on the earth. He had finished the work given Him to do. He had manifested the Father's name to the disciples; and given them the words which the Father had given to Him. In verse 9 we meet with His second request, not for Himself but for His disciples. He begins by dissociating them from the world in the most decisive fashion.

The old line of cleavage had been between Jew and Gentile, but that, though it had been sharp enough up to this point, was now disappearing, and was being replaced by the cleavage between the disciples who received Him and the world that rejected Him. If a Jew rejected Him, his place of privilege disappeared, and he was just one of the units of which the world was

composed. Note how the Lord characterizes His disciples here. They were the Father's by His purpose and choice, and then given by Him to the Son. As thus given they were held as belonging jointly to the Father and the Son. But they were peculiarly the vessel or vehicle in which the Son is to be glorified.

"All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine." Ponder these words. A mere man may say, "All mine are Thine," but no mere man could say, "All Thine are mine," or he would be guilty of unpardonable and blasphemous presumption. But the Son could so speak with seemliness and truth; for He is One with the Father.

Having placed the disciples before the Father as the objects of His second request, Jesus mentioned as the occasion of it that He was leaving the world and coming to the Father, while they were to be left in it. They had very little conception of what the world was, with its dangers and snares; He knew it perfectly. Nothing but the keeping power of the Father, according to His own holiness, would be sufficient to preserve them. They were not merely to be preserved but kept in a unity after the pattern of the Father and the Son. The Son had revealed that holy name of Father, and in it there was binding power and grace, as also

there was in the life eternal which the Son gives, coupled with the gift of the Spirit, soon to be. These men moreover were left to be witnesses to their Lord who was going, and it was essential that their witness should be marked by unity, in order to be effectual. The Acts and the Epistles show us how fully this unity of witness was preserved.

Hitherto they had been kept by the Son in the Father's name, and the only one missing was no true disciple at all but the son of perdition, and even this sad happening was in fulfilment of Scripture. As to all those really given to Him of the Father, Jesus could say, "I have kept;" the fifth occurrence of "I have" in the chapter. Now as going out of the world He puts the disciples in His own place, as verse 13 shows. He had been here in His Father's name, finding His joy in serving His interests. They were henceforward to be here in His Name and have that same joy fulfilled in themselves as they served the Father in representing the Son.

But for this they would need to be in the knowledge of the Father's mind and purpose; hence the Son had given to them the Father's word. For the sixth time we have the words, "I have," and this time concerning not "the words" but "the

word;" that is, the whole revelation which He had brought. They had as yet but little entered into its fulness, but thereby they had been separated from the world as to their knowledge, just as they were separated also in their origin, for they were not OF the world even as He was not. Yet as to place they were IN the world, and the Lord did not desire that they should be taken out of it, but rather kept from the evil.

Here we have very explicitly a thing for which the Lord did NOT make a request. Yet the thing, with strange perversity, has been sought by earnest souls — and many true believers among them — through the centuries, as embodied in the monastic idea. That idea may be pursued by the aid of walls of thick masonry, or it may be pursued without them. The result, however, is the same. If we turn Divinely-ordained separation into monastic isolation, we shall always end by generating within the area of our seclusion the very evils we are supposed to be avoiding. The world indeed presents us with a deadly peril. But why? Because of what we are in ourselves. A holy angel would neither court its favours nor fear its frowns: it would leave him wholly unmoved. The world does present, so to speak, the infectious germs from without; but the main trouble lies in

ourselves — the susceptibility of the flesh within. No monastic isolation affects that.

What the Lord did request was, "Sanctify them through thy truth," for the truth separates by building up that spiritual immunity which preserves from spiritual disease. The root idea of sanctification is setting apart. The Son has given the Father's word, which introduces us to all His love, His thoughts, His purposes, His glory. All this is truth; that is, reality of the Divine sort. The world lives so largely in a region of unreality and make-believe, striving to establish its systems which have no solid basis and which eventually must pass away. If we know Divine realities we must of necessity be set apart from the world's unrealities. This will expose us to the world's hatred, but it will build up strong spiritual resistance to its snares. It will immunize us against its germs. This is the kind of separation that endures, because effected by the Father's word and truth.

The seventh "I have," is found in verse 18. As the holy and perfect One, Jesus had been sent into the world by the Father, that He might represent Him and make Him known. Now He sends His disciples into the world in similar manner. They were to

represent Him and make Him known. What qualified them for this was the sanctification of which the previous verse had spoken. Had it been His plan to place them in monastic isolation, no such mission would have been possible, and it would not have been possible had they not been sanctified by the truth. But with the spiritual immunity which the truth confers it was possible.

But a further thing was needed as indicated in verse 19. The Lord Jesus must Himself be set apart in the glory of heaven, that He might shed upon them His Spirit, that He might become the attractive Object for their hearts, and the Pattern to whom they are to be conformed in due time. Being intrinsically and Divinely holy, the only sanctification possible for Him was such a setting apart as this; and let us notice that, according to this verse, He does it Himself. Another tribute to His Deity, for no mere man could set himself apart in the glory of heaven!

Verse 17, then, gives us the sanctifying power of truth, reaching us through the Father's word, which had been ministered by the Son, as verse 14 has stated. Verse 19 adds the sanctifying power of Christ's glory, to be ministered by the Spirit, who was to come to the disciples as the consequence of His glorifica-

tion. To state the matter more briefly: it is the revelation of the Father by the Son, and the knowledge of the glory of the Son in risen Manhood by the Spirit, that sanctifies the believer today.

Verse 20 should touch all our hearts. The Lord Jesus had been praying for the little band of disciples that surrounded Him at that moment: He now enlarged His requests to embrace even ourselves. Though nineteen centuries have passed since the first disciples went forth with the word, we have believed on Him as the result of it. Their spoken word has long since died away, but their word in the shape of inspired New Testament writings abides, and it has been the authoritative basis of all Gospel preaching through the years, and it is still that today. It should also touch our hearts that the first of the two requests, which He made for us, was for our unification.

The oneness He desired is of a fundamental nature. We are to be one as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. Between the Father and the Son there is the unity of essential being, and consequently of life and nature and manifestation. We so truly derive life and nature from the Son and the Father that the Lord Jesus could say, "One in Us" — this very expression showing the equality which exists between Them — and

without oneness of this sort nothing of a more outward kind would have been of value. Ecclesiastical union without this would have been only the binding together of a mass of heterogeneous material. This request being granted, the Divine nature would characterize all saints; and the formation of such an underlying unity in those who on the surface were so different (Jews and Gentiles; as had been intimated in John 10:16) was a satisfying proof of the Divine mission of Christ. He does not say that the world would believe, but there was sufficient proof so that they might.

The oneness for which the Lord prayed, is to be perfected in glory, though first established in grace. Again we find the words "I have" and this time connected with glory. To His disciples, ourselves amongst them, He has donated the glory given to Him of the Father. Questions of time do not enter into the intercourse of the Divine Persons, so He does not say, "I will give," but, "I have given." When things are viewed from the standpoint of God's counsel and purpose we find similar statements of an absolute kind — Romans 8:30 and Ephesians 2:6, for instance. It is indeed a marvellous fact that the glory given to Him as Man by the Father is now irrevocably ours by His

gift to us; and this with a view to the perfection of our oneness in Him. In verse 23, then, we have the unity displayed: the Father displayed in the Son; the Son displayed in the glorified saints. This will be a perfected unity indeed! The world of that day will know that the Father sent the Son, and has loved the saints even as He loved Him. The glory will declare the love.

This leads to the second request of the Lord which was framed to embrace all the saints of this present period. He had given His glory to them, and now He asks the Father to place them in association and company with Himself. Glory with Himself above is His desire, yet the crowning point of it for us will be to behold the supreme glory which shall be His. Earlier in His prayer He had asked to be glorified along with the Father with the glory that He had with Him before the world was. That un-created glory had been His from eternity as being in the unity of the Godhead: He has now been re-invested with it, but in a new way; receiving it as a gift from the Father in His risen Manhood. As glorified with Him we are to behold His glory, which will witness to us for ever, not only the perfection of all that He wrought in Manhood, but also of the Father's love, of which He had been the Object from all eternity.

The world was sunk in ignorance of the Father. When Jesus prayed for the preservation of His disciples in the world, He addressed the Father as "Holy" (verse 11), for their separation from it was to be governed by His holiness. In verse 25 He contemplates the world itself in its sin and blindness, so He addresses the Father as "Righteous." Thus the Divine righteousness is set over against the world's sin, as before it had been — John 16:9-10. He had come as the Sent One, bringing the knowledge of the Father, and the disciples had received it in receiving Him, for He had declared to them the Father's Name. Here are the closing occurrences of, "I have" — "I have known Thee ... I have declared to them Thy name."

He had spoken, in verse 6, of the manifestation of the Father's name, and this was accomplished in the life He had lived and needed no addition. But He also had made a declaration of His name by lip and word, and this He would supplement in the future, when risen from the dead. We are permitted to hear of it in this Gospel: John 20:17. And all this was to the end that the Father's love, which supremely centred in Him, might be "in them ;" that is, their consciously realized portion. As the

Father's love thus dwelt in them, they would be qualified to be an expression of Christ: He would be "in them" in display.

This wonderful prayer — the out-breathings of the Son in communion with the Father — must of necessity be beyond all our thoughts, yet it is effective beyond all else in bringing the warmth of Divine love into our hearts. It is a joy to notice that just as it begins with the Son glorified by the Father, it ends with the Son manifested and thus glorified in the saints.

Chapter 18

Having communed with the Father and expressed His desires, Jesus went forth to meet His foes, who were led by the traitor, and then to the death that He should die. True to the character of this Gospel, striking witness is borne to His omniscience. He went forth in the full knowledge of "all things that should come upon Him" — not only of outward circumstances but of the inward weight of all involved. If we refer back to John 6:6, and John 13:3, we shall find statements of similar import.

But the scene in the Garden also furnishes us with a display of His omnipotence. They sought Jesus of Nazareth, but when He

replied, "I am," reminiscent of the way Jehovah declared Himself in the Old Testament, they were felled to the ground. Thus irresistibly, yet unwillingly, they did obeisance before Him. So the signs of His Deity were present even while He submitted to their hands, since He was here as the Man subject to the Father's will. His desire was to extend protection to His disciples according to His own word, and Peter's zealous but mistaken action only gave occasion to the display of His complete oneness of mind with the Father. He accepted all as coming from His hands, even though the highest religious authorities in Jewry were His chief opponents. The servant of the high priest, Malchus, was prominent in His arrest, and to the tribunal of Annas and Caiaphas was He first led. Caiaphas had the decisive voice and was already determined upon His death.

Verses 15-18 are parenthetical, as again are verses 25-27. Taken together they give us the sad story of Peter's downfall, in which the Lord's prediction of John 13:38 was fulfilled. That this should be one of the few episodes recorded by all four Evangelists is worthy of note. God does not take pleasure in recording the sins of His saints, so we may be sure that there is in it warning and instruction much needed by all saints in all ages,

for self-confidence is one of the commonest and most deep-seated tendencies of the flesh: a tendency which, if not judged and refused, invariably leads to disaster. True spiritual circumcision involves "no confidence in the flesh," (See, Phil. 3:3), but that is a lesson we do not learn save through a good deal of painful experience.

The "other disciple" known to the high priest was pretty evidently John himself. His acquaintance with the high priest gave him a little worldly status and privilege, which he used to introduce Peter into the place of danger. The word "also" in verse 17 seems to imply that the damsel keeping the door knew that John was a disciple of Jesus. He had not been tempted to deny the fact as Peter had. That which trips up one disciple may leave another unmoved. Moreover, Satan knows just exactly how to set his traps. That the third questioner should be a relation of the Malchus, who had suffered in the Garden at Peter's hands, was a master-stroke of his craft. That encompassed Peter's third and worst denial, and his sin and discomfiture were complete.

Verses 19-24, give details of what transpired in the palace of the high priest, and they are the connecting link between verses

14 and 28. The question raised as to His disciples and doctrine was an attempt to obtain from His lips something incriminating as a basis for the death sentence they had determined to pronounce. The other Gospels tell us that they sought for witness against Him and found none, which accounts for the fact that when He referred them to the witness of His hearers they were so irritated as to strike our Lord. Matthew tells us that they went so far as to seek false witness against Him.

It is well to note the contrast between Jesus in verse 23 and Paul in Acts 23:5. There is a gulf between the Master and the most devoted of His servants. The reply of Jesus was conclusive. There was no evil to which any could bear witness: no one could convince Him of sin.

John's account of the proceedings before the high priest is very brief. In contrast to this he gives us a fuller account of what transpired before Pilate than any of the others. Paul writes of "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession," and the details of that good confession come particularly to light here.

First however, we are given a sight of the fearful hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. To have walked inside the judgment hall would have defiled them, so they felt. Yet they had no scruple as to committing themselves to murder, and hunting for liars in order to give some semblance of decency to their action. Alas! Alas! to such lengths will religious flesh proceed. Pilate rightly desired a definite accusation, but, having none to offer, they attempted in the first place to rush Pilate into a verdict on the general plea that He was an evildoer. To denounce on general grounds, whilst avoiding any specific charge, is a common trick of the religious persecutor. This irregularity made Pilate wish to throw the case back on their hands. Their answer showed that they were determined upon His death, yet it led to the fulfilment of the Lord's own predictions as to the death He should die — see, John 3:14; John 8:28; John 12:32. However, they eventually fixed on the charge that He sought to make Himself a King. The Lord's question in verse 34 infers this; and it comes clearly to light in the next chapter, verse 12.

The "good confession" before Pilate covered at least four great points. First, the Lord boldly confessed that He was a King. The context shows that in saying this He referred not merely to

the fact that He was the true Son of David according to the flesh, but that He held the place as Son of God, just as Psalm 2 predicted.

But secondly, He affirmed that His kingdom was neither "of this world," nor "from hence." It does not bear the character or stamp of this world nor does it derive its authority and power from this place. His Kingdom of course derives all its authority and power from Heaven, and it bears the heavenly character; but instead of stating this positively He put the matter in that negative light which tacitly put a sentence of condemnation and repudiation upon this world and this place. It was a bold statement to make in the presence of the man who represented the greatest existing earthly power.

Thirdly, He asserted that He was born to Kingship inasmuch as He came into the world as the Witness to the truth. He who brings the light of truth is the only One fitted to hold the Royal power, as David stated in 2 Samuel 23:3. We started this Gospel with the fact that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, but in this moment of crisis grace had been rejected and truth was the matter in question. Outside were the men who embodied lying and hypocrisy. Pilate held the judicial authority, and there-

fore was responsible to discern truth and judge accordingly, but his question, "What is truth?" was evidently uttered in a vein of flippant scepticism, and showed how judgment was divorced from righteousness in his mind. As a Roman judge he knew all too much of men and their deceits, and he felt that to pursue truth was to chase a mirage. But this did not excuse his folly, manifested in turning his back on Christ and going out to the lying Jews directly he had asked his question.

Fourthly, He claimed to be not merely the Witness to the truth, but the very embodiment of truth itself. In the farewell discourse He had said, "I am ... the truth," to His disciples; now before His adversaries the same thing is implicit in the remarkable words, "Every one that is of the truth hears My Voice." He is the truth in such absolute fashion that He is the test of every man. Those of whom it can be said, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18), are "of the truth," and such hear His voice. It is remarkable how often in this Gospel our attention is called to hearing His voice or hearing His word — see, for instance, John 3:34; John 4:42; John 5:24-25, 28; John 6:68; John 7:17; John 8:43; John 10:4, 16, 27; John 12:48-50. Everything hinges upon it for us, as these scriptures

make manifest, and (to use a modern illustration) we must be on the right wave-length in order to hear. Nothing but being begotten of God with the word of truth can put us on the right wave-length.

Pilate had no real ear for His voice, as his words and action plainly showed. He walked out from the presence of the Truth that again he might establish contact with the world of unreality, yet he had sufficient judicial sense to perceive how false was the case against the Lord and to pronounce Him to be without fault. His effort, however, to side-track the accusers by the Passover custom failed, yet it was over-ruled to bring out in the plainest possible fashion their implacable hostility.

Five words sufficed to express their utter rejection of the Lord — "Not this Man, but Barabbas," and they were wholly unanimous for this was the cry of all. The Evangelist's comment on this cry is equally terse and also compressed into five words, "Now Barabbas was a robber." Without exaggeration we may designate this cry as the most fateful in all history. It has controlled the course of the world for nearly two thousand years and will ultimately seal its doom — more particularly we might say it has controlled the sad course of Jewish history. What

have they not endured at the hands of the spoilers during the centuries! But if they cry out and even wish to complain against God, it is sufficient answer to refer them to this unanimous demand of their leaders. The One who was the embodiment of grace and truth they rejected. Barabbas, the robber, they demanded. Incidentally, he was also a revolutionary and a murderer, as other Gospels show. Robbery, revolution and murder has been their portion with a vengeance, right through the centuries.

The fact is that in the holy government of God they have just reaped what they have sown. And the same thing has been true of the Gentile world generally, though perhaps on not quite so intensive a scale. Still, again and again through the years there have arisen men of striking personality in whom the Barabbas spirit has reappeared. At the present moment the earth is groaning beneath this very thing. As we contemplate the sufferings of many peoples, we have to remind ourselves, "Now Barabbas was a robber."

Chapter 19

IN THE FIRST verse of this chapter the word, "therefore" is to be noted. Pilate had pronounced already the verdict of "No fault" as to Jesus, but because the Jews shouted for Barabbas and rejected Him, he took Him and scourged Him. All attempt at a display of ordinary human justice was thrown to the winds, all public decencies were outraged. Taking their cue from the action of the judge, the soldiers followed suit in their own rough way. Yet the hand of God was so over even Pilate that a second and yet a third time was he constrained to pronounce the verdict of "No fault" over the Lord. This was a much more sweeping pronouncement than if he had merely declared Him to be not guilty of the particular offences alleged against Him. He attempted to throw the onus of the death sentence on to the Jews. They repudiated it however, while declaring that His claim to be the Son of God demanded death according to their law.

They said He should die because He said He was the Son of God, while demanding that Pilate should condemn Him because He said He was the King of Israel. At the start of the Gospel we heard Nathanael owning Him in that twofold way,

as we, thank God, own Him today. But on those two counts He was condemned.

The remark of the Evangelist in verse 8, throws a flood of light on the situation as far as Pilate was concerned. Secular history informs us that he badly antagonized the Jews in the earlier years of his governorship and therefore he feared to irritate them further. Yet he was convinced of the innocence of the Prisoner, whose serene bearing made him even more uneasy. The accusation relating to "the Son of God," raised fears which were probably superstitious, but nonetheless potent, and which prompted the question, "Whence art Thou?"

Had this question sprung from real spiritual exercise the Lord doubtless would have responded, as He did to the two disciples with their question, "Where dwellest Thou?" in the first chapter of this Gospel. As it was prompted by superstition and fear the Lord gave no answer. This led Pilate to the threatening assertion of the power of life and death which he held under Caesar. The Lord's reply to this evidently increased his fears — for lo! the Prisoner calmly assumed the judicial position, and with an air of finality pointed him to a higher Power than Caesar as the real Source of any transient authority that he possessed, and

also adjudicated on the degree of guilt attaching to himself and to the Jewish leaders respectively. The desperate animus lay with the Jews and he was but their tool. Still, though less guilty than they, he was definitely a guilty man. It was a shattering situation for Pilate, who found himself without knowing it in the presence of the Word become flesh. What then was the answer to Pilate's unanswered question? Surely that Jesus was Himself "from above," come from the Fountainhead of Pilate's authority.

This episode greatly increased Pilate's desire to release Jesus but the crafty Jews knew how to exert decisive pressure. In view of the tension previously existing between himself and the Jews he could only regard their cry, recorded in verse 12, as a direct threat to impeach him to Caesar if he let Jesus go. The Jewish leaders themselves "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God," (John 12:43); Pilate had much more regard for the praise of Caesar than for judgment according to truth and justice.

He made, however, one more appeal. In John 18:31, we saw him making a suggestion calculated to appeal to their national pride; again in verse 39, he asked a question, appealing to their

custom. Now in our chapter, verses 13 and 14, he makes an appeal to their sentiment. All, however, was in vain as regards his wish to divest himself of the responsibility of pronouncing judgment against the Lord. All was ordered so that the guilt of the Jews, and more especially of the chief priests, should be proclaimed in clearest fashion by their own lips. They crown their cry, "Not this Man, but Barabbas," with the statement, "We have no king but Caesar."

Hosea's prediction had been, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince ..." (Hosea 3:4). The two tribes had had the kings of the God-appointed line, and the ten tribes princes of their own selection. Hosea declared that soon they should have neither. But as if that were not enough for these evil men they now deliberately accepted Gentile despotism. They appealed to Caesar, and under the iron heel of a succession of despots God has seen fit to leave them. For nineteen centuries the two names, Barabbas and Caesar, might serve to sum up their history of misery. The lawless and insurrectionary spirit of mankind had been headed up in Barabbas: the order which is enforced by powerful autocracy was expressed in Caesar. For nineteen centuries the Jews have

suffered; now from the organized cruelty of the authorities, and then from the unorganized rabble — ground, as it were, between this upper and nether millstone. They have yet to suffer under the last forms of Caesar and Barabbas, which will prove to be worse than the first.

When Pilate brought Jesus forth to make his last appeal, he seated himself in the judgment seat on the Pavement, which indicated that he was about to pronounce judgment in the case. John pauses here to give us the note as to time, which is recorded in verse 14. The fact that there is an apparent clash between it and that given so plainly in Mark 15:25, has occasioned much discussion and controversy. We cannot but enquire, If he was crucified at the third hour, how comes it that Pilate should be said to deliver his sentence about the sixth hour? The solution would appear to be that our Evangelist, dealing with what transpired before the Roman judge, uses the Roman reckoning, which was similar to ours, whereas Mark reckons according to Jewish custom. If this is so, all is simple. It was about 6 a.m. when Pilate's examination drew to a close, and about 9 a.m. when Jesus was crucified. The "preparation of the Passover" was the 24 hours, starting at 6 the evening be-

fore. Into that 24 hours were crowded the most tremendous events in time, or indeed in eternity.

In our Gospel nothing is said as to the further mockery of the Roman soldiers, when He was handed over to them, for these were but the crude actions of pagans and lay upon the surface. What we are told in verse 16 is that Pilate delivered Him "to them," that is, the chief priests and officers, of which verse 6 had spoken. They were His persecutors and prosecutors. The animus lay with them. They it was who hated both Him and His Father. Pilate delivered Him into their hands that they might perpetrate their greatest sin by handing Him over to the Gentile executioners.

As the other Gospels show, the Lord had used such expressions as "taking his cross," and "bearing his cross," as figurative of the fact that His disciple must be prepared to come under the death sentence of the world. The full force of that figure is seen here, for, "He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull." The place got its name from the peculiar configuration of the rock, but it is significant for all that! A skull speaks of the humiliating end of all man's power and glory. In some living man it may once have held as brilliant and

powerful a brain as ever existed; and it has come to this! The Son of God accepted the judgment of death as from man's hand, and to a place which set forth symbolically the end of all man's glory He went to bear it.

Moreover, He accepted death from the hands of men in its most shameful form. Crucifixion was peculiarly a death of repudiation and shame. As a Roman invention it expressed the haughty contempt with which they put to death the conquered barbarians, nailing them up as though they were vermin. To such a death was Jesus delivered by the leaders of the Jews. John gives us but the briefest and plainest statement of that tremendous fact. The Lord of glory was crucified. That fact needs no embellishment of any kind.

But when this was accomplished Pilate intervened, writing a title and putting it on the cross. It would appear that not one of the Evangelists quotes every word of the title, though John comes nearest to doing so. In full it seems to have been, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." As regards the Jews this act of Pilate was definitely provocative, and intended to be so. They had forced his hand in the condemnation of Jesus and he retaliated by the public statement that the hated Jesus of

Nazareth was the King of the Jews. This was the last thing they wished to admit, hence their expostulation. But here Pilate was adamant. He refused to alter one jot or tittle, and his curt answer, "What I have written I have written," has become almost proverbial.

In all this we can see the hand of God. The Word had become flesh and had dwelt among us. God had so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. He was known among men as Jesus of Nazareth — a title of disparagement. When He entered Jerusalem a week before there had been some testimony to His glory, and had there not been the stones would immediately have cried out — so Luke tells us. But here indeed there was no human testimony and so a piece of board, inscribed by the hand of Pilate, or by his order, cried out that the despised Jesus of Nazareth was indeed King of the Jews. It is remarkable how our Lord Himself adopted the title of shame, and weaved it as a chaplet for His brow when risen and glorified. It is an astounding fact that, JESUS of NAZARETH IS IN HEAVEN — see, Acts 22:8.

The title was written in the three prevailing languages of that day. Hebrew, the tongue in which the Law of Moses had ap-

peared, the language of religion. Greek, the language of Gentile culture. Latin, the language of Gentile imperialism. In this representative way the whole world was involved in His death.

In verse 23, the Roman soldiers do appear as the instruments of His death, and also as fulfilling prophecies that had stood in the Scripture for about a thousand years and of which they knew nothing. In Psalm 22, David had foretold the parting of His garments among them and the casting of lots upon His vesture. These two things the four soldiers did, and John puts on record the circumstances which led to so exact a fulfilment. His coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. Things which to us might seem quite trivial lead to the fulfilment of the Word of God.

We cannot but think, however, that this feature is mentioned because it has a symbolic value. Everything about our Lord, both as to His Person and work, was of one piece, woven throughout without seam. With man in his fallen condition it is otherwise. The appropriate symbol for man and his work is the fig leaf apron to which Adam and his wife had recourse after their sin. They sewed fig leaves together, and anyone who knows the shape of the fig leaf will realize how many a seam

there must have been. All was patchwork of an elaborate sort. Theirs was the patchwork apron: His was the seamless coat.

In that coat Jesus appeared before men, the symbol of His perfection and it was not to be rent. It is remarkable that John only speaks of this coat, telling us it was woven "from the top throughout," for unlike the other Gospels he omits any mention of the vail in the temple that was "rent in swain from the top to the bottom." Everything about the Lord testified to the fact that He came from above and was above all. And the stroke that at the hour of His death set aside the old order of things came from above also.

Verses 25-27 are particularly striking as occurring in this Gospel, written as it was to declare His divine glory that we might believe Him to be the Christ, the Son of God. Viewing Him thus we might have supposed that such lower things as human relationships would be disregarded. But it is just the opposite. All through the Gospel we have noticed how the reality of His Manhood is stressed. Every human perfection reached its fullest display in Him, and hence we see the affection connected with near human relationship fully displayed even in the hour of His deepest agony. The hour had struck when the

words of the aged Simeon to Mary were fulfilled — "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." The sword of Jehovah, according to Zechariah, was about to awake against the true Shepherd of Israel, but a sword of another kind would also pierce the soul of His mother, and the Shepherd thought of that.

Only seven words were spoken — four to Mary, and three to John; but their significance was plain, and they struck a chord of love which met with a ready response. Jesus entrusted His mother to the disciple whom He loved, and who in the knowledge of His love, loved in return. Love can be trusted, especially when it is not mere human affection but divine in its source, as springing from the appreciation of the love of Jesus.

In verse 28 we get another of those flashes of omniscience which characterize this Gospel. A few verses earlier we saw the soldiers fulfilling Scripture, though utterly unconscious that they were doing so. We now see Jesus Himself in that dark hour surveying the whole field of prophecy, and well aware that of all the predictions centring on His death only one remained to be fulfilled. In Psalm 69 David had written, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." A small thing in itself,

but every word of God must be verified in its season, and we are informed that in that hour of suffering He was able to rise above His circumstances and not only discern the one thing lacking but also utter words that at once brought it to pass. No mere man could have done either the one or the other.

The remarkable thing is also that just before He was crucified the soldiers gave Him vinegar mixed with gall and myrrh, but He would not accept it, as recorded in Matthew and Mark. This was doubtless because He would have nothing of any human device to lessen the physical suffering involved, and also because at that moment there was no thirst on His part. Divine predictions must be fulfilled with exactitude and precision.

John makes no mention of the three hours of darkness, nor of the forsaking with the bitter cry that it called forth, which had been predicted in the first verse of Psalm 22. Those things did not particularly illustrate the Deity of Jesus, upon which the Spirit of God had led him to lay such emphasis. What did illustrate it was the triumphant cry with which His earthly life closed. Psalm 22 ends with the words, "He has done," and of this the New Testament equivalent is, "It is finished." He had come into the world in the full knowledge of all that had been

entrusted to Him of the Father: He was now leaving it in the full knowledge that all had been fulfilled; not one thing was lacking. The prophet had predicted that Jehovah should "make His soul an offering for sin," and this was accomplished. As a consequence faith can now take up the language of Isaiah 53:5, and make it its own; just as the repentant remnant of Israel will adopt it in a coming day.

In this also our Lord was unique. There have been servants of God who like Paul have been able to speak with confidence of having finished their course, but none would have dared to affirm that they had put the finishing touch to the work in their hands; they have rather handed on the work to him who should succeed them. His work was exclusively His own, He carried it to its perfect completion. He could appraise His own work, and announce it as finished. All others have to humbly submit their labour to the Divine scrutiny and verdict in the day to come.

Both Matthew and Mark tell us that after crying with a loud voice Jesus expired. It would appear that Luke and John each give us a part of that last utterance. If so, it must have been, "It is finished, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." The first part helps to emphasize His Deity, so John records it: the

second emphasizes His perfect Humanity, in its dependence upon God, so Luke records it. True also to the character of his Gospel, John chronicles the very act of His death in a special way — "He delivered up His spirit" (New Trans.). The wise man of the Old Testament has told us, "There is no man that has power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death" (Eccles. 8:8), but here is One who had that power. He is able at one moment to lift up His voice with unimpaired strength, and the next moment to deliver up His spirit, and thus fulfil His own words recorded in John 10. True, there He spoke of the laying down of His "life" or "soul," saying, "No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." But the two statements are entirely in agreement for we all know that when the human spirit quits the body a man's life on earth ceases. When God calls his spirit, go he must. Here is One who has full command over His spirit; He delivered it up to His Father, and thus He laid down His life.

That, having laid it down, He took it again in resurrection, we find in the next chapter: the rest of our chapter is filled with the various activities of men, some of them His foes and some His

friends, but all working together to the end that the determinate counsel of God should be fulfilled, just as He had spoken in His word.

First on the scene were the Jews, the men who were His most implacable foes. They were great sticklers for the ceremonial side of things and the Passover Sabbath being an high day it was of peculiar sanctity in their eyes. They could not enter the judgment hall lest they defile themselves, as we saw in the last chapter. Now we see that the idea of the dead bodies of men they esteemed evil-doers remaining exposed in the sight of men and Heaven over that day was abhorrent to their ritualistic souls. They were right of course, for it had been so ordered in Deuteronomy 21:23, but that was the type of enactment which they loved to observe, whilst overlooking matters of greater moment. Thus from them came the request that death might be hastened by the breaking of the legs, so indirectly they played their part in bringing to fulfilment another of the many predictions which were focussed on that great day when Jesus died.

We might have supposed that life with the Lord would have been prolonged far beyond the others, but in fact it was the opposite, just because He deliberately laid His life down. Had He

not done so, man's act in crucifying Him would have had no power against Him. It is significant also that John does not designate the two men as thieves or malefactors; they were "two other" (ver. 18). No need to mention their particularly bad character to heighten the contrast. The greatness of the Divine Son is such that it is sufficient to say that they were two other men.

Pilate's order to the soldiers, at the instance of the Jews, had two effects. First, while the two other had their legs broken to hasten their end not a bone of our Lord was broken, and thus Scripture was fulfilled. The reference must be to Psalm 34:20, and to the instructions given as to the Passover lamb in Exodus 12, and repeated in Numbers 9. This is worthy of note as showing how fully the Spirit of God identifies the typical lamb with its Antitype, inasmuch as that which is said of the type is treated as applying to the Antitype. With this agree the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5, when he says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Secondly, there was the wanton and vindictive act of the soldier with a spear. Seeing that Jesus was dead, and hence he had no

authority to break His bones, he thrust the spear into His side. He did it without the least understanding of the significant effect of his act. Once more, however, that which lay in the Divine counsel was brought to pass and a Scripture found its fulfilment. The prophet Zechariah had declared that at last the spirit of grace and of supplications should be poured upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "and they shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced" (John 12:10). Notice here how the act of the subordinate official is treated as the act of those whose determination and will lay at the root of all that happened. The Roman soldier was but the instrument of this wickedness, and in the coming day the repentant remnant of Israel will acknowledge it as the act of their nation. Even today do we not acknowledge that spear-thrust to have been the terrible expression of man's hatred and contemptuous rejection of the Son of God?

But the Evangelist specially concentrates our attention upon the result of that wanton deed — "forthwith came there out blood and water." When, in verse 35, he solemnly affirms the truth of his record, so that faith may spring up in the reader, it is to this he refers. In the first place, this piercing of His side publicly

demonstrated that death had really taken place. In the second place, by it His blood was actually shed, and we have only to recall that, "without shedding of blood is no remission," (Heb. 9:22), to realize the importance of that fact. In the third place, we know what gracious and blessed results flow to us each individually when our faith reaches out and reposes in the Christ who died and in the blood that He shed. So we are not surprised at John's strong affirmation of the truth of his witness.

But water came thereout as well as blood and we do well to study the significance of that, for John dwells on it again in 1 John 5, where we read that Jesus Christ came "by water and blood," and it is emphasized that it was "not by water only, but by water and blood." If the blood speaks of judicial expiation, the water speaks of moral purification, and both are absolutely essential and only to be found in the death of Christ. There is always a tendency to separate the two. When John wrote, the tendency was to emphasize the water and ignore or belittle the blood, and this tendency is still powerfully felt, for there are many who like to think of His death as having a moral effect on us while they dislike the thought of death paying the wages of sin and thus effecting expiation. It is quite possible of course to

find the opposite extreme in those who recognize nothing but the blood shed for our sins, and thus overlook the necessity of that moral cleansing of which the death of Christ is the all-essential basis.

It is remarkable too that in the Gospel we have the record of John as to the fact, whereas in his Epistle both the water and the blood are regarded as bearing witness, together with the Spirit. They bear record "that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Blood and water came forth from the dead Christ. The Spirit has been shed forth from the risen and glorified Christ. Together they bear record that, while there is no life in us, we have eternal life in the Son of God.

Joseph of Arimathaea now appears at the precise moment when he can serve the purpose of God. He is mentioned in each of the Gospels, and each supplies us with some special detail concerning him. Matthew tells us that he was rich and a disciple. Mark calls him an honourable counsellor who waited for the kingdom of God. Luke says he was a good man and a just and that he had not consented to the counsel and deed of the great majority of the Sanhedrim in putting Jesus to death. John admits that he was a disciple, but a secret one for fear of the Jews.

So apparently he had been in a position akin to that of the Pharisees, who are mentioned in John 12:42-43. Yet, wonderful to say, in this the darkest hour, when everything seemed hopelessly lost — as witness the attitude of the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke 24) — Joseph found his courage and went to Pilate with his request to have possession of the body of Jesus. Mark it is, who tells us that he went in boldly to Pilate, and the decision of the Governor was overruled of God. Isaiah had declared that He should be "with the rich in His death," though His grave was appointed to Him with the wicked. The Jews would have desired nothing better than that He should be flung under a heap of stones with the bodies of the malefactors. But God fulfilled His own word, firstly through the sudden boldness of Joseph, and then through Pilate's disposition to thwart the Jews by reason of his irritation with them. God everywhere has sway and all things serve His might.

At this point Nicodemus again appears. Mentioned nowhere else, he is mentioned three times in our Gospel. We see him first as an enquirer, but needing to be humbled, and brought down from his high estate as Pharisee, teacher, and ruler in Israel. He must be born again. At the end of chapter 7 we find

him raising a mild objection to the evil counsel and actions of the council, and standing up for what is right, and being snubbed for his remonstrance. Now we find him taking a further step in advance. He identified himself with Jesus in His death more definitely than he ever had during His life. He too must have been rich, judging from the amount of spices that he brought. The crisis, which had paralyzed the men who had boldly identified themselves with the Lord in His life and ministry, had nerved these timid and cautious men, who hitherto had been in the background unrecognized, into boldness and action. Truly Omnipotence has servants everywhere!

One other point remains at the end of the chapter. Close by the place of the crucifixion was a garden and a tomb in the rock. Only Matthew tells us that it was Joseph's own tomb; he also says that it was new; both Luke and John are more emphatic on this point, saying no man before had lain there. It had been foretold through the Psalmist that Jehovah would not suffer His "Holy One to see corruption." That this signified that the holy and sacred body of Jesus though undergoing death was not in the least touched by the process of disintegration and corruption, we all know. But it also meant that His body should not

even come into contact with it externally. When God fulfils His word, He does so with thoroughness and completeness.

Thus, as we intimated, when the Divine Son suffered, the hand of Omnipotence overshadowed all men and all things, so that all that He had declared through holy men of old might come to pass. The counsel of the Lord, it shall stand.

Chapter 20

IN OUR GOSPEL Mary Magdalene only appears in connection with the closing scenes. She was amongst the last standing by the cross and amongst the first at the sepulchre on the resurrection day. It is not easy to piece together the records of the four Evangelists so as to make out the historic sequence of events, but it would almost appear that, having come with other women very early in the morning, she ran off by herself to inform Peter and John that the sepulchre was open and empty and then returned to its vicinity.

The other women are not mentioned here at all. Our thoughts are concentrated on her, to lead us up to the spiritual instruction conveyed through her actions and by means of her lips.

That the Lord was the supreme and absorbing Object before her is quite evident from her words to the Apostles, as recorded in verse 2. Her choice of the two to whom she went is remarkable for Peter had so grievously sinned just before. Still, he did love the Lord, as the next chapter records, and John was the disciple whom Jesus loved. On their side love may have been somewhat eclipsed for the moment, but it was there, and Mary, in whom it was burning brightly, knew it.

It was declared, moreover, by the way they responded to the announcement Mary brought. It set their hearts and feet in motion. They ran with eager haste and John outran Peter. The natural explanation doubtless was that he was the younger man; but there was also a spiritual explanation. John was more deeply impressed by the Lord's love for him, as he showed by the way he spoke of himself, whilst Peter was under the cloud of having trusted in his own love for the Lord, which, when tested, broke down in such a scandalous and public way. He who is most drawn by the love of Christ, runs the fastest. It was a case of, "Draw me, we will run after Thee" (Song of Sol. 1:4).

Still Peter, in spite of his disgraceful failure, did run and, arrived at the sepulchre, was the bolder of the two and went right inside. This led John to join him and thus there were two witnesses to the fact that the linen clothes in which the sacred body had been enfolded were not lying in disorder but rather in such fashion as to suggest that, far from the body having been removed by others, Jesus had risen from death in such a condition that the grave clothes were wholly undisturbed. Verse 19 of our chapter shows that in His resurrection body closed doors were no impediment to our Lord, so doubtless the clothes similarly were left just as they were.

In verse 8, John speaks for himself — he believed, though it was only accepting the evidence of his eyes. Peter is not mentioned, for faith, though it may be there, is not active when the soul is under the dark cloud of failure and sin, and is as yet un-restored. But though John believed his faith was of an unintelligent kind, for he, as much as the rest, was not yet illuminated by an understanding of the Scripture. Had he been he would have known the Christ must rise from the dead (see, Acts 17:3), which would have explained everything. So though there was faith there was also ignorance, and this accounts for what we

read in verse 10. The example set by Peter and John early in the morning of the resurrection day was followed in the afternoon by Cleopas and his companion as recorded in Luke 24.

The conduct of Mary stands out in bright contrast to all the rest. The two disciples had left for their home convinced that the body of Jesus was not there. Mary was equally convinced but she left her home to linger at the sepulchre, weeping in her sense of utter desolation. They knew the Lord as One who had called them from boats and nets. She knew Him as One who had delivered her from the grip of seven demons. It had been a mighty deliverance and she loved much. To her two angels appeared and there is no record of her having been afraid of their presence.

This is remarkable since in the other Gospels fear is mentioned in connection with each appearance. Her case evidently illustrates how an overpowering affection can drive out of the heart every other emotion. Her reply to the question of the angels showed how Jesus, whom she called "My Lord," monopolized the whole range of her thoughts. She answered as though meeting with angels were an everyday occurrence. In seeking her Lord she had lost the trail, and she seems to have taken it for

granted that they were as much preoccupied with the matter as she was herself. But evidently as yet no thought of His resurrection had crossed her mind. She only thought of others removing His body. She was seeking a dead Christ.

At that moment the risen Lord intervened and she turned herself back from the angels to find Him standing there, yet she did not recognize Him. The same feature characterized His meeting with the two disciples going to Emmaus that afternoon, and the rest of the disciples in the upper room that evening. It was the same Jesus but with a difference owing to His being clothed in a risen body — risen, though not yet glorified — hence they did not identify Him at once. She mistook Him for the gardener. He, the Great Shepherd risen from the dead, knew well that here was one of His sheep thoroughly devoted to Him, seeking only Himself and weeping because she knew not where to find Him.

In the simple utterance of her name He revealed Himself to her and she instantly responded to Him as her Master. All that is recorded, however, in verses 11-15, shows that she was seeking His body as dead, and hence her first thought on finding Him alive was doubtless that of a resumption of associations on the

old basis, which had prevailed in "the days of His flesh." This it is which accounts for the Lord's opening word to her, "Touch Me not." In view of the new relationship which He was about to announce to her, and through her to the other disciples, He showed her in this decisive way that relations could not be resumed just as they were before. His death and resurrection had changed everything. He was no less a Man than He was before He died, yet having laid down His life, He had taken it again in a new state and condition suited to the heavens into which He was about to ascend. Hence relations with Him must be on a new basis.

The Lord added the words, "for I am not yet ascended to My Father," to His prohibition. Thus He evidently implied that when He was ascended to His Father Mary was to be in "touch" with Him. His ascension to the Father involved the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost on the disciples, as has been made abundantly clear in this Gospel — see, John 7:39; John 14:16; John 15:26; John 16:13. When, at Pentecost, Mary, along with the others, was filled with the Holy Spirit, she found herself in her spirit brought into a far more intimate touch with

her risen Lord than she had ever experienced in the days of His flesh.

Doubtless the Apostles were privileged far beyond ourselves in the way they "heard," "saw," "looked upon," "handled of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). Yet while they were walking with Him in Palestine the real significance of what they observed was obscure to them. As John 14:17, 20, has shown us, it was only when they had the indwelling of the Spirit that they knew that they were in Him and He in them — His life theirs and a new relationship established. Now we too have the Spirit of God, so though the objective manifestation has reached us not directly as it did with the Apostles but only through their inspired writings, the subjective realization may be ours in full measure. We do well to ponder this matter very deeply.

A further thing lies in this great verse. Jesus calls the disciples, "My brethren." They had previously been designated, "His own," (John 13:1), and He had called them, "My friends" (John 15:14), but neither of these indicates relationship in the same way as "My brethren." We should learn from this that He has established the relationship as the Risen One, who has passed through death and triumphed over it. It exists not by virtue of

His incarnation but in the power of His resurrection. He truly took part in "flesh and blood," and laid hold on "the seed of Abraham," with a view to the suffering of death. Having tasted death for every man, and been made perfect through sufferings, He became the Captain of our salvation, and thus as the Sanctifier He acknowledges those whom He sanctifies as His brethren. This is brought before us in Hebrews 2:9-16. By incarnation He came to our side, that in His perfect and spotless Manhood He might take up our case. Having taken it up, and by His death and resurrection wrought deliverance for us, He lifts us to His side in identification with Him in risen life. Thus it is that the relationship lies not in incarnation but in resurrection. This, too, is a deeply important point to remember.

The message Mary was to convey to the other disciples announced to them their new relationship with God and not only in regard to Himself. His Father is our Father, His God is our God. He places us in His own relation to God but of course in a subsidiary way. Our relationship with God springs out of His, and out of our relations with Him. He did not say, "our" Father and God, as though He and we were on the same level. This we must carefully note, for His full pre-eminence must always be

acknowledged with thankfulness. Though He speaks of us as, "My brethren," we never find Him spoken of as "our Brother," nor even as, "our Elder Brother," in the Scriptures. Such terms would tend to our thinking of Him as though He came down to our side rather than His lifting us to His side. They would also obscure His pre-eminent position.

In His wonderful earthly life the Lord Jesus had revealed the Father, for the Father had dwelt in Him, so that He could say, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." This we saw when we considered chapter 14. He had also taught the disciples to look up to God as their "Heavenly Father," in connection with all their needs and circumstances in this world, as the other Gospels show, but a fuller revelation comes to light here. We do not lose the blessing and benefit of the earlier revelation, any more than we do of the revelation of Him as the Almighty or as Jehovah; but we need to understand and rejoice in the knowledge of God as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:3). Our Lord's words to Mary were the first intimation of this fuller and higher relationship, and once it had come to light the epistles of the New Testament present God to us in that way. He is indeed a "Heavenly

Father" to us in all the vicissitudes of this life but let us not treat this as though it were everything. Our proper relationship with God as Christians is on this higher basis.

Mary Magdalene — the woman with the loving responsive heart — was the first to hear these wonderful things, and she became the messenger of them to all of us. She could testify that she had seen the Lord and that He had made these communications to her, and through her to the rest.

Later in the day the Lord appeared to Simon Peter and to Cleopas and his companion journeying to Emmaus, though John makes no mention of these manifestations. It is clear, however, from the other Gospels that as the resurrection day advanced the disciples had two witnesses to His resurrection — Mary and Peter — and that their testimony brought them together in Jerusalem as the eventide drew on. When assembled, Cleopas and his friend came amongst them, thus furnishing them with a third and fourth witness. Then, when the doors were shut, Jesus Himself stood in their midst, identifying Himself by His pierced hands and side, and filling their hearts with gladness.

The doors had been shut for fear of the Jews. His presence as risen caused joy to intervene on their fear. Even so an element was still lacking, which could only be supplied by the filling of the Spirit of God. On the day of Pentecost fear was swallowed up entirely, and they were filled with boldness coupled with power.

The Lord Jesus Christ of necessity always takes the central place. He did so in death, as recorded in verse 18 of the previous chapter. Here He does so in resurrection, and thus there was a fulfilment of His word recorded in Matthew 18:20. On the evening of the resurrection day the disciples were gathered together in His Name, though only half believing the witnesses to His resurrection. He came into their midst in visible form. The main difference for us today is that He takes His place in invisible form where disciples are gathered in His Name. When His presence is realized the effect is as here — peace and gladness. The word of peace came from His lips. The gladness followed as their eyes corroborated the evidence furnished by their ears.

Luke tells us, in Acts 1, that He showed Himself alive "by many infallible proofs," and prominent among these was the

display to His disciples of His pierced hands and side. These sacred marks identified Him beyond all dispute. Death and resurrection had both been accomplished, and they were like twin pillars on which the peace He announced was firmly established. Twice did the Lord salute them with peace on His lips for He knew full well that until that was realized in their hearts they would have little ability to receive the further things that He had to convey to them. It is just so with us today. Until we have the enjoyment of settled peace with God we can make no spiritual progress.

Having announced peace for the second time the risen Lord commissioned His disciples in words which, though very brief, are full of profound significance. Each Gospel records a commission, though with characteristic differences. Matthew records it in terms that would specially strike a Jewish reader. They were no longer to make disciples from the very limited sphere indicated earlier in that Gospel (Matt. 10:5-11), but from all nations, and they were to baptise in the Name that had come to light in Christ, and not with John's baptism or one akin to that. The commission there is so worded as to have an application to those who may make disciples after the church is

gone. In Mark also the universal aspect of the Apostolic preaching and service is emphasized. This is the case also in Luke, where the fulness of grace seems to be the point; grace which could begin at Jerusalem, the worst spot, and extend to all nations. The three synoptic Gospels have this in common however; the commission in each is concerned with the apostles' preaching and service.

But in John, as befits that Gospel, a deeper note is struck. The Lord Jesus had been sent forth from the Father, that in Him the Father might be made known. As the fourteenth chapter made so plain, He was in the Father as to His being, His life, His nature, and consequently the Father was in Him, and so was fully made known. Now, having died and risen again He was going to the Father, but He was leaving in the world disciples, whom now He sent that they might be for Him after the pattern of the way He had been sent forth to be for the Father. If, therefore, we are to understand their mission, we must first understand the Lord's own mission as sent of the Father.

It is remarkable how many times in this Gospel the Lord is referred to as the One who had been sent of the Father into the world. In slightly varying words this is referred to upwards of

forty times, and we can see how relevant it is to the fact that He is presented to us as One who was God, and was with God. He was, therefore not indigenous to the world, as though He sprang out of it. He came from above, and all that He was He brought with Him. His words and His works were all the Father's. Now a new thing is brought to pass, and in its institution the Lord was fulfilling His own statement in His prayer to the Father — see, John 17:18. He was departing, and they now were to be sent as from Him.

What lay behind this sending was the fact that they too were not of the world as He had not been. This is also stated in John 17 — see, verse 16. There was this difference, however; once they had been indigenous to the world, so in their case there was a link that had to be broken, and there were new links that had to be formed. This at once leads us to that which is set forth in verse 22 of our chapter.

The words of commission were followed by words of impartation, coupled with a peculiar action. He breathed on — or, more correctly, into — them, and said, "Receive ye Holy Ghost," for the definite article "the" is lacking in the original. We must observe the connection between this and what is re-

corded as to the creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7. As to his body, he was formed of the dust of the ground but the spiritual part of him came into being by the Lord God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus it was he became a living soul. Now our Lord, who is the last Adam, is a quickening or life-giving spirit, as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:45, and here we see Him breathing into His disciples His own risen life.

But this being so, why did He say, "Receive ye Holy Ghost"? Because His own life as the risen Man is in the energy of the Holy Ghost. He was, "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). On the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, the disciples did indeed receive the Holy Ghost, as a Divine Person indwelling their very bodies, but here we have something preliminary to that. On the very day that Jesus entered upon His risen life as quickened in and by the Spirit of God, He imparted it to His own.

We must connect this great act with both what precedes and what follows. How could they be sent into the world, to be for Him as He had been sent of the Father, except they possessed His risen life? The natural life which they had from Adam gave them no competency for such a mission. They did not have

power till the Holy Ghost was shed forth abundantly at Pentecost, but they now had the life and nature that rendered the mission possible. We do not read of this action in the other Gospels but we do read in Luke 24, "then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (verse 45). This opening of their understandings was, we judge, the result of the inbreathing of His risen life.

In our Gospel, however, there are the two things connected with it: first it gave them capacity to be witnesses in the world as sent of Him; and second, to be entrusted with administrative powers as to remitting or retaining sins, not eternally of course, but governmentally. In Matthew's Gospel we see that the Lord before His death and resurrection had indicated that such powers should be conferred upon Peter (Matt. 16:19), and upon the Apostles as a whole (Matt. 18:18), on each occasion looking forward to the future. Here the power is actually conferred. Primarily, no doubt, the power was apostolic, and we see Peter wielding the power in Acts 5:1-11, and the Holy Ghost ratifying it in no uncertain way. But in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, 12, 13, we have Paul wielding it and calling upon the church to act with him in retaining the evil-doer's sin. In 2 Corinthians 2:4-8,

we find him calling upon the church to reverse the action as the evil-doer had repented. They were to remit, or forgive; and verse 10 of that chapter is very instructive in connection with it.

In the other Gospels the name of Thomas only appears in the list of the apostles: all that we know of him is contained in our Gospel. This is significant. He is mentioned in John 11 and John 14 and his words on those occasions prepare us for the light in which his character appears here. He was evidently a man of plain, unimaginative, matter-of-fact mind, too inclined to be materialistic, and, therefore, hard to convince of anything lying off the plane of ordinary human experience. We are now very close to the verse which avows the goal to which this Gospel is designed to conduct us, and we are considering the last and greatest of the signs that John has brought before us. Hence the case of Thomas is of particular value in this Gospel.

He was not present on the evening of the resurrection day, and hence when he heard the testimony of the other disciples, which they condensed into five words of deepest import, "We have seen the Lord," he was not prepared to accept it. In a spirit of stubborn doubt he declared that except he had visible and

tangible evidence of a most indubitable sort, evidence that most clearly identified the One who appeared with the One who died upon the cross, he would not believe. In thus challenging the disciple's testimony, he was really flinging down a challenge to his risen Lord, which, if accepted, would place His resurrection beyond all question as far as he was concerned.

The Lord in condescending grace did accept it a week later. Again He appeared in their midst though the doors were shut. Again He saluted them with the words, "Peace to you." Then He bade Thomas do exactly as he had said, that he might have not only the visible, but also the tangible evidence he desired. And not only this, for He gave a spiritual sign also. His words to Thomas revealed that the challenge flung down when He was not visibly present was perfectly known to the risen Lord. At the end of chapter 1, we had a similar incident. Jesus showed Nathanael that He had seen him when he thought himself unobserved under the fig tree, and Nathanael was convinced and confessed Him as the Son of God and the King of Israel.

That was in the days of His flesh yet He revealed Himself as the all-seeing One. Here the days of His flesh are over and He

is risen, but He is revealed as the all-hearing One. The effect on Thomas of all this was overwhelming. The stubborn doubter, when he is convinced, is convinced indeed! A few minutes ago he was dragging far behind the other disciples, now in his rapturous confession he goes at one bound definitely beyond them. Nathanael had been explicit in his confession at the outset: Thomas at the close is even more explicit. Only five words again! But what words they were — "My Lord and My God."!

Deniers of our Lord's deity have sought to avoid the force of this by treating this as a mere exclamation, addressed to no one in particular, but the record distinctly states that the words were said to the Lord, the form of them in the original being very emphatic, since he used the definite article twice. The risen Jesus was the Lord and the God to him. And what is more significant still, the Lord replied, "Thomas ... thou hast believed." Beyond all question then He treated Thomas' joyful exclamation as faith laying hold of FACT. In other words, He accepted the confession as being true. There is no greater sin than for a mere man to accept Divine honours or adulation, as witness the drastic smiting of Herod, recorded in Acts 12. When John fell down before a holy angel as about to worship him, the instant

reply was, "See thou do it not" (Rev. 22:9). Instead of rebuking Thomas, Jesus approved of his confession and called it faith.

The full Deity of Jesus thus being acknowledged, we have reached the end to which this Gospel is designed to conduct us. Very appropriately, therefore, do verses 30 and 31 close this chapter. We are reminded that all the miraculous signs put on record are but a tiny fraction of the whole. Those that are recorded are quite sufficient however, and in this Gospel they are specially selected to afford ample ground for faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, for it is the faith of this which brings life through His Name.

Note that the last and conclusive proof of Jesus being the Son of God is that He accepted the ascription of Deity to Himself. We may say that if He is God, He is the Son of God; and conversely, that if He is the Son of God, He is God. Note also that His Sonship is the great point in the Gospel which traces Him back into the unfathomable depths of past eternity, and gives no details of the virgin birth. If we really embrace this Gospel in faith we shall have no doubt that His Sonship is eternal, and not something assumed in time.

Before leaving this chapter we have only to remark the significance of the Lord's words in verse 29. There is something better than accepting ocular and tangible evidence, and that is believing the word without any such demonstration. Thomas doubtless illustrates the way in which a godly remnant of Israel will discover the truth in a coming day. The word of the prophet shall be fulfilled, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10), and then it is that they will cry, "My God, we know Thee" (Hosea 8:2). The greater blessedness, of those who believe without seeing, is the portion of all who receive in faith the Gospel today, whether Jew or Gentile.

We can render to God no tribute that is more grateful to Him than that of taking Him fully and simply at His word without asking any corroboration by sight or by feeling. As light may be resolved into the colours of the rainbow so the Divine Name comprises many features of equal value and importance, yet He specially emphasizes the verity and reliability of His word — "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name" (Ps. 138:2). Seeing that at the outset sin came in through disbelief of the Divine Word, how fitting this is! The present Gospel

epoch is peculiarly the time when men believe without seeing — "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:8-9).

This scripture gives us a glimpse of the special blessedness of which the Lord spoke to Thomas. It may be ours, and the keener and more simple our faith the deeper the measure in which it will be ours. May the full blessedness of it be known by each reader of these lines.

Chapter 21

THE CLOSING VERSES of the previous chapter indicate that the evidence furnished, showing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is now complete. This is therefore taken for granted in the closing chapter, which puts on record dealings with certain of His disciples wholly unrecorded in the other Gospels. It may be considered in two ways: first, as having a figurative or typical meaning; second, as showing His gracious dealings with them in view of their future.

Verse 14 gives us a key to its special significance from the typical viewpoint. We may remember that at the opening of this Gospel the Evangelist calls our attention to certain days, and at the beginning of John 2 there was a manifestation of the glory of Jesus on the third day, typical of the millennial age. Now here we have before us what is noted as the third manifestation of Jesus as risen from the dead, and again we discover it has a millennial significance.

The first manifestation, as we saw in the last chapter, was on the actual resurrection day, and all recorded in connection with it spoke of the portion of the Church in association with the risen Lord. The second, in the same chapter, gave us the awakening of faith in the remnant of Israel, when at last they look upon Him whom they have pierced. That was set forth in Thomas. Now we come to the third, when the millennial morning will break and the Lord be revealed as the Master of every circumstance and the Supplier of every need. The three days pointed out in John 1 and John 2, had in each case the same significance.

The main drift of this Gospel has been the revelation of the Father in the Person of the Son, and the certifying to us that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, so that we may have no doubt as to the revelation but the light of it shine with undimmed radiance into our souls. It is very remarkable, therefore, that it should both open and close with these figurative reminders of dispensational distinctions, though the burden of the Gospel is that which abides eternally above all dispensational distinctions. Differences of dispensation may impose different measures upon the apprehensions of saints, but that which is to be apprehended is eternally the same.

John has given us an account of Peter's downfall, but has said no word as to his bitter tears immediately after as the result of the Lord's look, nor of the personal interview with his risen Lord in the latter part of the resurrection day. We open this chapter to find him reverting to his fishing and taking six of the other disciples with him. It was not for this kind of fishing that the Lord had originally called him, and it looks as if, though knowing that the Lord had forgiven him, he was assuming that his commission to service would have to lapse. The risen Shep-

herd, however, was about to restore his soul fully and lead the feet of all of them into the paths of righteousness.

Their expedition on the lake was a failure. Verse 3 sums it up as "night" and "nothing." When the morning was come everything was reversed for Jesus was there — net full, great fishes — and no broken net or sinking ship, as in Luke 5. Nor was there Peter falling down to confess himself a sinful man, though his sad fall had been so recent. Instead he flung himself into the sea to get to Jesus with all possible speed. Again we see how he is prominent when the action of love is in question, just as John displays more prominently the discernment of love.

Arrived on the shore, the disciples found themselves forestalled though their catch had been so great. The Lord had fire and fish and bread ready for them; the provision was all His own. Viewed typically, we may see a figure of disciples going forth and bringing in under the Lord's direction, a great harvest from the sea of nations, which will mark the opening of the millennial age. It was surely intended, too, as a lesson to Peter and the rest, showing them that their reversion to their ordinary occupation was unnecessary, even if specially blessed by Him.

Their food was already prepared by His hand. The disciples knew it was their risen Lord, not by the sight of their eyes, but by His actions, which were unique.

Then began the Lord's special dealings with Simon Peter. His fall had taken place when he was warming himself at the world's fire in the company of the servants of the high priest, who was utterly hostile to his Master. He now finds himself by the fire that had been kindled by his Lord, not only warmed but also fed by Him, and in the company of fellow-servants as devoted to his Master as himself. Thrice had Peter been tested and each time with increasing emphasis he had denied his Lord. Thrice on this occasion does the Lord probe Peter's conscience and heart, each time increasing the severity of the test.

We can more fully appreciate verses 15-17 if we observe that two different words are used for "love." The first is one which, we are told, is not used for "love" outside the New Testament and Septuagint: the Spirit of God laid hold of it, and consecrated it to express the love of God. The second is one based upon the word for friends, and signifying rather the love of the feelings or of warm affection; or, as it has been put, "it indicates less of insight and more of emotion." We will quote from

Darby's New Translation where the distinction is carefully observed.

The Lord addressed Peter not by that new name, which He had given him, but by his old name in nature, "Simon son of Jonas," and asked him, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" This is just what he had claimed for himself in saying, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I," as Mark tells us. This must have been a very painful question, for judging by his performance it appeared that he loved Him far less. What could he say? Only this, "Yea, Lord: Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee." He used the lower word, showing that he had already come down in his own esteem.

A second time Jesus asked the question, using the same word as before but not instituting any comparison between Peter and the other disciples. It was simply, "Lovest thou Me?" it was as though He had said, "Do you really love Me at all?" This probed the wound in still deeper fashion. Peter was again unable to accept the challenge and adhered to his own word, "Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee."

The third question was a still deeper thrust, for this time Jesus adopted Peter's own word and asked, "Art thou attached to Me?" Thus He challenged Peter's right to go so far as saying he was even attached to Him. This cut him to the quick and probed him to the depth. He realized that he could not claim to love, and that his conduct had belied even a friendly attachment. He therefore cast himself wholly upon his omniscient Lord, saying, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee." This virtually acknowledged that his attachment was of such faint and microscopic proportions that only Divine omniscience would perceive it. Still it was there! Peter knew it, and he knew his Lord would know it.

In all this Peter was being most graciously yet very pointedly conducted to self-judgment — the judgment of the state that had led to the sin and disaster. It is one thing to confess the sin committed, and another to confess the wrong state that led to it. This is the point which is so instructive and salutary for us. Self-esteem with its twin evil, self-confidence, was the bottom of the mischief, and full restoration before the Lord was not perfected till Peter reached this point. Moreover his sin had taken place with considerable publicity, and the other disciples

must have had their confidence in him sadly shaken. How gracious then of the Lord to deal with Peter to his restoration in the presence of a number of the disciples.

And this was not all. Each affirmation by Peter that he really was attached to the Lord in spite of his cowardly denial, was followed by a response which indicated that a very important service was to be entrusted to him. The Lord used three different expressions, which are not entirely clear in our excellent Authorised Version. They were, "Feed My lambs," "Shepherd My sheep," "Feed My sheep." The shepherding of sheep would involve seeing that they were fed, but it would go beyond that and cover many activities in the way of oversight, leading, protecting.

It is very evident that Peter was entrusted with a pastoral ministry, and the way in which he urges upon others a similar pastoral care, in the opening verses of 1 Peter 5, is very striking. Therein he warns against the very abuses of such a ministry as have come in like a flood in the history of the church. These abuses reach their greatest development in the imposing religious body that claims their Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter; and they are just the outgrowth of fallen human nature,

for exactly similar things happened in Israel, and are denounced by the Lord through the prophecy of Ezekiel in Ezek. 34. Today "Peter's-pence" means money extracted from the flock for the support of the supposed successor of Peter, instead of anything ministered to the flock. A grim perversion and parody indeed!

The under shepherds who served after Peter's departure soon forgot that the lambs and sheep belonged to the Lord. The word to Peter was not "Feed your sheep," but "My sheep," and that makes all the difference. It is noticeable further that the Lord spoke once of shepherding and twice of feeding. That is where the emphasis lies. Shepherding means a certain amount of authoritative handling and directing, and there are not a few who love wielding authority, even in the church of God. To be a dispenser of spiritual food is another matter and a far deeper one. He who can give spiritual food will not have much difficulty in exercising some measure of spiritual control.

One other thing we might note. When Peter was thus commissioned he was a broken and humbled man. To such an one, when fully restored, the Lord entrusted His lambs and sheep. We may remember the Apostolic injunction, "If a man be over-

taken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). It is assumed that a spiritual man will be meek and have a wholesome sense of his own liability to fall. Here Peter had fallen and, humbled now and restored, he had reached that tender and meek spirit which marks the spiritual man. To men of that type the Lord entrusts His lambs and sheep.

Having recommissioned Peter and indicated the special character of the service he was to render, the Lord now showed him that what he had boasted he would do in the energy of youth, he should actually do when his natural energy had abated. "I will lay down my life for Thy sake," had been his words, yet he miserably failed. His desire had been right, though his self-confidence was wrong and had to be rebuked. So his desire should be fulfilled, but in power other than his own. The Lord's words in verse 18 not only indicated that he should glorify God by a martyr's death, but also the character of that death. The allusion was to crucifixion. He was to follow the Lord in caring for His sheep and, up to a certain point, in the manner of his death. What amazing grace was this to the disciple who had failed!

And what instruction for us! The case of John Mark also furnishes us with an example of how what is begun in the flesh may yet be made perfect by the Spirit: the exact opposite of Galatians 3:3.

For the moment Peter turned his eye from his Master and fixed it upon a fellow-disciple, none other than the writer of this Gospel. John was evidently a younger man but had already been closely linked with Peter on several occasions. It was probably genuine interest and not merely curiosity that made him enquire as to his future. The reply appears to have a two-fold bearing.

First, it emphasized the fact that for each disciple — whether Peter or ourselves — our great business is not with our brethren but with our Lord. What the Lord ordained for John was not Peter's concern, but to follow the Lord for himself. There are not very many today who point to their brother and say, "What shall this man do?" but plenty there are who say, "Look what this man has done!" To be exercised about somebody else's doings, especially if they are not quite right, is a cheap and easy thing, whereas to be exercised about oneself is

a costly business. To each of us, as to Peter, does the Lord say, "Follow thou Me."

In the second place there was something cryptic or hidden in this saying about John, just as there had been in the saying of verse 18 about Peter. It did not indicate that he should not die and so remain till the second advent, but rather that his ministry should have a special character. The word here, translated, "tarry" is one that occurs in John's writings as often as in all the rest of the New Testament put together. It is variously translated as "abide," "continue," "dwell," "remain." Now John's ministry, as exemplified in his Gospel and Epistles, did specially deal with the abiding things of the revelation of God which nothing can touch or tarnish. In the Revelation we find he was the last of the Apostles to see the Lord in His glorious majesty, and to receive from Him through His angel the fullest unfolding of things to come, which things lead us up to the second advent, and even to the eternal state.

Verse 23 is a warning to us of the danger of drawing inferences from the Word of God, and then elevating those inferences into dogmatic assertions. If a saying had gone forth among the brethren that John might not die, in view of what the Lord had

said, it perhaps would not have been worthy of remark. But they said he should not, rather than he might not. Inspired words stand in a class by themselves, and we must be careful how we draw inferences from them.

The last verse of our Gospel is very characteristic. It reminds us that what is recorded of the doings of the Lord on earth is but a tiny fraction of the whole, and this is true if we put all four Gospels together. It is also as true of His words as of His works. This is a fact that helps to explain things that are sometimes quoted as apparent discrepancies. For instance, the Lord must have done and said similar things scores of times during the years of His incessant service in various parts of Judaea and Galilee. And lastly, there is no picturesque exaggeration in what is said about the world and the books. John has traced for us the matchless words and works of the Word become flesh — at least, a selection of them, which though small is ample to convince us that in Him we have the Christ, the Son of God. Though He assumed a finite form the Word who assumed it is infinite. He put therefore the stamp of infinity on all He did and said, and the world and books cannot contain that.

We shall never get to the end of all the things which Jesus did.
On this most appropriate note our Gospel ends.