

EDIFICATION

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MAGAZINE

“Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of
the Church” (I COR. 14: 12).

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

WE pass on to our readers a word that during the past year has come to our heart with some degree of freshness and power. It is this:—

“We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1: 23; 24).

We have no difficulty in recognizing that Christ crucified is a stumbling-block to the Jew. It is most manifest that it is so. They would very gladly receive a Christ who would come in pomp and power, and put honour upon them as a nation without probing into their moral and spiritual state. But a Christ who did raise such a question, and consequently collide violently with their religious leaders, and end His earthly story upon a malefactor's cross, is a hopeless offence to them.

With equal ease we can see that Christ crucified is foolishness to the Greek, and to those who in this age hold the place of philosophic culture which the Greeks held two milleniums ago. Their pride of intellect rebels against the thought that they have anything to learn from One who never laid the main stress of His teaching upon intellect, and who finished as a discredited outcast upon a cross.

But do we see with equal clearness that "Christ crucified" is "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God"? Perhaps we do not. But depend upon it, it is so.

In the preaching of the Gospel Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God. The Gospel is a great theme. In preaching it we may range over a vast variety of topics: we may present it from many points of view, basing our words on many different passages and texts, and finding illustrations of it that are beyond number. But the power and wisdom are to be found in Christ crucified. We declare Him as the risen Saviour, of course; if we could not do this there would be no point in setting Him forth as the crucified One. We do not however read that Christ glorified is the power of God, or even that Christ risen is the power of God. As we know Christ to be risen our souls are established in peace, as we know Him to be glorified we entertain hope of glory. We do well to preach Him as both risen and glorified, but it is when we preach Him **crucified** that the power of God comes in and hearts are moved.

Have we sufficiently recognized this? We fear not. We preach from many interesting, and sometimes elaborate themes, and take it for granted that our hearers know all about the facts of the Gospel; but it is a mistake to do so. We should do well if we sought grace never to stand up to preach the Gospel without clearly presenting Christ crucified. Then perhaps we should see more results than we are in the habit of doing.

We should see the working of the power of God.

And in relation to ourselves as believers Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God, just as it was amongst the Corinthians. Nothing preaches the Divine love to us like the cross, and it is love that works in our lives with most potent force. Nothing shows up what we are in ourselves according to nature like the cross, revealing in its darkest hue every ugly feature that is about us. Nothing expresses God's judgment of all that we do as men in the flesh like the cross; nothing so sets forth the judgment of sin. The cross, it is true, sets forth man's judgment of the Son of God, but then man's judgment is worth nothing in the eyes of Heaven. The cross also sets forth God's judgment of man, of sin, and of man's world, and God's judgment is worth everything, and it will sweep away all that He condemns, as the coming day will show. As we judge all things in the light of the cross we are strangely moved, and moved in a way that is according to God.

The cross is the wisdom of God. We need not fear that it will fail. All human wisdom will be brought lowly before it. It is also the power of God, and nothing will move our hearts—the hearts of all true saints—in the right direction the cross will move. So let us give the cross its right place of prominence in our thoughts and in our ministry whether spoken or written. As another year begins let us see to it that like Paul, “we preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE MASTER.

I AM going to invite the reader's attention to a fact that seems to me full of significance, and one which, I venture to say, claims more than a passing thought. Briefly stated it is this: **It is easily possible for any of us to stand in the most favoured of all Christian associations and yet to be out of fellowship with our Master in feelings and sympathies and spirit and ways.**

No one will doubt that when the Lord was on earth the twelve men who were chosen by Him to be His companions and messengers were privileged beyond all others. They were with Him all the days of His public ministry, and if in His teaching there were things they did not understand they had every opportunity of asking Him to pity their ignorance and to explain His meaning. They were with Him also in His private life, seeing, hearing, and observing things that could only be known by those who were admitted to His dear and hallowed companionship. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see"—said He to them on one occasion—"for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Luke x. 23). Yes, beyond all doubt they enjoyed unequalled privileges, and yet their thoughts and wishes and ways often jarred upon their Lord and

Master, and had to be corrected by Him. Let me give you some examples.

And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10: 13, 14).

We may be sure it was the best of motives that led them to bring these dear babes to Jesus. They craved His blessing and believed that His touch would do them lifelong good. Therefore did they come and ask that His hands might be laid on their little ones. But this wish found no favour in the eyes of His disciples. **Their** Master was not to be troubled about a matter of such trifling moment! Other and more important concerns engaged His time and attention, and so they took upon themselves to bid them go away. Oh, how little did the twelve understand their Master! How little they knew His heart! This they were soon to see. For when Jesus saw it "He was much displeased"—**indignant** is the word—"and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." And instead of touching them only, He laid His hands upon them and took them in His arms, and blessed them. Now that word **bless** is a strong one and means that He blessed them abundantly. How ashamed should these disciples have been at the rebuke of their Lord and Master! They learned in that hour that His thoughts were

not their thoughts, neither were their ways His ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so were His ways higher than their ways, and His thoughts than their thoughts.

And He who abundantly blessed the little children when on earth is still blessing them. The years may come and go and the centuries may roll away, but there is no change in His love. He is always the children's Friend. And they are most in the secret of His mind who are earnestly striving to bring the little ones to Jesus. To this end they labour in fervent prayer. To this end they seize every opportunity to tell them of the Saviour's dying love, of His precious blood that cleanseth from every sin, and how He longs that they should know and love and follow Him.

Strange to say there are those — followers of Christ in some things—who frown upon Sunday-school work and have given it up as not being in accord with the mind of heaven for to-day. Thank God their number is not large. Possibly they think that parents are responsible to teach their own children and that they should not be encouraged to pass on their duties to others. But if I am a Christian parent may not my children sometimes hear the story of redeeming love from other lips than mine? And then the children of our Sunday-schools, for the most part, come from homes where the Bible is never read and where the children are never taught to pray. Oh, it is Christlike work, let others say what they will, to gather the

Children together by twos or tens, by hundreds or thousands, if possible, to tell them, for one brief hour a week, of Him, their best Friend, who came from heaven to save them, and who, saving, will be their Guardian and Guide through life.

"Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is against us is on our part" (Mark 9: 38—40).

Who this man was we cannot tell. Nor does it matter. Enough that he was one who hated the devil and all his works, and when he met one possessed of demons he cast the demons out in the power of the name of Jesus. But the disciples forbade him. Had they been in a right frame of mind they would have been glad to see one able to spoil the "strong man's" goods in their Master's name. And more especially as they themselves had just failed to cast out the evil spirit from the son of the scoffing father who had brought his afflicted son to them. It is a sure mark of singleness of heart and largeness of heart when we rejoice unreservedly in seeing others possess a richer measure of spiritual power than ourselves, even though they follow not us, and it is an equally sure sign of a narrow spirit when we do not. But in the eyes of the disciples the fact of his not following them was a fatal flaw. It seemed intolerable that he should cast out demons in Christ's blessed name

and yet not be of their company. So in their mistaken zeal they bade him cease. And in returning to their Master, John made haste to tell Him what they had done. Instead of commending, the Lord corrected them and bade them never to do it again, saying, "For there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part."

How we need to guard against the same sectarian and ungenerous temper. We are too ready to suppose that spiritual power can only be found along the lines on which we move, and to criticize and find fault with the devoted service of another because it is not cast in our mould and carried on according to our methods. **He followeth not us** is reason enough to condemn him root and branch. True, he is winning souls for Christ, he is seeking by devoted labour to feed the flock of God, and he is waging unceasing war with the forces of evil. Yes, all true, but **he followeth not us**. Our thoughts are not his thoughts, and our ways are not his ways, and that is an offence which cannot be overlooked. So we shut up our sympathies, we give him no words of cheer, and brighten his life with no kindly deed. We leave him severely alone, and in acting thus sincerely believe that we have our Master's mind. But it is not so. We are as completely astray as were the disciples on the occasion of which we have spoken. Oh, let us jealously guard against such a spirit. Let us ungrudgingly recognize all the good we can in an-

ther even though **he followeth not us.**

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village" (Luke ix: 51—56).

These Samaritans made a great mistake in refusing to receive the Saviour even as a passing guest. Strong religious prejudices were at the bottom of it. They profoundly differed from the Jews as to the place where men should worship. Mount Gerizim was their sacred spot and Jerusalem was that of their rivals. Now the face of Jesus was steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, and they, knowing this, would suffer Him to tarry in their village, no, not for an hour. They were strong, very wrong, but their refusal serves to show how religious prejudices darken the understanding and lead to sorrowful results. It is always so. We have, even in our day, to beware of the Samaritan spirit. It steals into the heart and takes possession of it all unawares. And under its influence it becomes easy to close the door against those who should be warmly welcomed. It is not that we are insincere. Far from it. Deep down in

our hearts we think that we are doing God service and caring for His glory. Doubtless the Samaritans thought the same.

And this affront to their Master was more than His disciples — James and John — could endure. That the despised Samaritans should treat their Lord thus was an offence that deserved signal punishment, and they were ready to inflict it. Should they command fire to come down from heaven and consume them even as Elias did? How gladly would they have done it and how vehemently, and with what plausible reasons, would they have justified their act had it been challenged! But these disciples did not know their Master! Nor did they know what manner of spirit they were of. He had not come to destroy men's lives but to save them. And they went to another village. Here is the meekness and gentleness of Christ!

Alas, how many un-Christlike things have been done under the plea of faithfulness to Christ. Possibly we have done them ourselves. And when we did them our zeal for our Master's honour sprang from the very same spirit that made James and John eager to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans. And if there was a voice that would have restrained us, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" our ears were so filled with the clash of tongues that we did not heed it. We **would** vindicate our Master's name,

we would uphold His rights, regardless of all consequences, and we called down the fire!

But we need go no further. These examples show the truth of what we said at the beginning: **It is easily possible for any of us to stand in the most favoured of all Christian associations and yet to be out of fellowship with our Master in feelings and sympathies and spirit and ways.**

Perhaps you believe that the immediate circle in which you move is the most favoured of all circles. You are constantly receiving—so you suppose — fresh light from the Word, and you complacently regard yourself as standing on a spiritual elevation from whence you can look down with feelings akin to pity on your fellow Christians who have no eyes to see what you see. But take care that you are not out of harmony with your Master's mind. It is easy to be far, far astray and utterly unconscious of it — easy to be filled with a zeal for His honour and rights which instead of receiving His approval only meets with His rebuke. What need there is ever to pray the Psalmist's prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139: 23-24). Have you ever prayed it? May we ask you to pray it once more.

W.B.

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SELF-CENTRED AND EMPTY

IN reading through the Minor Prophets one is often rewarded in the discovery of some truth presented in a striking and epigrammatic way. One such instance is found in Hosea 10: 1:—

“Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto HIMSELF.”

Here we have a lesson of the greatest importance:

“A self-centred life is an EMPTY life.”

What would you think of a vine that consumed its own fruit? What would you think of the owner of a vineyard who possessed thousands of vines, which consequently produced nothing for him; he was not the richer by a single bunch? You reply, Such a vineyard should be destroyed. A vine is of no value to its owner save for its fruit. Its wood is valueless. Not even a pin to hang a vessel on will it produce.

We can surely see how useless a vine that consumed its own fruit would be. This is just what is stated. “Israel is an empty vine” (or, **a vine emptying the fruit which it giveth**—marginal rendering). But apply the parable to our own lives and how shall we fare? Judged by this standard how empty often are our lives. To be wrapped up in oneself is to make a very small bundle. And we must admit how self-centred we are.

It is a good thing when we realize that the only real title we have to life is to glorify God and serve our fellows. We get this illustrated in the first

parable recorded in Scripture. We read, "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, Reign over us" (Judges 9: 8). How illuminating is the reply of the olive tree! "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees" (verse 9). Notice well the words, "**By me** they honour God and man." Do men honour God when they see how we live? We all loathe a miser, who is so consumed by love of money that he will not spend that which is proper over himself. But the prodigal is no better. What is the good of solid gold fittings in the bathroom of more than one Hollywood film artiste? Is God or man honoured by the parsimony of a miser, or the vulgar luxury of the prodigal?

The vine is asked to be king over the trees. How good is the reply. "Should I leave my vine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" This vine is not an **empty** vine. Its fruit cheers its Maker and mankind. Promotion over the trees would indeed be the quaint type of promotion that involves a big step backward. A quotation from a recent letter illustrates our meaning:—"I have two red and one pink roses in my garden, just fulfilling their function of making me give thanks to the Maker of me and of them." Is that not sweetly put? And it is not an extract from the letter of a sentimental girl or of an old person, tied to a bathchair, but of a young man in the prime of his powers. Would that we all looked through his spectacles!

Take the case of one of the most highly gifted of men, Napoleon Buonaparte. What a name he made for himself! What tremendous will power! What ability to sway the minds of multitudes! How consummate his military genius—his statesmanship! Yet, he was but an empty vine. Stand by his magnificent mausoleum in the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, see the impressive list of his brilliant victories, and look at life, as it should be, and ask yourself the question, How fruitful was the great Napoleon's life?

To gratify boundless ambition and lust for power, he was the instrument of the death of millions of men, and of bleeding white and draining the resources of his country, till at length the nations gathered as one man and hurled the monster from his pinnacle of power. Disappointed and diseased he ended his life in his early fifties on the barren rock of St. Helena. We ask, What was there for **God** in that life? The sorrowful answer must be truthful. Absolutely nothing. What was there for **men** in that life? The same answer must be given. Napoleon was an **empty** vine.

Take the case of another, most highly gifted of men—the Apostle Paul. If he had lived a self-centred life he might have died on a bed of down, instead of laying down his head on the executioner's block. Once converted to God he consecrated himself and all his power to His service. "Straightway," we read, "he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (Acts

at 20). And as he began so he continued. For Christ's sake five times received he "forty stripes save one," thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice "suffered shipwreck," in perils by land and sea, in perils of city and wilderness, often weary, often in pain, hungry and thirsty, "in cold and nakedness"—all this he endured for God and man. Was that life empty? Was Paul an empty vine? He glorified God and His record is not on any earthly mausoleum, but is inscribed on high. In glorifying God he served man. By his incessant personal labours, his preaching, his inspired writings, he has moulded for God the lives of millions. He was a fruitful vine. He lived not in vain.

What a contrast between Napoleon and Paul! Napoleon is dead and it is only a perverted judgment that acclaims such a man as a hero. Paul is dead, and yet he is living to-day in the lives that his inspired writings are affecting for God, and through those lives for the blessing of others.

To close and to be practical, What is **my** life, **your** life? Am **I**, are **you**, a fruitful vine? Am **I**, are **you**, touching the need of the world for God's glory and as setting forth His character? Job says, "If I have . . . eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof . . . if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep . . . then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade" (Job 31: 16—22). Evidently Job was not an empty vine.

And in addition to temporal needs such as Job described, are there not above all spiritual needs? Did not Paul cry out, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9: 16). If it were a question of building up the churches he could say, "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20: 31). What earnestness for others! What zeal for God! What holy tears were his! Do we know anything of this? I fear, for myself, very little.

The Lord stir us up. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear MUCH fruit" (John 15: 8).

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 1: 1 — 2: 38).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

IN the opening verses Luke avows the object before him in writing his Gospel; he wished to bring certainty to the mind of a certain Gentile convert. God had given him a perfect understanding of all things from the outset, so now he wrote them "in order," or "with method;" and we shall see as we proceed that he sometimes ignores historical order to present things in a method that is moral and spiritual. The understanding of that moral and spiritual order, together with having the

facts clearly in writing, would bring certainty to Theophilus, as also it will to us. We see here how **certainty** is linked with **the Holy Writings**—the Word of God. If we had not the Holy Writings, we should have certainty of nothing.

The first and second chapters present us with facts concerning the birth of Christ, and with very interesting pictures of the godly remnant in Israel, out of whom, according to the flesh, He appeared. The first picture, verses 5—25, concerns the priest Zacharias and his wife. They were “righteous before God,” from which we may deduce that they were a couple marked by faith, and consequently they were marked by obedience to the instructions of the law. Yet, when told by an angel that his elderly and barren wife should bear a son, he asked for a sign of some kind to be given in support of the bare Word of God. In this he proved himself to be an “unbelieving believer,” though very true to type, for “the Jews require a sign” (1 Cor. 1: 22); and he suffered governmentally, inasmuch as the sign granted was the loss of his power of speech. The sign was quite appropriate however. The Psalmist said, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” Zacharias did not believe, and therefore he could not speak.

The angel’s prediction concerning the son of Zacharias was that he should be great in the sight of the Lord, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, so that in the spirit and power of Elijah he might “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” In verses 6, 9, 11, 15, 16 and 17, “Lord” is the

equivalent of the Old Testament "Jehovah," so the advent of the Messiah is to be the advent of Jehovah. There were to be people on earth who were prepared to receive Christ when He came. The Gospel starts then with a godly priest fulfilling the ritual of the law in the temple, and granted a promise that had to do with a people waiting for the Messiah to appear on earth. We ask special attention to this, for we think we shall see that this Gospel gives us the transition **from law to grace, and from earth to heaven**, so that it ends with tidings of grace for all nations, and with Christ ascending into the heavens to take up high-priestly service there. In chapter 1 the earthly priest was dumb. In the closing verses of the Gospel the men who are to be priests in the new dispensation of the Holy Spirit, were in the temple and anything but dumb. They were praising and blessing God.

In verses 26—38, we have the angel's announcement to Mary concerning the conception and birth of her Son. She was the chosen vessel for this great event. A few details of much importance must be briefly noted. In the first place, verse 31 makes it abundantly plain that He was truly a Man; "made of a woman," as Galatians 4: 4 says.

In the second place, verses 32 and 33 make it plain that He was far more than a mere Man. He was "great," in a way that no other man ever was, being Son of the Highest; and He is destined to be the looked-for King over the house of Jacob, and take up a kingdom that abides for ever. We

observe that there is as yet no hint of anything outside those hopes as to the Messiah which could be based upon Old Testament prophecies. The Son of the Highest was coming to reign, and that reign might be immediate as far as this message was concerned.

A difficulty occurred to Mary's mind which she expressed in verse 34. The coming Child was to have David as His ancestor and yet be the Son of the Highest! She did not ask for a **sign**, since she accepted the angel's words, but she did ask for an **explanation**. How could this thing be? Mary's question and the angel's answer in verses 35—37, make quite plain in the third place the reality of the virgin birth and the wholly supernatural character of the Manhood of Jesus.

There was to be an action of the Holy Ghost, producing "that Holy Thing," and then the overshadowing of the Power of the Highest—a process we believe—protecting "that Holy Thing," while as yet unborn. In result there was to be a suitable vessel of flesh and blood for the incarnation of the Son of God. He is Son of David truly, as is indicated at the end of verse 32, but Romans 1: 3 shows that it was **the Son of God** who **became** Son of David according to the flesh. In verse 35 of our chapter the article "the" is really absent—"called Son of God"—that is, it indicates character rather than the definite Person. When **the** Son of God became the Son of David through Mary, there was such a putting forth of the power of God as en-

sured that the "Holy Thing" born of Mary should be "Son of God" in character, and therefore the fit vessel for His incarnation. It was a miracle of the first order; but then, as the angel said, "with God nothing shall be impossible."

The faith of Mary, and her submission to the pleasure of God concerning her, comes out beautifully in verse 38. Verses 39—45 show the piety and prophetic spirit that characterized Elisabeth, for seeing Mary she at once recognized in her the mother "of my Lord." She was filled with the Holy Ghost, and recognized Jesus as her Lord even before He was born, an instructive illustration, this, of 1 Corinthians 12: 3.

This is followed by Mary's prophetic utterance in verses 46—55. It was called forth by her sense of the extraordinary mercy that had been shown to her in her humble circumstances. Though descended from David she was but the espoused wife of the humble carpenter of Nazareth. In the mercy shown to her she saw the pledge of the final exaltation of those who fear God and the scattering of the proud and mighty of this world. She saw moreover that the coming of her Child was to be the fulfilment of the promise that had been made to Abraham—God's unconditional promise. She had no thought of Israel having deserved anything under the covenant of law. All depended upon the covenant of promise. The hungry were being filled and the rich dismissed empty. This is ever God's way.

We must not omit to notice that Mary spoke of "God my Saviour." Though the mother of our Saviour, she herself found her Saviour in God.

In due time the son was born to Zacharias and Elisabeth and at the time of his circumcision his father's mouth was opened. He wrote, "His name is John," showing that he now fully accepted the angel's word, and hence the name of his son was a settled question. At last he believed, though it was faith that follows sight, of the true Jewish type; consequently his mouth was opened. He praised God, and filled with the Holy Ghost he prophesied.

A striking thing about this prophecy is that, though it was provoked by the birth of his own son John, that child was only before his mind in a minor and secondary way. The great theme of his utterance was the yet unborn Christ of God. He held things in their right proportion. This was the fruit of his being filled with the Spirit, who always magnifies Christ. Had he spoken merely in the enthusiasm engendered by the birth of the unexpected son, he would have talked mainly or altogether about him and the exalted prophetic office to which he was called.

He spoke of the coming of Christ as though it had already materialized, and he celebrated the effects of His coming as though they had already been accomplished. This is a common feature of prophecy: it speaks of things as accomplished which historically are still in the future. For the

moment the prophet is carried in his spirit outside all time considerations. In the imminent appearance of Christ, Zacharias saw the Lord God of Israel visiting His people in order to redeem them. The salvation that He would bring would deliver them from all their enemies and enable them to serve Him in freedom, and in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. And all this would be in fulfilment of His promise and oath to Abraham. Notice how the Holy Spirit inspired him to refer to the unconditional promise to Abraham, just as Mary had done. Israel's blessing will be on that basis and not on the basis of the covenant of law.

In all this we observe as yet no clear distinction between the first and second comings of Christ. Verses 68—75, contemplate things which will only be brought to pass in any full sense at His second coming. True, redemption was wrought by Christ at His first coming, but it was redemption by blood, and not by power; and it is true of course that the holiness and righteousness in which a restored and delivered Israel will serve their God through the bright millennial day will be based upon the work of the cross. Still in these verses the two comings are regarded as one whole.

Verses 76 and 77 refer directly to John, who had just been born. He was to go before the face of Jehovah preparing His ways. He was to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins. This he did as verse 3 of chapter 3 records, in connection with his baptism.

Notice that here "His people" acquires a rather new sense—not Israel nationally, but those who were the believing remnant in the midst of that people. All is on the ground of mercy even with John and his Elijah-like ministry. It is, "the remission of their sins on account of the bowels of mercy of our God" (New Trans.).

In verses 78 and 79 Zacharias returns to the coming of Christ, and all of course is on the ground of that same mercy, for the word "whereby," connects what follows with the mercy just mentioned. The "Dayspring from on high" is a peculiarly lovely description of Christ. Alternative words for "Dayspring" would be "Daydawn" or "Sun-rising." His advent was indeed the dawning of a new day. Every earthly sunrising has been, to human eyes, from beneath upwards. This one was "from on high" that is, from above downwards. The Spirit of God moved Zacharias to announce by inspiration the dawning of a day that would be new, though the full wonder of it was as yet hidden from his eyes.

He saw however that it meant the bringing in of both light and peace for men; and here he does begin to speak of things that were blessedly accomplished in the first coming of Christ. When He came forth in His public ministry the light began to shine, and the way of peace was well and truly laid in His death and resurrection, and the feet of His disciples led into it immediately after. The prophecy of Zacharias closes on this

strikingly beautiful note. In the first glimpse we have of him he is a troubled and fearful man. His last word recorded in Scripture is "peace." He had seen by faith the coming of the Saviour, like the dawning of a new day of blessing, and that made all the difference.

Verse 80 summarizes the whole of John's life up to the opening of his ministry. God dealt with him in secret in the deserts, educating him in view of his solemn preaching of repentance in the days to come.

The opening verse of chapter 2 shows how God may use the great ones of the earth, all unconsciously to themselves, for the accomplishing of His designs. The case here is the more remarkable inasmuch as the decree of Augustus was not carried out immediately but delayed until Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Prophecy however had indicated Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah, and the decree of the Emperor came just at the right time to send Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, though subsequently the proceedings were stayed for a time. It was owing to this disturbed state of affairs, no doubt, that the inn was full, and the fact that the infant Christ was born in a stable was a testimony to the poverty of Joseph and Mary, for then as now inconveniences can always be obviated by money. It was symbolic however of the outside place as regards the world and its glory which Christ was to have from the outset.

Verses 8—20, are occupied with the episode in connection with the shepherds. This has become so well known in connection with hymns and carols that we are in danger perhaps of missing its full significance. Shepherds, as a class, were not held in much esteem in those days, and these were the men who took night duty, unskilled in comparison with the men who cared for the sheep by day. To these exceedingly humble and unknown men the angels appeared. Heaven's secret concerning the arrival of the Saviour was disclosed to such nobodies as these!

The thing becomes even more remarkable when we compare this chapter with Matthew 2. There the scene is cast amongst the great ones in Jerusalem—Herod the king, his courtiers, chief priests and scribes—and they are completely ignorant of this marvellous event for months afterwards, and then they only hear of it through the wise men of the east arriving, men who were complete outsiders as regards the nation of Israel. The explanation is given to us in the words of the Psalmist, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (25: 14). God respects no man's person, but He has respect to humility and integrity of heart before Himself; so He passed by the grandees in Jerusalem, and sent a deputation of angelic beings to wait on a small group of despised night watchmen that they might be initiated into the secret of Heaven's ways. These shepherds were a few of the godly remnant waiting for

the Messiah, as their subsequent words and actions show us.

First came the message of the angel, and then the praise of the angels. The great joy of the message centred in the fact that it was as Saviour that He had come. They had had the Lawgiver and the prophets, but now had arrived the Saviour, and He was so great an One as Christ the Lord. This good news was for "all **the** people," — not "all people" as our A.V. has it. For the moment a wider circle than all Israel is not in view. The sign of this marvellous event was one that never could have been anticipated. Men might have expected to see a mighty warrior wrapped in garments of glory and seated on a throne. The sign was a Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. But then the sign indicated the whole manner and spirit of His approach to men at this time.

The praise of the angels is compressed into fourteen words, recorded in verse 14—though few in number, words of deep meaning. They put on record the ultimate results that were to flow from the advent of the Babe. God is to be glorified in the highest seats of His power, the very place where the slightest slur cast upon His name would be most keenly perceived and felt. On earth, where since the fall warfare and strife had been incessant, peace is to be established. God is to find His good pleasure in men. "Good pleasure in men," is the rendering of the New Translation.

from the moment that sin came in there was no pleasure for God in Adam or in his race: but now had appeared One who is of another order of humanity than Adam, owing to the Virgin birth, which has been so plainly stated in the first chapter. In Him the good pleasure of God rests in supreme measure, as also it will rest in men who are in Him as the fruit of His work. Wonderful results indeed!

To all this the shepherds gave the response of faith. They did not say, "Let us go . . . and see if this thing is come to pass," but "see this thing which **is** come to pass." They came with haste and saw the Babe with their own eyes; then they bore testimony to others. They could then say, "God has **said** it, and we have **seen** it." — the Divine testimony backed by personal experience. Such testimony is bound to have effect. Many wondered, and Mary herself kept these things, pondering them in her heart; for evidently she did not herself yet understand the full significance of it all. As for the shepherds, they caught the spirit of the angels, glorifying and praising God. So there was praise **on earth** as well as praise **in heaven** on this great occasion; and we venture to think that the praise of these humble men below had in it a note that was absent from the praise of the angels of His might above.

We are permitted to see in verses 21—24, that all things that the law enjoined were carried out in the case of the holy Child, and when presented

to the Lord in the temple two aged saints, walking in the fear of the Lord, were there to greet Him as guided by the Spirit of God. We have just noted how the great men of Jerusalem were totally out of touch with God and knew nothing about Him: there were those in touch with God and they soon knew, even though no angel appeared to them. The Holy Ghost was upon Simeon, and by the Spirit he not only **knew** that he should see Jehovah's Christ before he died but also he **came** into the temple at the exact moment that the child Jesus was there. So too with old Anna. Her visit was timed perfectly, so that she saw Him.

Reading verses 28—35, we can feel how affecting scene must have been. The old man addressed God and then addressed Mary. He was ready to depart in peace having seen Jehovah's salvation in the holy Child. He actually went one step further than the angel, for he recognized that God's salvation had been prepared before the face of "all peoples"—the word is in the plural this time. Not only was Jesus to be the glory of Israel but also a light to lighten the Gentiles. It was revealed to him that grace was going to flow beyond the narrow borders of Israel.

It was revealed to him also that the Christ had come to be spoken against. Dimly perhaps he saw it, but there it was—the shadow of the cross when the sword should pierce through Mary's soul. This we learn from his words to her.

THE RAPTURE AND THE APPEARING.

THE last chapter in the Old Testament ends with the promise, "Unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4: 2); whilst the last chapter in the New Testament gives us the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ by Himself in the words: "I am the Root and the Offspring of David and the Bright and Morning Star. . . Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22: 16, 20). The Sun of Righteousness, the Hope of Israel and of the world: the Bright Morning Star, the Hope of the Church, are here presented.

The similes are used skilfully, for just as the morning star rises before the sun, so the Lord will come FOR His heavenly saints before He comes WITH them to reign over the earth.

The writer well remembers an illustration of this. Travelling from the Shetland Islands to the Orkneys he rose after a restless night at 5 a.m. On reaching the deck of the steamer he saw a really beautiful and impressive sight. High up in the sky, already beginning to light up with the morning glow, shone one large, lustrous star—the only one visible. It was the bright morning star. Away on the eastern horizon the rising sun was shooting upwards his beams of golden light.

Instantly there came into his mind these symbols of the Lord in connection with His coming again: the Bright Morning Star, the Hope of the

Church; the Sun of Righteousness, the Hope of Israel and of the world.

That the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is fundamental to the Christian faith is evidenced by the fact that it is mentioned in every New Testament Book, save five, and the reason for these exceptions only strengthens this statement.

These five exceptions are the little pastoral Epistle to Philemon and the Second and Third Epistles of John, and the Epistles to the Galatians and Ephesians.

It is quite understandable that in the case of the three first named there should be no mention of the Second Advent. They were very short pastoral letters addressed to individuals, and not taken up with any systematic unfolding of Christian doctrine.

In the case of the Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul fought strenuously the evil effects of the propaganda of the Judaizing teachers, who were undermining the very foundations of the Gospel in their attempt to bring the ritual of the Law as a system into connection with Christianity. The plain fact was that believers in the Galatian assemblies were not clear as to the Gospel—as to the result of the **first** coming of Christ, and how could the Apostle write to them as to the **Second** Coming?

Just as a boy at school who has not mastered what is taught in the lower class is not likely to

be promoted to the higher, so the Apostle had to keep to his theme, as to what Grace and the Gospel brought the believer into.

In the case of the Epistle to the Ephesians the reason why the Lord's Second Coming is not mentioned is for an exactly opposite reason to that of the Galatians. In Ephesians the believer is looked upon as quickened, raised and seated with Christ in Heavenly places. Already are they in **spirit** where the Lord's Coming will place them bodily.

The Coming of the Lord is Made Up of Two Parts

namely, the Coming of the Lord **for** His saints, commonly called for convenience sake **THE RAPTURE**; and the Coming of the Lord **with** His saints to deliver His earthly saints, and bring them into the Millennium—the Kingdom of Heaven set up in manifestation on the earth — commonly called **THE APPEARING**.

The latter was prophesied even in Old Testament times. As far back as "the seventh from Adam," Enoch prophesied, "Behold the Lord cometh **WITH** ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 1: 14, 15). In the New Testament the great majority of allusions to the Second Coming refer to the Appearing. Not that the importance of the Rapture is to reckoned by the number of allusions made to it. The Appearing has to do with God's government upon the earth, and the place the believer will have in the Kingdom is determined by his devotedness and

faithfulness during the King's absence. **The "Rapture" has to do with Heaven; the "Appearing" with the Kingdom of Heaven upon the earth.** The Rapture has to do with the Father's House, sovereignty, God's grace, salvation, eternal life, and all believers share alike in this; whereas the Appearing has to do with government, responsibility, reward, and believers will differ one from another according to their faithfulness and devotedness.

Naturally we should expect the Appearing to be oftener presented to us in the New Testament as the means to awaken saints to a sense of their responsibility, and as an incentive to devotedness and faithfulness whereby they may earn the Lord's word of approbation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25: 21).

But though this is the case, and the Rapture is not referred to in the Old Testament at all, and only directly twice in the New Testament, though there are one or two other allusions to it, yet

The Rapture is a Matter of Supreme Importance.

Its blessedness and importance must not be measured by the number of times it is alluded to as compared with the Appearing.

What can be more wonderful than the Lord presenting the Church "to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing"?

(Eph. 5: 27). And this will take place at the Rapture.

There is a deep and widespread impression on the part of earnest Christians all over the world that the Church of God is upon the very threshold of her translation to glory. It is true that there are no events which must be fulfilled before that wonderful event may take place. And yet there are recent events which clearly point to the imminence of the Lord's Coming.

If, for instance, it were true that the Church had to go through the great tribulation we should be in the position of saying that the Lord's Coming could not take place until the Antichrist had appeared and made his treaty with the head of the Roman empire, yet to be revived; in short, that the Coming of the Lord could not occur for several years at least.

In order to be clear on this point it must be grasped: (1) That no events need to occur before the Return of the Lord FOR His saints, but (2) That there are events which must needs materialize before the Lord can come WITH His saints to reign on the earth; in other words, there are no necessary events to occur before the Rapture; there are necessary events which must occur before the Appearing.

But seeing that these two events are separated by a very measurable space of years, it is not surprising that before the Rapture takes place there should be signs, ominous of and preparatory to the Ap-

pearing, occurring, and that these very signs, though necessary to and connected with the Appearing, and proclaiming that the Appearing is at hand, must necessarily tell us that if the Appearing is near at hand, the Rapture must be still nearer.

It is this that has stirred so many Christians of late years out of their lethargy and revived the hope of the Lord's Coming in their hearts.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18; 1 Corinthians 15: 51-57, which are the two prominent Scriptures which present the Coming as the immediate Hope of the Church, and you will find no event or events are outlined as needing fulfilment before the Lord shall come for His people; whereas in Matthew 24: 3—41, where the Coming of the Lord **with** His people is the theme, you have many events necessary to take place before that event can occur.

How cheering for the believer to realize that there may be only "the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15: 52) between him and that most wonderful event—the Coming of the Lord for His Church. Do we really live in constant and daily expectation of this blissful event, which is surely coming, and that soon?

The Church is Listening for Sounds, Not Looking for Signs,

which latter the godly Jew will do in a future day, when he will wait and long and pray for Messiah's appearing. We wait for the long-continued silence of the heavens to be broken, "For the Lord Him-

self shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4: 16). And that silence may be broken before the reader has time to finish this paper.

How sweet and comforting are the words, "the Lord Himself"! He will not send a deputy, however glorious. **He will come Himself.** How could it be otherwise? The One who has revealed the Father, the One who in His anguish sweated as it were great drops of blood in Gethsemane's Garden, the One who died for His Church in all the shame and bitterness of the Cross of Calvary, the One who broke the power of sin and death and hell, the One who ascended to God's right hand, the One who sympathizes with, succours and supports His people through their wilderness journey, is the One who is coming again for us. What a joyful shout His will be! How full of power and majesty!

The archangel, as leader of the uncounted, angelic hosts, will voice with deepest reverence their sympathy with and joy in the glad shout of their Creator and Lord, whilst God Himself will sound the trump which proclaims so blessedly that the mind of Heaven is one. The Father and the Spirit are in fullest accord with the Son in this wondrous moment.

Some Uninstructed Christians

may think of the Lord as gracious and merciful and tender and of God as austere and demanding satisfaction for outraged majesty in connection with

sin. But the Gospel is to bring us **to God**, not to shield us **from** God. It was the Father, gracious and merciful and tender, who sent the Son, equally so surely. Righteousness must be upheld, but only that love might flow forth through the only channel possible. "Grace reigns **through righteousness**" (Rom. 5: 21).

"The river of His grace,
Through righteousness supplied,
Is flowing o'er the barren place
Where Jesus died."

It will be sweet to hear "the trump of God," as "the voice of the archangel," and "the shout" of the blessed Lord—to be welcomed by all in Heaven.

The few verses, 1 Thessalonians 4: 13—18, are of especial interest to the believer. Cut them out of the Bible and we should not know the order of the Lord's coming. Verse 14 reiterates that the Lord will come with His saints; verses 15, 16, 17 explain how the Lord will come **for** His saints, in order to come with them, and how the sleeping saints, the dead in Christ, will be the first to come under the mighty power of the resurrection shout, and then the living with them will be changed.

The question is often asked,

Will All Believers be Caught up at the Second Coming of Christ?

and the Scriptural answer is clearly in the affirmative. But some may quote Hebrews 9: 28, "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation," and say

that only those who **LOOK for Him** will be caught up. That is exactly what the verse states, but "those who look for Him" describes the believers, whilst the unbelievers can be described as those who do not look for the Lord. It **certainly does not describe a specially earnest section of the believers**, but it describes believers as a class. It does not say, "those who look for His coming," but those who look **for Him**," and what Christian is there who cannot be thus described? 1 Corinthians 15: 51, 52, settles the point beyond dispute that all believers will be caught up. We read, "Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall not **all** sleep, but we shall **ALL** be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."

Here it states categorically that **ALL** saints—dead and living—will be changed in a moment, not at different times, the duration of the moment being limited to "the twinkling of an eye." The whole chapter bears this out. Verse 22 says, "**In Christ shall all be made alive**," and "**Afterwards they that are Christ's at His Coming**" (v. 23), will be raised.

The one qualification for the sleeping saints is, Do they belong to Christ? and surely that is the only qualification for the living saint.

But for a place in the Kingdom of Heaven in manifestation, devotedness is required. It is this confounding of Heaven and the Kingdom of Heaven that leads to this view of partial raptures.

After the Rapture,

when saints have their glorified bodies and are like Christ, there will be the judgment seat of Christ, when the deeds of the believer will be reviewed for his loss or reward. His person, however, will never come into judgment—we have the Judge's own assurance in John 5: 24 that this will never take place, but his deeds will be manifested. **There is no question of his fitness for Heaven being raised. That is settled on the ground of the wondrous efficacy of the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ,** and hence there can be no question as to all believers being caught up at the Rapture, but their position in the Kingdom of Heaven will be determined by the results of the judgment seat.

As for unbelievers, Scripture teaches that they must be judged. In their case it is their persons that will be judged according to their works. How different it is for the **person** of the unbeliever to be judged, and the **deeds** of the believer to be manifested either for loss or reward in view of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let me give one Scripture which clearly proves that the believer's person will never come into judgment: I would refer to the hypothetical case adduced in 1 Corinthians 3: 15, where we read, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; **but he himself shall be saved;** yet so as by fire." The case is adduced where a man's work might be thoroughly bad, and its condemna-

tion at the judgment seat would actually be a means of salvation—not in the eternal sense of the word, but in a governmental sense. Yet, how solemn when the work of the flesh has to be burned by the fire of judgment. May the solemnity of this affect our lives even now and day by day till He come. And the knowledge that the judgment of the persons of the unbelievers means eternal punishment will make us more grateful for the wonderful salvation that is ours through the death of Christ and more zealous in the Gospel.

A. J. POLLOCK.

“THOU ART . . . THOU SHALT BE”

III.

WE are not told where Simon went when he fled from the High Priest's kitchen, after his thrice repeated denial of the Lord, but we may imagine the state of his mind. All the hopes of what he might have been, that had been raised in his heart by the Lord's first words to him, would now be thoroughly dashed. His case was hopeless. And after three and a half years! and three times too! Why had he not fled when the cock crew the first time? That cock-crowing he would never forget! “Thou art”—yes, he knew that now only too well: he was indeed Simon—unreliable, fickle, boastful yet a coward, and a denier of his Lord when He needed him most. **“Thou shalt be.”** Never! That was no longer pos-

sible; all that had disappeared as a bright dream at this terrible awakening of the dreamer, leaving bitter disappointment behind, and deepening the darkness of his soul. He had meant to fight, but the power of the devil had been too great for him: he was beaten. **"Thou art."** Yes.

“I am battered and broken, and weary and out of heart;
. I am, I —
What wouldst Thou make of me?”

And yet, the Lord had "turned and looked upon Peter." Would he ever forget that look? Never! As he bowed himself in the fierce agony of his repentance, that look would be a memory more vivid than the cock-crowing, a ray of light in his darkness, for it was a look not of anger, nor even of reproach but of tenderest pity. Judas had gone out and hanged himself, should he do the same? No, the devil could not drive him so far; he was preserved through that awful soul struggle by the Lord's intercession and by that look.

The fact is that Simon was to be the outstanding witness to the triumph of patient, persevering grace. He was to be the vessel chosen of God to write of **the true grace of God** in which every Christian stands; and of this he had to write, not only as inspired by the Holy Spirit, but out of his own experience. His words were to be infallible words because Holy-Ghost-given, but he was to be able to say as he wrote them, I know the truth of them in my soul's history. Hence it was that Simon had to learn his need of grace by his sin,

and the greatness of the grace, that he needed, in that look that revealed the love that would not let him go.

And he was the first of His eleven disciples that the Lord sought out on the resurrection day—not that the Lord loved him more than the others, He did not, but Simon’s was the greatest need—poor broken-hearted, conscience-stricken Simon, and the greatest need received the first attention. We are not told what took place at that interview; it probably could not be told; it is enough for us to know that the Lord appeared to Simon, and at that interview so restored and strengthened his faith, and set his heart so completely at rest, that he was able to join his brethren in the evening of the day, when the Lord stood in the midst of them. “Thou shalt be” was taken up in resurrection, and Peter’s eyes were turned away from his terrible past, for it was all forgiven, to the goal of the Lord’s purpose for him.

This most wonderful grace was not shewn to Peter to make us think little of his sin or of our own, but to shew us that where sin abounded grace did much more abound, and to shew us that His grace will never fail; our whole hope lies not in what we are or can do but in what our Lord is.

Now grace first chooses its object, and in so doing shews **its sovereignty**; then it declares the destiny of the chosen one, shewing **its fore-knowledge**; then it sets to work to bring the object of its

choice into full conformity with the great destiny, and in doing this it brings to light **its inexhaustible resources**. It looks for no merit in its object, and does not use any material that it finds in it; it acts from itself, and brings forth its own riches of wisdom and patience and power. And this was the lesson that Simon had to learn, that he might teach it to us. He had to learn that Simon was not to be trusted, but that nothing could turn grace from its purpose. He had to learn that nothing could change the feelings of the Lord to him, not even his own base conduct. Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end, and not "one of them is lost," and Simon was one of these, chosen, designated and kept for the day of glory.

And you are one of these, young believer—"His own." What comfort, what encouragement this gives. Yet it may be you are discouraged, sorely discouraged. You have glimpsed the "thou shalt be" and it has stirred the holiest emotions of your soul, but the "thou art" has cast you down, and brought you almost to despair.

"Oh, the regret, the struggle and the failing!
Oh, the days desolate and useless years!
Vows in the night so fierce and unavailing
Stings of my shame and passion of my tears!"

Do you realize in your soul's deep exercise that the Lord looks upon you with the same tenderness with which He looked on Peter. And that He has prayed for you as effectually as He prayed for

him? Do you know that He knew all you are before He called you? "Thou art" was as truly known to Him about you as it was about Simon, and yet He chose you in His sovereign grace, and designated you to a glorious destiny, and His grace will bring you into full conformity with His purpose for you. Be confident of this very thing, that good work He hath begun in you He will complete, and grace begun shall end in glory.

How great is our Lord! He has risen up above the power of death and ever liveth to make intercession for us; how gracious He is, no failure on our part can change Him. **He appeared unto Simon**, and in the same wonderful grace He desires always to shew Himself to you and to me.

J. T. MAWSON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 2: 29 — 4: 44).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

WE may wonder perhaps that Simeon, having been permitted to live until he actually held the Saviour in his arms, should have been so ready to "depart in peace." We might have anticipated that he would have felt it a tantalizing thing to see the beginning of God's intervention in this way, and yet have to depart before the climax was reached. But evidently it was given to him as a prophet to foresee the rejection of Christ, and

therefore he did not expect the immediate arrival of the glory, and was prepared to go.

He announced that the Child would put Israel to the test. Many who were high and lifted up would fall, and many who were low and despised would rise up; and as He would be spoken against and rejected, the thoughts of many hearts would come to light, as they came into contact with Him. In the presence of God all men are forced to come out in their true character, so this feature about Christ was an involuntary tribute to His deity. Moreover Mary herself should be pierced with sorrow as with a sword: a word that was fulfilled when she stood by the cross.

The very aged Anna completes this beautiful picture of the godly remnant in Israel. She served God continually, and when she had seen the Christ, she "spake of Him."

We may recapitulate at this point by summing up the features that marked these pious folk. The shepherds illustrate **the faith** that characterized them. They accepted at once the word that reached them through the angel, then their own eyes verified it, then they glorified and praised God.

Mary exemplified **the thoughtful and meditative spirit**, that waits upon God for understanding—verse 19.

Simeon was the man who was **waiting** for the Christ under the instruction and power of the Spirit of God. He was **satisfied** with Christ when he found Him, and **prophesied** concerning Him.

Anna was one who **served** God continually, and **witnessed** of the Christ, when she had found Him.

Lastly, there was great care exercised that every detail concerning the Christ should be carried out as the law of the Lord had ordained. Fives times over it is stated that the law was observed—verses 22, 23, 24, 27, 39. This excellent feature, we presume must be credited to Joseph, the husband of Mary—this **careful obedience to the Word of God**.

We are now waiting for His second advent. How good it would be if in our cases these excellent features were strongly marked.

Verse 40 covers the first twelve years of our Lord's life. It conveys to us the fact that the ordinary development of mind and body, which is proper to mankind, marked Him; a testimony to His true Manhood.

This is reinforced too by the further glimpse we are given of Him at the age of twelve years. He was not teaching the learned men, but He was hearing them and asking them questions in such a way as to astonish them as they questioned Him. Here again we see Him fulfilling perfectly that which is proper to a child of such an age, while displaying features that were supernatural. His reply to His mother also showed that He was conscious of His mission. Yet for many years to come He took the subject place in regard to Joseph and Mary, and thus displayed all human perfection proper to His years.

The commencement of John's ministry is very fully dated in the two verses that open chapter 3. These verses at least show that things were entirely out of course. Government was vested in the Gentiles, and even in Israel things were in confusion, for there were two high priests instead of one. Hence repentance was the dominant note in his preaching. Earlier prophets had reasoned with Israel and recalled them to the broken law. John no longer does this, but demands repentance. They were to acknowledge that they were hopelessly lost on the ground of the law, and take their place as dead men in the waters of his baptism. It was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." If they listened to John and repented, they were morally prepared to receive the remission of sins through the One who was about to come. Thus the path before the Lord would be made straight.

Note how this quotation from Isaiah speaks of Jehovah coming, and how this coming of Jehovah is obviously fulfilled in Jesus. Verse 5 states the same truth as we had in verses 52 and 53 of chapter 1, and verse 34 of chapter 2, only putting it into language of a more figurative sort. Verse 6 shows that since He who was about to come was One no less than Jehovah, the salvation He would bring was not to be confined within the narrow boundaries of Israel, but go forth to "all flesh." Grace was about to come, and it would overflow in all directions. This grace is one of the special themes of the Gospel of Luke.

But John not only preached repentance in a general way, he also made it a very pointed and personal matter. Crowds flocked to him, and his baptism threatened to become a popular service, almost a fashionable recreation. Things work in just the same way to-day: any religious ordinance, such as baptism, very easily degenerates into a kind of popular festival. Evidently John was not in the least afraid of offending his audience and spoiling his own popularity. Nothing could be more vigorous than his words recorded in verses 7—9. He told the people what they were very plainly; he warned them of wrath ahead; he called for the genuine repentance which would bring forth fruits; he showed that no place of religious privilege would avail them, for God was about to judge the very roots of things. The axe was now about to cut, not in the way of lopping off branches, but of smiting at the root so as to bring down the whole tree. A very graphic figure, this; and fulfilled not in the execution of outward judgment, such as will mark the Second Advent, but in that moral judgment which was reached at the cross. The Second Advent will be characterized by the fire which will consume the dead tree: the First Advent led to the cross, where the judicial sentence of condemnation was promulgated against Adam and his race; or in other words, the tree was cut down.

John demanded deeds, not words, as the practical fruits of repentance, and this led to the people's question, recorded in verse 10. The pub-

licans and the soldiers followed with similar questions. By his answers in each case John put his finger upon the particular sins that marked the different classes. Yet, though the answers varied, we can see that covetousness provoked all the wrongs that he dealt with. Of all the evil weeds that flourish in the human heart covetousness is about the most deep-seated and difficult to deal with: like the dandelion its roots penetrate to a great depth. True repentance leads to true conversion from the old way of sin, and John knew this.

Thus John prepared the way of the Lord, and not only so he also faithfully pointed to Him, and did not for one moment permit the people to think great things of himself. He proclaimed himself to be but the humblest servant of the great Person who was coming—so humble as to be unworthy to perform the very menial service of unlacing His sandal. The Coming One was so great that He would baptize men with the Holy Ghost and with fire: the former for blessing, and the latter for judgment, as the next verse makes abundantly plain. Here again we may notice that the two Advents are not as yet quite plainly distinguished. There was a baptism of the Spirit, recorded in Acts 2, as the result of the First Advent, but the baptism with fire, according to verse 17, awaits the Second Advent.

Luke records John's faithful ministry and then briefly dismisses him from the record in order to make way for Jesus. The imprisonment of John

did not take place just at this juncture, but Luke deviates from the historical order to set the thing before us in a moral and spiritual way. The Elijah-like ministry of John disappears before the One who was to be the vessel of the grace of God; and who was baptized, and thus introduced to His ministry. We are not even told here that it was John who baptized Him, but we are told that He was praying when baptized, a thing not mentioned elsewhere. This Gospel evidently emphasizes the perfection of our Lord's humanity. Grace for man is vested in One who is the perfect Man, and the very first feature of perfection in man is that of dependence upon God. Prayer is an expression of that dependence, and we shall notice in this Gospel how many times it is put on record that Jesus prayed. This is the first instance.

On this praying and dependent Man the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove, while the Father's voice declared Him to be the beloved Son, the Object of all the Divine delight. Thus at last the truth of the Trinity became manifest. The Spirit became for a moment visible; the Father became audible; the Son was here in flesh and blood, and consequently not only visible and audible but tangible also. It is very wonderful that the heaven should be opened, and all its attention focussed upon a praying Man on earth. But in that praying Man God was to be known, for it was pleasing that "in Him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1: 19).

The Father's voice having thus owned Him as the beloved Son, Luke now introduces His genealogy through Mary to show how really He is also Man. Matthew traces His descent down from Abraham, the depository of promise, and David, the depository of royalty. Luke traces Him up to Adam and to God, for it is simply His Manhood that is the point, and that was through Mary, for Joseph was only supposed to be His father. He is truly a Man though the Son of God. He is the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, the One overflowing with the grace of God.

Consequently chapter 4 opens with Him returning from His baptism, full of the Holy Ghost. But before beginning His service He must for forty days be tempted of the devil. To this testing the Spirit led Him, and here we see the glorious contrast between the Second Man and the first.

When the first man was created God pronounced all to be very good, but Satan came promptly on the scene, tempted man and ruined him. The Second Man has appeared, and the Father's voice has pronounced His excellence, so again Satan comes on the scene with promptness, but this time he meets Man, full of the Holy Ghost, who is impervious to his wiles. When the first man fell, he knew no pangs of hunger, for he dwelt in the fertile garden planted by his Creator's hand. The Second Man victoriously stood, though the garden had been turned into a wilderness and He was an hungered.

Luke evidently gives us the temptations in the moral order and not the historical. Matthew gives us the historical order, and shows us that the end of the temptation was when the Lord bade Satan get behind Him, as recorded in verse 8 of our chapter. The order here agrees with John's analysis of the world in chapter 2 of his first Epistle. The first temptation was evidently designed to appeal to the lust of the flesh, the second to the lust of the eyes, and the third to the pride of life. But no such lust or pride had any place in our Lord, and the three testings only served to reveal His perfection in its details.

The Lord Jesus had become truly a Man, and in answer to the first temptation He took man's proper place of complete **dependence** upon God. Just as man's natural life hangs upon his assimilation of bread, so his spiritual life hangs upon his assimilation of, and obedience to, the Word of God. In answer to the second temptation was seen His whole-hearted **devotedness** to God. Power and glory and dominion in themselves were as nothing to Him; He was wholly set for the worship and service of God. He met the third temptation, in which He was urged to put God's faithfulness to the test, by His unswerving **confidence** in God. The great adversary found no point of attack in Him. He trusted God without testing Him.

The three features thus brought so prominently into display — dependence, devotedness, confidence, — are those which mark the perfect Man.

They are very distinctly seen in Psalm 16, which by the Spirit of prophecy sets forth Christ in His perfections as a Man.

Having been tested by Satan, and triumphed over him in the power of the Holy Ghost, the Lord Jesus returned to Galilee to begin His public ministry in the power of the same Spirit, and His first recorded utterance is in the synagogue at Nazareth, where he had been brought up. He read the opening words of Isaiah 61, stopping at the point where the prophecy passes from the first Advent to the second. "The day of vengeance of our God" has not yet come, but by stopping at the point He did, where in our Version only a comma appears, He was able to begin His sermon by saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." It presented Him as the One anointed by the Spirit of God, in whom was to be made known to men the fulness of the grace of God.

This presentation of Himself appears to be characteristic of Luke's Gospel. Though He was God in the fulness of His Person, yet He comes before us as the dependent Man full of the Holy Ghost, speaking and acting in the power of the Spirit, and flowing over with grace for men. What struck the hearers at Nazareth was, "the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." The law of Moses had often been rehearsed within the walls of the synagogue, but never before had grace been thus proclaimed there. But it was not enough to proclaim grace in the abstract: He proceeded to illustrate grace in order that the people

might realize what it involved. He cited two instances from their own Scriptures where the kindness of God had been shown, and in both cases the recipients of the grace were sinners of the Gentiles. The Sidonian widow was in a hopeless plight—"without strength." The Syrian soldier was amongst the "enemies" of God and His people. Hence the two cases quite aptly illustrate Romans 5: 6—10, for the woman was saved and sustained, and the man was cleansed and reconciled.

This beautiful presentation of grace in its practical working did not suit the people of Nazareth. Gracious words were all very nice in the abstract, but the moment they realized that grace presupposes nothing but demerit in those who receive it, they rose up in proud rebellion and great fury, and would have slain Jesus had He not passed from their midst. The good things that grace brings were acceptable enough, but they did not want them on the ground of grace, since it assumed they were no better than Gentile sinners. The modern mind would probably approve of grace being offered in the slum, while regarding it as an affront if preached in the synagogue. The Jewish mind would not even hear of it being exercised in the slum!

Thus in a very definite way there was a rejection of grace the very first time it was proclaimed, and this not in Jerusalem among scribes and Pharisees but in the humbler parts of Galilee in the very place where He had been brought up. Their

familiarity with Him acted as a veil upon their hearts.

In the light of all this the closing section of the chapter is very beautiful. When men offer a kindness in the spirit of grace and it is spurned with contumely and violence they are offended, and turn away with disgust. It was not so with Jesus. If it had been so, where should we have been? He withdrew Himself from Nazareth but passed to Capernaum and there He preached. His teaching astonished them, doubtless because of the new note of grace that characterized it, and then also because of the Divine authority with which it was clothed.

In the synagogue He came into conflict with the powers of darkness. The synagogue was a dead affair, hence men possessed by demons could be present undetected. But instantly the Lord appeared the demon revealed himself, and also showed that he knew who He was, even if the people themselves were in ignorance. Jesus was indeed the Holy One of God, but instead of accepting the demon's testimony He rebuked him and cast him out of his victim. Thus He proved the power of His word.

In verse 36 we have both authority and power, the latter word meaning dynamic force. In verse 32 the word is really authority. So we have the **grace** of His word in verse 22, followed by the **authority** of His word, and the **power** of His word. No wonder that folk were saying, "What a word is this!" And we, who have in this day received

the Gospel of the grace of God, have equal cause for such an ejaculation. What wonders of spiritual regeneration are being wrought by the Gospel to-day!

From the synagogue He passed to the home of Simon in which disease was holding sway. It vanished at His word. And then at eventide came that marvellous display of the power of God in the fulness of grace. All kinds of diseases and miseries were brought into his presence, and there was deliverance for all. "He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them." Thus He exemplified the grace of God, for it is exactly the character of grace to go out to all irrespective of merit or demerit. On God's side it is offered freely and for all. Verse 40 inspired the hymn,

"At even when the sun was set,"

and surely we all rejoice to sing that,

"Thy touch has till its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall."

But beautiful as that hymn is, the reality spoken of in verse 40 is far more lovely. Such is the grace of our God.

And the grace that was displayed on that memorable evening was not exhausted by the display. He went forth elsewhere to preach the kingdom of God—a kingdom to be established not on the basis of the works of the law but on the basis which would be laid by grace as the fruit of His own work.

A CONTRAST.

The law of Moses and the grace of Christ **stand** in very sharp contrast, and this may be very clearly seen if we cite two scriptures, printing in capitals the words which reveal it.

"Now therefore, **IF YE WILL OBEY** My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, **THEN YE SHALL BE** a peculiar treasure unto **ME . . .** and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19: 5, 6).

"But **YE ARE** a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; **THAT YE SHOULD** shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2: 9).

Under the law everything was hinged upon Israel's obedience. "If ye will obey . . . then ye shall be . . ." They never did **obey**, and hence they never **were** that peculiar treasure, that kingdom of priests, that holy nation. We are no better than they. Were we under law, the same disaster would follow.

Under grace everything is hinged upon what God makes us to be. "Ye are . . . that ye should . . ." What **we do** springs from what **God has done**; and what He does, is done thoroughly and for ever.

However, someone may urge that though we are the chosen of God we are not always showing forth His praises, and that is sadly true. But then we need another scripture, which we also print with certain words in capitals.

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, **THAT YE MAY BE** a new lump, **AS YE ARE** unleavened" (1 Cor. 5: 7).

If failure comes in with the Christian it is because of the allowance of some defiling thing, and that defilement is to be purged out of his life. But that cleansing—whether it be an act of the church as at Corinth, or a process in the life of an individual believer—is to be effected, "that ye may be . . . as ye are."

There is **what we are** according to the grace of God, and our business is, not to make ourselves anything, but to be consistent with what grace has made us.

"THOU ART . . . THOU SHALT BE"

IV. JOHN 21.

IT was right that Simon and his brethren should be in Galilee, for the Lord had told them that

He would meet them there. But for a wise purpose, which I think unfolds as the story is told, He had kept them waiting. This waiting time was the testing time, and Simon, the old Simon, could not stand the test: he did not like to be kept waiting.

Years before, he and his brother and the sons of Zebedee had forsaken their nets at the word of their Lord, but someone had taken care of them and carefully stored them away, and perhaps while rummaging about on an idle day, Simon had discovered them and the love of his old calling came strong upon him. Then there was his wife and may-be several healthy children, and his mother-in-law—certainly there was his mother-in-law, who possibly had never agreed to his giving up his lucrative toil and following a penniless Master—they must live, he could not see them wanting bread; and the Lord had not appeared as they had hoped. Out with the nets. "I go a fishing." Ah, Simon, "Thou art Simon!" His brethren were caught in the same mood, and seven of them launched their boat and spread their sails and cast their nets, **"and that night they caught nothing."**

I do not suppose that they had lost their old skill with the nets, or that the fish were less numerous than before. I think we must recognise

the fact that the Lord was behind the scenes, the Lord of land and sea. We read "on this wise shewed He Himself to them." and this night of useless toil was a necessary background for this shewing. He controls the circumstances of His chosen servants, and He controlled the fish that night. He had not given up Simon, even though Simon seemed to have abandoned his commission and drifted back to his old life. "Thou shalt be" was still the Lord's purpose for him, and in the journey from "Thou art" to "thou shalt be" he had to learn wholly to trust his Lord.

"But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." Who can tell the compassion with which He looked upon those seven men, and Simon in particular. He had died for them to make them His own, and His purpose was to change them all from their native instability and distrust of God, into men who would face foes and death for His sake and never doubt Him again. So His voice sounded over the water. "Children." It was a term of endearment, such as He might have used to a band of irresponsible lads. "Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him. No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." If His servants needed food, He had but to speak the word and the fish of the sea hastened to obey their Creator, and this was the truth that the Lord would teach these men.

"That disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is **the Lord.**" Who else could act and speak like that! Who else could mingle infinite compassion and almighty power in the same voice but He? "It is the Lord." They had to learn the meaning of that great title, and we need to understand it too. Neither Simon nor we can be what He would make us unless we come under His Lordship, His authority, His administration. It is as our Lord that He moulds us to His gracious will, and on our part that surely means subjection to Him.

It is good to see Simon Peter's eagerness to reach the presence of his Lord; he was a forgiven man, and "blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." It is the grace that forgives that bows the heart in grateful adoration at the Lord's feet. Simon had been forgiven much and "to whom much is forgiven the same loveth much." And there is good hope for the man who eagerly seeks and truly loves the presence of the Lord, for it is in His presence that the transforming work goes on.

Every detail in the record is deeply interesting and instructive. The Lord was shewing Himself to His disciples, and they would never forget the sight. He did it. He had gathered the charcoal and kindled a fire for them, for the night winds had been cold on the lake. He had gathered fish and bread and prepared their breakfast, for the night's cold had sharpened their appetites; He banished

all their fear of Him by His tender words "Come and dine," and made them perfectly at home by waiting on them. He was their servant. It is as clear as can be that He wanted them to understand that death and resurrection had not changed Him. He had said to them on the night before His crucifixion, "I am among you as he that serveth." Many times He had been up before them and prepared their breakfast; He was still their servant, considering them, anticipating their needs and providing abundantly for them. The whole town of Tiberias would benefit by that morning's great catch for those one hundred and fifty-three great fishes would be duly distributed, but they, His brethren, His disciples, feasted with Him and were served by Him. Thus He shewed Himself to them, and the record of it is given that we might believe, and blessed is he that has not seen yet has believed.

"So when they had dined," their needs all graciously and fully met, "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" The Lord called him by his own natural name. He seemed to go back to the very beginning to shew Simon that what he was naturally was no fit material for what he was to be. It was Simon's confidence in himself that had been the cause of all the trouble, that was the root that had to be dragged into the light and discerned and judged. Simon, the son of Jonas, had boasted that though all forsook the Lord he would stand by Him, and Simon, the son of Jonas, had thrice

denied that he ever knew Him. For his own sake, for his brethren's sake, and for ours, the Lord did not spare him. Three times the sharp knife probed right down to the spring of evil within him, but the hand that used the knife was moved by a heart that loved too well to allow His servant to continue in a false way, and He knew well how to heal the wound. Simon reached the full judgment of himself when he cried "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." How good it is that we have to do with One who knows all things.

Then Simon's commission was publicly restored to him and confirmed. The Lord could trust the man who at last distrusted himself; He could trust him with that which is most precious to Him on earth, His lambs and His sheep—His flock, for which He gave His life. And the Lord assured him that His purpose for him would not fail, and even his own desires should be realized. He would honour his Lord and be honoured himself to a martyr's death. Yet he needed that word, "Follow Me." Only as he travelled with the Lord could he be safe; only in his Master's company, and dependent upon Him, would he be preserved from Simon the son of Jonas. And what was true of him is true for us.

With foes and snares around us
And lusts and fears within
The grace that sought and found us
Alone can keep us clean."

And hope to see further how Peter reacted to all the work of the Lord.

J. T. MAWSON.

FALLEN AWAY

HEBREWS 6.

IN a Sussex cottage an aged Christian was bemoaning her spiritual state. She had lost all her happy feelings, and feared she had fallen away beyond all hope of recovery, like those described in Hebrews 6.

Her conscience accused her of declining from the Lord's ways, and she sorrowed almost to despair as she dwelt upon the statement in verse eight, "That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Let us try to help her.

You say you are a backslider, and that your case is hopeless. Do you really think a backslider cannot be restored?

No, indeed, she replies with a shake of the head, for we had a prayer-meeting the other evening in the village chapel to pray that backsliders may repent of their ways and turn again to the Lord.

If Hebrews 6 refers to a backslider, such a meeting would be useless.

Why do you say that?

Because that chapter tells us that it is **impossible to renew them again to repentance**—that is, the individuals of whom the chapter speaks.

Eh! I never thought of those words. What, then, does the chapter mean?

Clearly not what you have hitherto believed.

For is it not true that you gather from it that a true believer may be lost after all?

Does it not teach that?

I will answer you by asking another question. Can God lie, or His Word contradict itself?

Of course not.

Turn then to a plain positive statement in John 5: 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Again, "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish" (John 10: 28).

What does God say here about those who hear and believe?

That they have **everlasting life**.

What does Christ say of His sheep in John 10?

They shall never perish.

How then can the end of such be "to be burned"?

I begin to see that those verses in Hebrews 6 cannot refer to a true believer, but I am quite at a loss to understand what is really meant.

That is because you do not see that all the things named there may be true of a mere professor. The Apostle was writing to Hebrews who professed to embrace the Christian faith, and he warned them as to the result of apostatizing from it.

What is the meaning of apostasy?

It is a wilful, deliberate giving up of Christianity, and in their case a going back to Judaism.

But surely "once enlightened" means more than profession?

When the sun rises the earth is enlightened. Light shines where darkness reigned. Just so when Jesus, the true Light, came into the world, He shone for every one. But all who saw Jesus were not truly converted.

But how could they taste the "heavenly gift" and be made "partakers of the Holy Ghost," and the "good word of God"?

God has given two great gifts; first of all He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He also sent forth the Holy Ghost, not to condemn the Jews for crucifying Jesus, but to announce full forgiveness.

The "good word of God" was the gracious announcement that instead of wrath there was mercy for those who had betrayed and murdered their Messiah. This message was first of all to be proclaimed in Jerusalem and to the people who had said, "His blood be on us and on our children." It was indeed a "good word," and many of them had "tasted" both it and the gracious influence of the heavenly gift. But a thing may be tasted and yet refused. Many enjoy hearing a loving gospel who have never been truly converted. It is those who **eat** the flesh and **drink** the blood of the Son of Man who have eternal life.

But how can we be "partakers of the Holy Ghost" and yet not be truly saved?

Just as everybody partakes of the air which sur-

rounds us and basks in the rays of the sun. When the Holy Spirit came down He shed an atmosphere of blessing all round. These Hebrews were "partakers" of the gracious effects of His presence, but not a word is said about their having been "born again." Nor is there a word about their being children of God and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, or that their sins were forgiven. The verse simply shows that Christianity brings blessings which even a mere professor may taste and partake of, and especially in those early days.

What is meant by the "powers of the world to come"?

The "world to come" was an expression well understood by the Hebrews, and refers to the millennial reign of Christ, when miracles shall be wrought for the healing and blessing of the nations. You remember how miracles were wrought by the apostles, and the sick were brought so that even their shadow might fall upon them. These are samples of "the powers of the world to come." Those miraculous acts were a little foretaste of that age when sickness and suffering shall be banished under the benign reign of Christ.

Do you mean to say these expressions refer to Hebrews who made a profession of following Christ and who might fall away if persecution arose like the stony-ground hearer of Matt. 13: 21?

Yes, but now let me ask you a question. Do you actually intend to do despite to the Spirit of grace and trample under foot the Son of God, and give up the glorious blessings the Spirit of God is dis-

pensing? In other words, are you going to give up Christ and say the Jews were right in crucifying Him?

Give Him up! No; my fear is He has given me up because of my unfaithfulness. My one grief is that I have wandered so far away, and I am full of sorrow when I think of my ingratitude to Him in return for all His love to me.

The Corinthians had sinned, but they had not renounced Christianity, and had not apostatized like those spoken of here. So, sorrow with a godly sorrow and repenting truly, God graciously forgave even the worst man among them, and restored him to Himself and His people.

Do you really mean to say that Hebrews 6 and 10 do not refer to one in my state?

Yes; the very fact of your sorrowing for your sin is a proof they do not, for how could you sorrow for sin if you could not be renewed to repentance?

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Again, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If you have wandered from God, now seek to find out **how**, **when**, and **where** the first declension set in, confess it to God, judge it in yourself, but do not imagine that your case is hopeless, for God's Word says there is mercy for those who confess and forsake their sin. So clearly the scriptures which have troubled you are not applicable

to your case, but refer to a mere professor renouncing Christianity and going back to Judaism.

H.N.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

(DANIEL 9: 24—27)

THIS is a most outstanding and unique prophecy in the Bible—**unique**, because it does not come in the first place from the pen of an inspired writer, but from the mouth of the angel Gabriel; **unique** because it concerns a great stretch of time; **unique** because it points to an exact date. Indeed it stands in vivid contrast to the second coming of our Lord, of which we are told no man, neither the angels, nor the Son, know the day and hour when it will occur, whilst Gabriel's prophecy tells us the time when the Lord Jesus should die,—“be cut off, but not for Himself” (Daniel 9: 26).

It is no wonder that Higher Critics and Modernists, generally unconverted men, should strive to prove that the Book of Daniel was written after the events. But only the blind, and often the wilfully blind, can be deceived by their sophistries; Sir Robert Anderson has replied vigorously, and pulverised their attack in his book, bearing the felicitous title, “**Daniel in the Critics Den.**” Certainly Daniel had the best of it in the lion's den in his day, and his critics were devoured, when they were thrown into the den into which their

devilish machinations had thrown Daniel. It reminds us of another incident occurring about that time, when Haman erected gallows, fifty cubits high, on which to hang Mordecai, who had excited his anger, but in result was hanged on it himself.

This notable prophecy of Gabriel's tells us when the prophecy dates from, viz., "the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9: 25). Here we have a date which we are able to fix with certainty. This is stated in Nehemiah 2: 1, as occurring in the month Nisan, answering to our April/May, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes. Then we have indicated the date when Messiah should be cut off, but not for Himself, viz., after 69 weeks from the date of the commandment to rebuild the city.

It is evident the seventy weeks are not literal weeks when one considers all that is to happen within them, viz., "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (verse 24). Also we have one striking instance in Scripture where a day stands for a year. See Ezekiel 4: 5 and 6—"I have appointed thee each day for a year."

Treating Gabriel's prophecy in this way, we find sixty-nine weeks have to elapse between the building of the wall in Jerusalem and the death of our Lord. Counting a year for a day, 69 weeks =

483 years. The prophetic year is made up of 360 days, so $483 \text{ years} \times 360 = 173,880 \text{ days}$, and that answers to the 10th day of the month Nisan in the 18th year of Tiberius Caesar, the Roman Emperor, and is the very day when our Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass's colt, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9: 9.

So it was possible for a godly Jew to anticipate the approximate time when our Lord should be born, and still more accurately when He should die. Isaiah 53: 8 indicates His dying in early years when the question is asked, "Who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living"; and in Psalm 102: 24 in the cry, "O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days." We know that the riding into Jerusalem occurred but a very few days before our Lord's death by crucifixion.

This accounts for sixty-nine out of the seventy weeks of Gabriel's prophecy. Why should the seventy weeks be broken up into sixty-nine weeks and then the seventieth week by itself?

Let us follow up the prophecy, and see what it tells us. It was under the Roman power that our Lord was crucified. So the prophecy tells us "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." When Jerusalem should be destroyed the prince should not have arrived, but it should be his people, that is the Roman people, who would do this.

Our Lord Himself most vividly prophesied the same event, which was to be God's judgment on His ancient people for the cutting off of their Messiah, the rejection of His beloved Son. This is very significantly set forth in our Lord's parable of the householder and his vinepress, how the husbandmen stoning and killing his servants, he last of all sent his son, saying, "They will reverence my son," and how when that occurred "they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him," and how nothing was left but to "miserably destroy those wicked men," and "let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." This was all fulfilled when Titus, the son of the Emperor Vespasian (A.D. 70), marched against Jerusalem, besieged it, destroying "the city and the sanctuary," and in time scattering the residue of the Jews among the nations.

But according to Daniel 9: 27 we have to wait for the advent of "the prince that shall come." He is to "confirm the covenant for one week," that is seven years, and in the midst of the week break his covenant with the Jews, treat it as "a scrap of paper," causing the sacrifice to cease, and setting up "the abomination of desolation" in the Temple to which our Lord refers in Matthew 24: 15 as "spoken of by Daniel the prophet." When that takes place the "great tribulation," the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30: 7) will occur.

So the angel Gabriel gives us, **firstly**, the start of the seventy weeks, the going forth of the com-

mandment to build the wall of Jerusalem; **secondly** the termination of the sixty-nine weeks as the time of the crucifixion of our Lord; **thirdly**, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (A.D. 70); **fourthly**, the beginning of the 70th week, viz., when the Head of the revived Roman Empire will make a treaty with the Jew in the land, with the Antichrist, the second beast of the revelation—the first being the Head of the Revived Roman Empire; **fifthly**, the breaking of this treaty, and the outbreak of the Great Tribulation, bringing things to the end, when our Lord shall appear, putting down all opposition, and, **sixthly**, setting up His glorious Kingdom on the earth.

Finally we have often heard it said there must be three-and-a-half years, or at the most seven years between the Rapture of the saints, and the Appearing—the coming of the Lord **for** His people, and His coming **with** them to set up His Kingdom on earth. This, however, if dogmatically stated, rests on a misunderstanding of Gabriel's prophecy. The prophecy tells us that the last "week," ending in the coming of the Lord to reign upon the earth, will not begin till the covenant is made between the Head of the Roman Empire and the Jews in the land. Have we any light when this will take place? We read in Revelation 16: 16 that the gathering together in view of the battle of Armageddon will take place under the sixth vial—the description of which is given in Revelation 19: 11—21. So we gather that the seven seals, providential judgment on the earth, must first run their

course, and the most of the trumpets and vials, for it is only when we come to the sixth trumpet that we find the preparation for a great battle, the number of the horsemen being the staggering number of 200,000,000; and in the sixth vial when "the way of the Kings of the east might be prepared."

When the predicted covenant for seven years is made, then and not till then will the godly Jew be able to know how long it will be before the longed for deliverance will arrive, though even then the day and hour will not be known.

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 5: 1 — 6: 49).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

IN the fourth chapter we saw the Lord Jesus coming forth in the power of the Spirit to announce the grace of God, and being confronted at once with man's rejection. We saw that nevertheless He pursued His way of grace unmoved by it. Chapter 5 now presents us with a series of lovely pictures, illustrating what grace accomplishes in the case of those who receive it. Four men come before us — Peter, the leper, the paralytic, Levi — and a different feature marks each. They follow one another in an order which is moral, if not strictly chronological.

Both Matthew and Mark tell us how the Lord called the four fishermen to be His followers, but only Luke informs us as to the miraculous draught of fishes, which made so profound an impression upon Peter. The Lord had used his boat and would not be his debtor, but grace it was that poured so abundant a recompense back upon him. It was made the more striking by the fact that they had just been spending a laborious and wholly fruitless night. Now there was not merely abundance but super-abundance. Where futile labour had abounded, there rich results did much more abound. The only breakdown was in connection with their ability to conserve what grace gave.

Peter's boat went out twice into the lake, once by night, when fish might be expected, once by day when they would not be. The place was the same on both occasions, so were the men, and so was their equipment. What made the difference? One thing, and one thing only. **Christ had stepped into the boat.** Peter had his eyes opened to see this fact, and it evidently made the Saviour shine before him in a light that was Divine. Finding himself in the presence of God, even though it was God present in the fulness of grace, wrought in Peter's heart conviction of his own sinfulness.

Now this is the first thing that grace brings with it—conviction of sin. It produces it in deeper measure than ever did the law, and it attracts while producing it. Herein lies the wonderful contrast. The law of Moses, when given at Sinai, wrought

conviction of unfitness on the part of the people, but it repelled them and sent them afar off from the burning mountain. Grace in the person of Jesus so convicted Peter that he confessed himself to be full of sin, and yet casting himself at Jesus' knees, he got as near to the Saviour as ever he could.

The next incident, fittingly enough, is about a man, not exactly full of sin, but full of leprosy, which is a type of sin. So full of leprosy was he that he felt himself to be too repulsive an object to count with confidence upon the kindness of Jesus. He was confident of His power but rather dubious as to His grace. So he approached with the words, "If Thou wilt . . ." revealing himself to be wholly filled with leprosy and partly filled with doubt. The grace of the Lord instantly rose to its full height. All power was in His word, yet He put forth His hand and touched him, as if to wipe out of his mind for ever the last lingering doubt and set him perfectly at ease.

Now here we see that grace brings cleansing, a cleansing which the law did not bring though it made provision for the recognition by the priests of any cleansing which should be at any time effected by the power of God. Here was the power of God at work in the fulness of grace, and it was a lovely sight indeed! We do not wonder that great crowds came together to hear and be healed, as verse 15 records.

Do not miss verse 16. Jesus has taken the place

of Man in dependence upon God, acting by the power of the Spirit. Grace has been freely flowing from Him, and He takes time for communion in prayer, withdrawn from the haunts of men, before further coming into contact with human need.

Next comes the case of the man smitten by paralysis and reduced to a state of utter helplessness. Nothing is said as to his faith, though striking and energetic faith was displayed by the men who brought him, and the Lord abundantly answered it. The Pharisees and doctors of the law, who were present, fill in a kind of dark background to the picture. They had plenty of needs and the power of the Lord was present to heal them, since grace brings its ample supplies freely and for all. They were present however to give and not to receive. What they gave was criticism, and it proved to be wrong! They flung out their criticisms and missed the blessing.

The man got the blessing—power was conferred upon him. This was just what he needed. The man full of sin not only needs cleansing from his sin but also power over his sin, and he needs that power in connection with forgiveness. Evidently in the case of this man his paralysis was the result of his sin, and the Lord dealt with the **root** of the trouble before addressing Himself to the **fruit**. This is the way that grace ever takes, for there is never anything superficial about its methods. The criticising Pharisees could no more deliver the man's body from the grip of paralysis than they could deliver

his soul from the guilt of his sins. Jesus could do both: and He proved His power to accomplish the wonder of forgiveness, which was outside human observation, by performing the wonder of healing right before their eyes.

The Pharisees were quite right in believing that **no one save God can forgive**. But when they heard Him give absolution they denounced Him as a **blasphemer**. We deduce from it that **He is God**. We each have to face this crisp and clear-cut alternative, and happy for us it is if we have made the right decision. The healing the man received was given in God-like fashion. He rose up a strong man, able to shoulder his couch at once and march off to his house. He did so glorifying God, and the beholders were moved in the same way. Grace, when displayed, does lead to the glory of God.

In the fourth place Levi comes upon the scene, and he illustrates the fact that grace supplies an Object for the heart. When Jesus called him he was occupied in the pleasant task of receiving money. His mind and heart was instantly diverted from his money and he began to follow the Lord, with the result that we next see him reversing the process, and dispersing by giving to the poor according to Psalm 112: 9. Levi invited a great company of publicans and others to his feast, showing how at once his thoughts had been brought into concert with his newly found Lord, and that he had caught the spirit of grace. Yet Christ was the real Object of the feast, for it says,

“Levi **made Him** a great feast in his own house.” The Pharisees were entirely out of sympathy with this spirit of grace, but their objections only served to bring forth the great saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

All that we have been saying might be summarized in this:—Grace **produces conviction of sin**, and then **works cleansing from sin**. Then it **confers power**, and also **conforms the recipient to the likeness of the One in whom it is expressed**. Christ becoming Levi's Object, we can see how he began to catch the spirit of his Master.

From verse 33, and onwards into chapter 6, another thing begins to emerge pretty clearly; and that is that grace **conducts out of bondage and into liberty**. The Pharisees disliked grace and were very strong as to the fastings and prayers and other ceremonies prescribed by the law. The law generates bondage and grace brings liberty: this is taught very fully in the Epistle to the Galatians. The full truth expounded there could not be made known until the death and resurrection of Christ were accomplished and the Spirit had been given, still here we find the Lord beginning to speak of the things so soon to shine forth clearly. He uses parabolic or illustrative language, but His meaning is clear. Being the true Messiah, He was the “Bridegroom,” and His presence with His disciples forbade their being under these restrictions.

Then, further, He was introducing that which was **new**. In Him the grace of God was beginning

to shine out, and like a piece of new cloth it could not be treated as a patch to be put on the old garment of the law. The new will impose such a strain upon the old fabric that it will tear, and also there will be no suitability between the new and the old. They will prove to be wholly incongruous.

Again, changing the figure, grace with its expansiveness may be likened to the action of new wine; whereas the forms and ordinances of the law are marked by the rigidity of old bottles. If the attempt is made to confine the one within the other, disaster is certain. New vessels must be found capable of containing the new power.

In this striking way did the Lord indicate that the grace of God, which had arrived in Himself, would create its own new conditions, and that the "carnal ordinances" instituted in Israel under the law were only "imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9: 10). But at the same time He indicated that men naturally prefer law to grace—the old wine suits them better than the new. One great reason for this is that by the very fact of giving the law to men it is supposed that they may be capable of keeping it; whereas grace is proffered upon the assured basis that man is a hopelessly lost creature.

As we open chapter 6, we see the Pharisees and scribes attempting to confine the actions of the disciples, and then also the gracious power of the Lord, within the limits of the Jewish sabbath, as they were accustomed to enforce it. This illustrates

His teaching at the close of chapter 5, and in result the "bottle" of the Jewish sabbath burst, and grace flows forth in spite of them.

The words, "The second sabbath after the first," refer we believe to Leviticus 23: 9—14, and are intended to show us that the "wave-sheaf" had already been offered, and hence there was no objection to the action of the disciples except the Pharisees' own strict enforcement of the sabbath. The Lord's answer to their objection was twofold: first, His position; second, His Person.

His **position** was analogous to that of David when he went into the house of God and took the shewbread. David was God's anointed king and yet rejected, and it was not the mind of God that His anointed with his followers should starve in order to uphold small technicalities of the law. The whole system of Israel was out of course by the refusal of the king, and it was no time for concentrating upon the smaller details of the law. So here, the Pharisees were concerned about trivialities whilst rejecting the Christ.

Verse 5 emphasizes His **Person**. Man, as originally created, was made lord over the earthly creation. The Son of Man is Lord over a far wider sphere. He was not bound by the sabbath, the sabbath was at His disposal. Who then is this Son of Man? That was what the Pharisees did not know, but the Lord indicated His greatness by this claim which He made.

The incident concerning the man with the

withered hand follows in verses 6—11. Here again the sabbath question came up, and the Pharisees would have pushed their technical objections to the length of forbidding the exercise of mercy on that day. Here we see, not the assertion of the Lord's position, nor of His Person, but of His **power**. He had power to heal in grace, and that power He exercised whether they liked it or not. He accepted their challenge, and making the man stand forth in the midst, He healed him in the most public way possible. The lords of the Philistines attempted to tie the hands of Samson with "seven green withs," but they tried in vain. The lords of Israel were trying to make cords from the law of the sabbath, wherewith to tie the gracious hands of Jesus, and they also tried in vain.

Failing to do it, they were filled with madness, and they began to plot His death. In the face of their rising hatred Jesus retired into the solitude of communion with God. In the last chapter we saw Him retiring for prayer when multitudes thronged Him and success seemed to be His. He does just the same when dark clouds of opposition seem to surround Him. In all circumstances prayer was the resource of the perfect Man.

It is significant further that what followed this night of prayer was the selection of the twelve men who were to be sent forth as Apostles. Amongst the twelve was Judas Iscariot, and why he should have been included appears to us mysterious. The Lord chose him however, and thus his selection

was right. No mistake was made after that night of prayer.

From verse 17 to the end of the chapter we get a record of the instruction which He gave to His disciples, and especially to these twelve men. We may give a general summary of His utterances by saying that He instructed them as to the character that would be produced in them by the grace of God that He was making known. The discourse much resembles the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5—7, but the occasion appears to have been different. No doubt the Lord again and again said very similar things to varying crowds of people.

On this occasion the Lord addressed His disciples personally. In Matthew He described a certain class, and says that **theirs** is the kingdom. Here He says, "**yours** is the kingdom," identifying that class with the disciples. His disciples were the poor, the hungry, the weepers, those hated and reproached. A description such as this shows that already He was treating His own rejection as a certainty, and the succeeding verses (24—26) show that He was dividing the people into two classes. There were those identified with Himself, sharing His sorrows, and those who were of the world and sharing its transient joys. Upon the head of the one class He called down a blessing: upon the head of the other a woe. This of course involved a tremendous paradox. The sad and rejected are the blessed: the glad and the popular are under judgment. But the one follow

in the footsteps of the Son of Man and suffer for His sake: the other follow in the way of the false prophets.

Having thus pronounced a blessing upon His disciples, He gives them instructions which, if carried out, would mean that they reflected His own spirit of grace. He does not actually send them for the moment, but He instructs them in view of their going out to represent Him and to serve His interests. The spirit of grace is specially marked in verses 27—38. The love that can go forth and even embrace an enemy is not human but Divine: whereas any sinner can love the one who loves him. The disciple of Jesus is to be a lover, a blessing, a giver; and on the other hand he is not to be one who judges and condemns. This does not mean that a disciple is to have no powers of sound judgment and discrimination, but it does mean that he is not to be characterized by the censorious spirit that is quick to impute wrong motives and thus judge other people.

These instructions were exactly fitted to those who were called to follow Christ during His sojourn upon earth. The spirit of them equally applies to those called to follow Him during His absence in heaven. This is the day of grace, in which the Gospel of grace is being preached, and it is therefore of the utmost importance that we should be marked by the spirit of grace. How often, alas, has our conduct belied the cause with which we are identified. A great deal of gracious

preaching can be totally nullified by a little ungracious practising on the part of the preacher or his friends. By the manifestation of love we prove ourselves to be the true children of God—the God who is “kind to the unthankful and to the evil.”

It is not so easy to discern the sequence of the teaching contained in verses 39—49, but a sequence there undoubtedly is. These disciples were to be sent forth as apostles before long, so they must be **seeing** persons themselves. If they were to be seeing they must be **taught**; and for that they must take the humble place at the feet of their Master. They were not above Him: He was above them, and the goal set before them was to be like Him. He was perfection, and when their “college course” was completed they would be as **He is**.

That this might be so, a spirit of **self-judgment** is to be cultivated. Our natural tendency is to judge others and perceive their smallest faults. If we judge ourselves we may discover some very substantial faults. And faithfully judging ourselves we may be able eventually to help others.

From verse 43 the outward profession of discipleship is contemplated. The Lord may have had such an one as Judas specially in view, in speaking thus. Amongst those who took the place of being His disciples there might be found “an evil man,” as well as “a good man.” They are to be discerned by their fruits, seen in both speech and action. Nature is revealed in fruit. We can-

not penetrate the secrets of nature either in a tree or in a man, but we can easily and correctly deduce the nature from the fruit.

This leads to the consideration that mere profession counts for nothing. Men may repeatedly call Jesus their Lord, but if there is no obedience to His word, there is no discipleship that He acknowledges. The kind of foundation that cannot be shaken under the testings is only laid by **obedience**. The mere hearing of His word apart from obedience may erect an edifice which looks like the real thing; but it means disaster in the day of testing.

Let us all bring ourselves under the searching power of this word. The truest believer needs to face it, and not one of us can escape it. It applies to the whole circle of truth. Nothing is really and solidly ours until we yield to it the obedience of faith—not only the **assent** of faith, but the **OBE-DIENCE** of faith. Then, and only then, we become established in it, in such a way that we are “founded upon a rock.”

These words of our Lord uncover for us, without a doubt, the secret of many a tragic collapse as regards their testimony, on the part of true believers; as also collapse and abandonment of the profession of discipleship on the part of those who have taken it up without any reality.

Reality is that, which above all things, the Lord must have.

THE LORD'S COMING EXPLAINED

HAVE you ever given serious thought to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Sometimes it has been spoken of as a subject of no practical use, and only fit for idle minds to speculate about. But that way of looking at the matter is, to say the least, exceedingly irreverent. Surely no truth, much less one holding so conspicuous a place as this in the pages of Holy Scripture, should be treated in such a fashion. It is a great mistake, involving serious spiritual loss; for the expectation of the Lord's return stirs up the holiest affections of the soul, powerfully influences the Christian's life, and ever urges him forward in the path of earnest and laborious service for Christ.

In speaking of the Lord's coming, let it be understood that I am not referring to the end of the world, nor even to His coming in judgment, though the hour shall yet dawn when He will take in hand that very solemn work. For it is written, that God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13: 31). The very day for that momentous event is thus seen to be fixed, and

the Judge appointed, who, when He comes to begin that dread assize, shall be attended by His mighty angels, and be clothed in flaming fire. The issue of that judgment is also declared in awe-inspiring terms—vengeance and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord — in view of which men might well quake, and their hearts fail them for fear (2 Thess. 1: 7, 9).

But assuredly the appearing of Christ in these connections is not the Church's hope. It is included in the testimony we have to bear; for He commanded us, says Peter, "to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10: 42). That side, then, of God's message must not be held back if we would be faithful witnesses. Judgment, however, strictly speaking, has nothing to say to the Church. She is the Bride of the Lamb, the object of Christ's profoundest love, and for her He gave Himself. How, then, should she ever be called into judgment? Moreover, He Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and exhausted the wrath due to them. Surely that great and glorious atonement shelters the individual believer, and answers every charge that could be laid at his door. And if it be said that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, still it is both clear and certain that when the saint stands there, washed from his sins in the Saviour's precious blood, it will not be to answer for the sins for which Jesus Himself has answered. He will stand there to hear the Lord's unerring judgment

on his pathway here, and to receive from His hand some gracious token of His approbation in reference to anything, however small, that he might have done or suffered for His name's sake while on earth. It will repay the reader to refer, if possible, before proceeding further, to Mark 9: 41; 2 Timothy 4: 8; Revelation 2: 17.

The coming of the Lord of which we speak is distinct from and precedes all this. It is set before us, in 1 Thessalonians 4: 16—18, in these words: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Consider for a moment the passage we have just quoted. Here the personal descent of the Lord is declared. He comes from heaven, but **not** to earth. With archangel's voice and trump of God He comes, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. That almighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself is displayed in calling out of their graves **the dead in Christ**. Then the living ones—all believers—shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and shall be for ever with Him.

What an astonishing statement! Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and the far-off islands of the sea, bereft, in a moment of time, of every living person who has faith in Christ! There shall not be found

at that hour, among earth's teeming population, one solitary individual who has come under the shelter of that precious blood. All will be gone—all of them shall have been caught up to meet the Lord.

“Impossible,” do you say? Nay, for with God nothing is impossible. “Enoch was translated that he should not see death,” and Elijah passed up in a chariot of fire, and the same power that caught them away will catch the Church away when the hour comes.

When the Church is thus translated to heaven, the Spirit of God will begin to act on others according to the counsels of God. Let men talk as they may about the Eastern question, the Jew must go back to his ancient land, and the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be fulfilled. Then, too, shall those who have deliberately refused the gospel and the truth of God be given over to believe a lie (2 Thess. 2: 11, 12). But I confine myself now to that which awaits the Christian—the Church's hope—even the coming of the Lord to receive us unto Himself, that we may be for ever with Him.

It has been often remarked that the coming of the Lord is spoken of in every chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. In alluding to their conversion, the Apostle Paul tells us how they turned to God from idols to **serve** the living and true God; and **to wait** for His Son from heaven,

whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, our Deliverer from coming wrath (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10). Had you lived in those days in the city of Thessalonica, and had asked any of Paul's converts what they were looking for, you would have been told that they were expecting the Son of God from heaven. They may not have been able to tell you much about it, but for that one great event they looked. Details, about which they needed light, are found in chapter 4, and are recorded there for our instruction as well as for theirs. And these details are prefaced in the most solemn way by the words, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord."

Does the same hope animate us to-day? Are we really living in the expectation of the Lord's return? Probably many of our readers, perhaps most of them, hold fast to the Lord's coming as a truth of Scripture. It is quite possible to do this without the heart being in an expectant state. The mind may be greatly enlightened, and the affections remain all the while perfectly dormant. But do you long to see the Saviour's face? Do you mourn His absence? If we were more with Him in spirit—eating Him and living by Him, as it is put in John 6: 57—we certainly should more earnestly desire to be with Him above. Any lack on this side is indicative of the low state of our spiritual affections, enfeebled and benumbed as, alas! they often are by the want of communion with Christ.

And if we believe the Lord may come at any

moment to call "His own" away, how earnestly shall we labour for the salvation of others, knowing that the same event that shall consummate our happiness will seal the doom of the Christ-rejecter. They shall be given over to believe a lie. Little do the unsaved, who live in lands where the Bible is circulated, and the gospel freely preached, reflect on the fearful goal towards which they are hurrying by leaps and bounds. But **we** know it, and **we** believe that the Master of the house ere long will rise and shut to the door (Luke 13: 25). Oh, that our hearts may be rightly balanced in view of these approaching events! On the one hand may we be able to say, out of the fulness of our hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus"; and, on the other, in earnest, beseeching accents, call on men to come and take the water of life freely (Rev. 22: 17).

W.B.

"THOU ART...THOU SHALT BE"

V. JOHN 21: 15—19.

THE restoration of Simon Peter to full communion with his Master, and the renewal and extension of his commission, is full of instruction, and opens up a view of the Lord that appeals to the heart. Simon had to learn that what he was,—"thou art"—could only hinder the Lord and mar whatever service he could do for Him. His confidence in himself had to be broken, and he de-

livered from Simon. So strong was his belief in himself that there was only one way by which this could be effected, and that was by a great and surprising fall. So Satan's desire to have him and sift him was granted, and he did the sifting thoroughly.

Never could he have had a greater hope of frustrating the Lord's intentions than when he took Simon in hand, but the intercession of the Lord was ahead of him, and more powerful to preserve the faith of Simon than Satan's efforts to destroy it. Let us be greatly encouraged as we consider it, for the Lord's love and care for us are not less than they were for Simon. The result of Satan's activities was that the chaff of Simon's self-confidence disappeared and the wheat of his faith remained; yet what faith remained must have been feeble, and he a broken and discouraged man. Nothing could avail for him and strengthen his faith, so that the "thou shalt be" might become a reality, and that he might be Cephas—a rock, but fresh revelations of the Lord to his soul.

How wonderful was the Lord's way with him. He was his first thought on the resurrection morning, and the only one of the disciples to be distinguished by name. When the women arrived at the grave of the Lord they found a young man sitting there in white garments—an angel from heaven. He was waiting for them to give them a special message. "Go your way," said he, "and tell His disciples and **Peter.**" We are sure that Simon felt

that he had forfeited all right to be called a disciple and in this it is probable that his brethren agreed with him, but he was still **Peter**. On this glorious resurrection morning, it was not his failure but the Lord's purpose that rang out in the angel's words. But what could be the full meaning of the angel's words? What did he know about Peter? Angels are but messengers, that is what "angel" means; they do not act on their own initiative, they obey the commands of the Lord. Then He must have instructed this young man in white to distinguish Peter in this way. Most certainly, and the message must have been to him like the first flush of dawn after a long and dreary night.

The angels of the Lord care for the disciples of the Lord, they are evidently interested in them by name, in Simon and in you and me. I have no doubt that they marvel at the love of their Lord for such as we are, and are amazed that we should ever turn from Him to other things, and backslide, as, alas, we are so prone to do. Great lessons they must also learn of His grace as He heals the backsliding and restores the penitent to the joy of His salvation. The master of a great house may have thoughts and interests of which his servants know nothing, but if a child of the house is dangerously ill, or has strayed away from home, then if they are true servants and the master a true master they are all deeply concerned. So I believe it is with the Lord and His angels, they are affected by the Lord's interest in His own.

The message of the angel and Lord's own secret interview with Simon had restored his confidence in the Lord; he knew that he was forgiven, his sin had been blotted out, but something more was needed. The word speaks of forgiveness on confession, but it also speaks of His "being faithful to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 9). Simon's self-confidence was unrighteousness, the root of his failure, and with this the Lord had to deal. It was His words that brought about this cleansing.

The Lord did not speak of Simon's denial, that was a closed chapter, closed by the Lord and never to be opened by Him again, but He did search into the very depths of his heart. The thrice repeated question, "Lovest thou Me" was needed, and Peter, brought at last to the end of his boasting and to a true judgment of himself, finds relief in the Lord's omniscience and grace. "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"Lovest thou Me" was the supreme question for Simon, and is for us all. Whatever else there may be, if this is wanting, all is wrong. "I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" were the Lord's stern words to a church that in all outward respects seemed to be a pattern to others. "Remember . . . and repent." His love is a jealous love: He can brook no rival. "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters,

yea, **and his own life also**, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14: 26). It was really self-love that had been Simon's undoing. What a splendid man he had been in his own eyes; what devotion to his Lord, with courage surpassing all his brethren! But now all that lay in the dust, and Simon would have nothing hidden, he was consciously in the presence of Omniscience and cast himself wholly on the Lord.

And now the "thou shalt be" comes fully into view; the Lord can trust him. He can trust him with that for which He had laid down His life, so precious is it to Him, **His one flock**. Peter's commission is extended and increased in its responsibility and privilege as the Lord says to him, "Feed My lambs," "Tend My sheep," "Feed My sheep" (or little sheep, a term of endearment). How well, in dependence upon his Lord, Peter carried out this commission; we have only to read his Epistles in the light of this most moving interview to realize that he never forgot it, that it was ever in his mind.

But the Lord had another honour to bestow on His restored disciple, who had sincerely wished to die for his Lord; that desire should be realized. He had failed when he had attempted to follow the Lord in the energy of his own will; but when thoroughly conscious of his own incompetence to do or to be, he should both do and be, and he should die for the Lord, not for the glory of Peter, but for the glory of God.

These things are written of Simon Peter for our learning; they are written to teach us that not in our own strength and self-sufficiency can we arrive at the Lord's purpose for us, but by distrust of self and dependence on the Lord and by the constraint of His love alone.

J. T. MAWSON.

DORCAS

(ACTS 9: 36—43).

LITTLE did she think, as she performed her good works and distributed her bounty freely, that her name would appear in Holy Writ, and give a title to thousands of meetings, commonly called

Dorcas Sewing Meetings,

when Christian women come together to work for others. Evidently she blazed the trail, and gave an example followed by many others. Is this not an encouragement for us all to follow her example, in caring for others?

And further suppose the activities of sister Dorcas had never appeared in the Bible, and she had lived and died and her name forgotten on earth, the memory of her devotedness and practical sympathy with the needs of others would be just as highly appreciated by the Lord. Indeed we feel sure Dorcas did what she did as unto the Lord without any thought of making a name for herself.

If she had striven to make a name for herself, inspiration would not have put her deeds on record as we find in Acts 9.

The details are interesting and encouraging. "This woman was full of good works and alms-deeds." So great were her activities that Tabitha got a nickname—Dorcas. This means a doe or a roe. These graceful animals are very fleet of foot, so one can imagine Tabitha constantly and swiftly moving about on her errands of mercy.

She sickened and died. The disciples were so bereaved that they sent two men to Lydda where the Apostle Peter was, asking him to come without delay.

Now we have known narrow-minded brethren criticize and oppose sisters in following the good example of Dorcas. May this be a rebuke to all such. The brothers in Joppa were evidently in sympathy with the philanthropy of Dorcas. Not two sisters, but two **brothers**, went as a deputation to Peter.

And what will Peter do? Will he stand on his dignity as an Apostle of the Lord? Will he say that the Apostle, who was the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost on the great day of Pentecost, is too big a man to run after a deceased sister and a lot of weeping widows?

No, Peter stands as a rebuke to critical and unsympathetic brothers. It is a charming scene. There is Peter, the leading apostle of the twelve,

who was on the Mount of Transfiguration, the spokesman on the great day of Pentecost, in the death chamber, the widows crowding round him weeping, and showing him the coats and garments that Dorcas had made.

It is a beautiful scene, and it shines forth as one of the happiest in Peter's eventful career.

Now see him put out of the death chamber all the widows, kneel down and pray and turn to the dead body, and say, "Tabitha arise." Her eyes open on the world once more and she arises. Peter calls in the widows and presents Tabitha alive to their great joy and delight.

We think it is strikingly remarkable that God thought it well to call back Tabitha to earth, in response to the widows' tears and the Apostle's prayer, to continue her good work a little longer.

May this not be a great encouragement to Christian women everywhere? It was not mere philanthropy on the part of Dorcas, but a heart full of divine love for the Lord that caused her to become active and practical in meeting needs around her.

If this little article is the means of stirring some sisters to start such work and so become real lineal descendants of her in her work, or of some others joining up in such work already in existence, it will be amply rewarded.

Not only are there the needs of the widows and

necessitous around us, but needs in the mission field, that may well command our sympathy and practical help. In watering others we shall ourselves be watered.

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 7: 1 — 8: 40).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

LUKE has just recorded the choice by the Lord of the twelve Apostles and also the instructions

He gave them, particularly as to the gracious spirit that was to characterize them, and the reality that was to mark them. Now, as we commence chapter 7, we find that He did not immediately dispatch them on their mission but retained them in His company, that they might further learn of Himself both by His words and His actions. The sending out to serve does not come till the beginning of chapter 9.

We have already noticed how this Gospel is characterized by the unfolding of grace. Chapter 7, we see, carries on this theme by showing very strikingly the extent to which grace reaches. The blessing goes out to **the Gentile**, to **the dead**, to **the degraded**. Moreover the way in which grace is received comes very clearly to light—by **repentance** and **faith**.

The first case recorded is that of the Gentile. The centurion showed that he accepted his place among the "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2: 12), by sending the Jewish elders to intercede for him. The elders, true to their upbringing under the law, would have utterly spoiled grace by representing the centurion as worthy. His worthiness, according to them, consisted in his kindly attitude and acts towards themselves! This was quite typical of the Jewish mind. Instead of seeing how their own law condemned them, they treated it as a distinction conferred upon them, they became self-centred; they made themselves, and the treatment accorded to themselves, the criterion of others. Judged by their standards this Gentile was a **worthy** man.

The centurion himself, however, was under no illusion on the point. He confessed himself to be **unworthy**, and thus manifested the spirit of repentance. At the same time he manifested remarkable faith in the grace and power of the Lord. He held a minor position of authority in the military organization of Rome, yet his power was absolute in his own small circle. He discerned in the Lord One who wielded authority in a vastly greater domain, and he was confident that a word from Him would effect all that was needed. Our language should be similar to his. It is enough that He should "say in a word," and we need nothing beside. The faith that simply takes Him at His word, without reasonings, feelings or experiences,

is "great faith" according to our Lord. We see moreover how intimately faith and repentance are connected. They go hand in hand.

From this case we pass to that of the dead man, being carried out of Nain to the grave. Here faith is not visible at all: His compassions and His action fill the scene. Grace and authority are equally and harmoniously displayed. Divine compassion shone forth in the words, "Weep not," uttered to the sorrowing mother. His authority was displayed, in that the moment He touched the bier the whole funeral procession came to a standstill. Then His word of power brought the young man back to life.

Here is One who speaks, and the dead obey Him. "I say unto thee, Arise." Who is this "I"? We may well ask this question. The people evidently asked it, and they decided that God had raised up a great prophet in their midst, and tidings of these things reached as far as to John the Baptist in his prison. Now a question, as to who He was after all, was at that time uppermost in John's mind, so this incident as to John's messengers comes in very appropriately at this juncture.

Verses 19—35 seem to be a kind of parenthesis in which we are shown that the display of **power exercised in grace**, and not in outward pomp, is the proof of the presence of the Messiah. The messengers of John were permitted to see ample proofs

of that gracious power. They saw Him doing what Isaiah 61: 1 had said He would do. That was ample proof of who He was.

Then, turning to the people when John's messengers were gone, He pointed out that John himself, His forerunner, had not been a mere nonentity, nor had he come in pomp and luxury. His whole mission had been strictly in keeping with the character of the One whom he announced, who was infinitely great and yet come in lowly grace. He designated John as a prophet so great that there was none greater than he. This of course at once showed that when the people spoke of Christ Himself as "a great prophet" they were falling far short of the truth concerning Him.

As far as John was concerned, though so great, the one that should be least in the coming kingdom of God would be greater than he — not morally, but in the position that would be his. Morally John was very great indeed, and his testimony of such importance that men's destiny was determined by their attitude towards it. The publicans and sinners accepted it, and, thus justifying God, were led ultimately to Christ. The Pharisees and lawyers rejected it, and in due course they rejected Christ. Verse 28 can only be understood as we distinguish between that moral greatness, which depends upon a man's character, and the greatness which springs from the position into which God may be pleased to call us, which varies in different dispensations.

The Lord now gives in a striking little parable the character of the unbelieving generation that surrounded Him. They were like petulant children who were agreeable to nothing; neither the gay nor the grave would they accept. So the Jews would not bow to the searching testimony of John, nor would they rejoice in the gracious ministry of Jesus. They denounced the one as being possessed by a demon, and falsely criticized the Other. Still there were those who discerned the Divine wisdom in both testimonies, and these were the true children of wisdom.

In the incident which closes this chapter we have all this most strikingly exemplified. Simon, the Pharisee, was amongst the critics, whom nothing pleased, though he invited Jesus to a meal in his house. The poor woman of the city was one of those who justified Jesus, and thereby she proved herself to be a true child of wisdom, and also she herself was justified.

The sorrow and contrition of the woman was nothing to the proud Pharisee. Satisfied with himself he was critical of Jesus, imputing to Him the feelings which he would have entertained toward such a person. As a result he felt sure that Jesus was no prophet at all. Verse 16 has shown us that the common people at least thought that He was a prophet, and a great one; Simon had not got as far as that. They had a glimmer of light; he was totally blind, for false religion is the most blinding thing on earth. However the Lord quickly gave

Simon a sample of the mighty prophetic powers that He possessed.

Simon only "spake within himself." He **thought** that Jesus had no discernment as to the woman. The Lord at once showed him that He knew his hypocrisy, and read his secret thoughts, by propounding to him the parable of the two debtors. One debtor was involved in liabilities ten times greater than the other; yet, since neither had any assets, both were equally bankrupt. And the creditor treated them alike; there was forgiving mercy for both. This parable was intended to bring home to Simon that though his sins might be fewer than the woman's, he too was utterly insolvent and he needed forgiving mercy just as she did.

Now debtors do not usually love their creditors, yet a sense of the grace that forgives does provoke love, and even Simon could judge rightly as to this. But then, the application was easy. Simon had studiously refrained from offering the Lord the most ordinary courtesies according to the customs of those days. Neither the water for His feet, nor the kiss of welcome, nor the oil for the head had been forthcoming. He had received the Lord in a way that amounted to offering Him an insult; yet the poor woman had made up for it all in abundant measure. He had no sense of guilt, and no love for the One who came in the grace of forgiveness: she had a true and deep repentance, coupled with faith in Jesus, and a fervent love for Him.

So we see how grace flows out to the degraded, and again we see how repentance and faith go hand in hand: they are like the obverse and reverse of a single coin. The grace that flowed out to this woman is the more striking inasmuch as it reached her in a purely spiritual way. She did not come with **bodily** ills and distresses to be cured; her ills were **spiritual**; her burden was that of her sins. Grace bestowed upon her an abundant forgiveness, and Simon was plainly told that such was the case.

But the Lord did not only speak of her forgiveness to the Pharisee, He also dealt with her personally as to it. What balm for her weary spirit must have been those four words, "Thy sins are forgiven." The saints of earlier days brought the appropriate sacrifice for each trespass or sin, and then knew that the particular sin was forgiven; they hardly knew such a complete absolution as the words of Jesus gave to her. The onlookers might well ask, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" God was here in the fulness of grace in the humbled Saviour.

Not only did He **forgive**, He gave the woman the assurance of **salvation**, and also declared that **her faith** had been the means of it. Apart from this word, she might have imagined that it had been procured by her sorrow or her tears. But no: faith it is that establishes the all-essential contact with the Saviour which brings salvation. She could indeed "Go in peace," for she not only had

forgiveness, which covered all her past, but salvation, which meant a deliverance from the evil that had enslaved her. This is what grace accomplishes.

The opening verses of chapter 8, show the thorough and systematic way in which the Lord Jesus evangelized the cities and villages. He announced the kingdom of God, which involves God's authority being established and man's salvation secured through judgment. It was too early as yet for the Gospel of 1 Corinthians 15: 1—4 to be preached, though, now that we have that Gospel, we can still preach the kingdom of God in its present form. The twelve were with Him, and being trained under His eye. The other Gospels show us this, but only Luke tells us how certain women, who had experienced His delivering power, followed Him and ministered to Him of their goods. This comes in very fittingly after the story of the salvation of the sinful woman of the city.

In verses 4—15, we have the parable of the sower and its interpretation. This reveals to us **the agency** which Divine grace uses to accomplish its benign results—**the Word of God**. The **fruit** of which the parable speaks is not something which is natural to man: it is only produced by the Word, as that Word is received into prepared hearts. In our natural condition our hearts are marked by insensibility, like the hardened way-side, or they are shallow without conviction, or preoccupied with cares or pleasures. The heart

prepared like the good ground is one that has been awakened and exercised by the Holy Spirit of God. When the heart is thus made "honest," the Word is retained and treasured, and ultimately fruit is produced.

Verse 16 adds the fact that **light** as well as fruit is produced by the true reception of the Word. Every real conversion means the lighting of a fresh candle in this dark world. Now just as cares and riches and pleasures choke the word, so may some "vessel," speaking of work and daily toil, or "bed," speaking of ease, hide the candle which has been lit. Every candle lit by the reception of the Word is to be conspicuously displayed for the benefit of others. Let us all take this home to ourselves, for the fact is that if the light be really there it cannot be altogether hid, as verse 17 indicates. If year after year nothing is manifested, only one conclusion can be drawn—**there is nothing to be manifested.**

All these considerations lead us to conclude how imperative it is that we hear the Word rightly. Hence, **how** we hear is of all importance. **What** we hear is of equal importance, and this is emphasized in Mark 4: 24. If we do not hear aright we lose that which we seem to have possessed. This is stated in verse 18, and it is illustrated above, in the case of the wayside, the stony ground and the thorny ground hearers.

Verses 19--21 add a further striking fact: **if the word be rightly received it brings the recipient into**

relationship with Christ Himself. The Lord plainly shows here that the relationship He was going to acknowledge was not based upon flesh and blood, but upon spiritual realities—upon the hearing and the doing of the Word. This thought is amplified in the epistles: Paul speaking of “the hearing of faith,” (Galatians 3: 2; Romans 10: 8—17); James of the works of faith, for “faith without works is dead” (James 2: 20). If we consult Matthew and Mark we shall probably conclude that this incident, as to the Lord’s mother and brethren, did not take place exactly at this point, but Luke here again observes an order which is moral rather than historical. The Word received in faith produces fruit for God, light for men, and introduces into true relationship with Christ himself. There is a moral sequence in these things.

Now we come, verses 22—25, to the storm on the lake which was so miraculously calmed. Here again we believe we see a moral sequence. He had just pointed out that the relationship that He acknowledged had a spiritual basis, and the disciples were those who had entered into it. Now they have to discover that relationship with Him means **opposition and trouble in the world.** The water of the lake was lashed into rough waves by the power of the wind, just as Satan, who is “the prince of the power of the air,” lashes men and nations into furious opposition against Christ and all that are connected with Him. The disciples came into that particular storm because of their identification with Him.

It was for the moment a terrifying experience, but one which afterwards must have yielded them much encouragement. It served as an opportunity for Him to display His complete mastery of wind and sea, and of the power that lay behind them. At the moment the faith of the disciples was small. They were thinking of their own safety, and had as yet but little understanding of who He was. When later the Spirit was given, and they saw all things clearly, they must have marvelled at their own obtuseness, that they had so little grasped the majesty of His action. If only they had grasped it, their hearts would have been calmed, equally with the waters of the lake.

On the lake the Lord triumphed over the power of Satan working upon the elements of nature: arrived in the country of the Gadarenes He was confronted by the same power, but much more directly exercised over man by means of demons. Opposition must be expected, but the power of His word was supreme. This man presented a very extreme case of demon possession. It had existed "long time;" it endowed him with super-human strength, so that no ordinary restraints held him; it drove him into deserts and the place of death—the tombs. Moreover he was enslaved not by one demon but by many. For some reason he had become like a fortress, strongly held for Satan by a whole legion of demons; so when Jesus met him there was a trial of strength indeed.

The cry of the demon-possessed man, in which

he acknowledged Jesus as "Son of God most high," is strikingly in contrast with the exclamation of the disciples, "What manner of man is this!" The demons had no doubt as to who He was, and they knew that they had met their supreme Master, who could have banished them into "the deep," or "the abyss," with a single word. Instead He permitted them to enter into the swine. This meant deliverance for the man but disaster for the swine. Incidentally too, it must have meant degradation for the demons to change their residence from a man to a herd of pigs; and this new residence was lost to them in a few minutes as the pigs choked themselves in the lake. Satan would have drowned the great Master and His disciples in the lake but an hour or so before; actually it was the swine, of which he had taken possession by his agents, that were drowned.

Just as the wind and water had obeyed His word, so the demons had to obey. The man was completely delivered and his whole character changed. In the words, "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind," we may see a beautiful picture of what grace accomplishes for men, who to-day have been held captive by Satan's power. We may also see in this delivered man another feature which stands good for us to-day. We too are not permitted as yet to be with our Deliverer: we have to go back to our friends and show what has been wrought in us. The more complete the change wrought, as in the case of this man, the more effective is such testimony.

The testimony was lost however on the Gadarene people, who had lost their swine. Pigs they did appreciate and grace they did not appreciate, so they refused the Deliverer. Jesus accepted their refusal and returned to the other side of the lake to continue the display of His grace there.

F. B. HOLE.

YIELDED TO GOD

WE should all acknowledge without hesitation that God has a claim upon the life and service of all those who have found redemption in Christ. We feel instinctively that it is our business now to bring forth fruit unto God, and should do so even if Scripture had not definitely stated it—as it has in Romans 7: 4.

This fruit-bearing however rests upon a certain basis—death and resurrection. Romans 6 has much to say as to the death of Christ; the early verses of chapter 7 speak of His resurrection.

If we are to bring forth fruit we must be truly yielded to God. The latter part of Romans 6 deals with this, and we find that we are to yield ourselves to Him as those that are alive from the dead.

Now we are alive from the dead as those who have been identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. If He died to sin then we have died to sin: if He lives to God then we live to God; and thus we are to reckon. Our reckoning is not an imaginary process. We reckon thus because of

what God Himself has effected in the death of Christ, when "our old man" was "crucified with Him."

So, as often pointed out, the first dominant verb in Romans 6 is **knowing**. This is followed by **reckoning**, and this again by **yielding**. If we really know what God has done, and if we reckon rightly, then this yielding becomes an imperative thing; our only proper response, our intelligent service. How fully do we each recognize this?

The other day we came across an incident related in a paper written a good many years ago, which illustrates this. We therefore reproduce it.

A brilliant young man of good family, chose the law some years ago for his profession. His name was Fuller and he had splendid prospects. A plain Baptist preacher came to the place where he lived, and young Fuller went out of curiosity to hear him. He was convinced of sin, had a great struggle, then stood up and declared his purpose to live for God. He was saved, and determined to abandon the bar for the pulpit. His friends were amazed, and one of them, named Preston, went to expostulate with him.

Calling at his office, Mr. Preston began to speak with great warmth.

"Fuller," said he, "what does this mean that I hear? Are you crazy? Have you become a fanatic? Giving up your prospects at the bar, and in public life, to become a preacher? It seems impossible. Let me persuade you to act

rationally, and give up this singular, and, it seems to me, morbid purpose."

Mr. Fuller listened quietly, and then said,—

"Preston, I was living a selfish life, eager only to win success, and have a great name among men. Religion never entered my thoughts, and I was negligent of all duty to God. Suddenly my eyes opened. I discovered God's great love. I saw that Jesus Christ had left heaven, and came to earth and died, to win my love. This act has so impressed me, that as a man of honour, I can do nothing else but to love Him in return, and put my life at His service. It does not seem to me that this is irrational."

Mr. Preston was a man of tender feelings. The earnest words touched him. The conversation continued for some time, and in leaving, Preston grasped his friend's hand, and said, with utterance half-choked, "Fuller, I think you are right. You are the rational man, and we are all irrational."

Does not this incident provide us all with some food for thought, and also for some heart and conscience work beside? We believe it does.

Let us seek grace from God to believe in this rational way ourselves. It just means our answering to the apostolic exhortation, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your **reasonable** service" (Rom. 12: 1).

RETROSPECT

IN a glorious passage of Scripture, instinct with spiritual life and vigour, the great Apostle Paul wrote, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, **FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND**, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3: 13, 14). He was surely right in **forgetting** the things which were behind in his earnest desire to make speed on the bit of road immediately before him. He was like the athlete making for the goal. To be occupied with the ground over which he had travelled, instead of that which lay before him, would have been foolish in the extreme.

However, it is good to sometimes take stock of the past. The Apostle did this, on one occasion at least, in his address to the elders of Ephesus when he summoned them to meet him at Miletus on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20: 17—38).

We were at a prayer meeting to commend to the Lord a young sister, who was going forth to the mission field. It seemed a fitting opportunity to draw the attention of all, especially the young Christians, as well as for the special benefit of the young missionary, how Paul at the end of his career could speak of his past.

If Paul could speak of a retrospect covering say 40 years, we must remember that such a period of time covers over 14,600 days of 24 hours each. Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders, as to the past, might occupy a few minutes, but the time described covered over 21,000,000 minutes. It might have been very pleasant for Paul to make a speech of reminiscences, but the time and pains and efforts of the 40 years meant the output of a living **sacrifice** on the altar of God's will. It may be that we feel very heroic in a missionary meeting. We are thrilled and, under the impulse of an emotion, we imagine we could do great things for God. The test comes when day succeeds day, hour succeeds hour, when circumstances are monotonous and hum-drum. It is the little things and out-of-sight happenings that test our metal.

The road to be trodden lay before the young Christians present. Would not Paul's retrospect be superbly valuable to them, if they took serious note of it, and discovered the power of Paul's life, and sought that power in their own?

One of the speakers at the missionary gathering told of a meeting where Robert Moffatt, the celebrated African missionary, the father of David Livingstone's wife, was present. He could look back as few could. He was asked the secret of success on the mission field. His answer was, "Firstly patience; secondly patience; thirdly patience." What could his memory not have recalled in the spreading out of that advice in his long life of mis-

sionary labour.

Paul speaks of certain things that marked him in his path. Let us glance at them.

“Serving the **LORD**” marked him. He did not serve men. He did not serve himself by seeking for praise at the hands of men. He did not seek earthly gain. He said, “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20: 33). He served **the Lord**.

Humility marked him (v. 19). Paul was an outstanding man. Highly educated, marked for signal preferment in the Jewish nation, he was a man of great personality. He might have been excused, as men speak, if he had had a good opinion of himself. Yet he speaks of “serving the Lord with all humility of mind.” Humility is a fine Christian grace.

We were told that one of the enquiries of a missionary society, into the character of applicants for the mission field, was to find out if they got on with their fellow workers in the homeland. If it was found that they were easily offended, touchy if they did not get the notice taken of them that they expected, inclined to fall out with their fellow workers, they were turned down. Humility of mind would save us from such touchiness, from taking offence and the like.

What was the secret of Paul’s humility? We believe he took his measure in the presence of his Lord and Master. His Master was none less than

God manifest in the flesh, the second Person in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Yet He, who was ever in the form of God, stooped down and took upon Himself the form of a bonds slave, and could say of Himself, "I am meek and lowly of heart." Could Paul be other than humble if his soul was occupied with, and controlled by such a Master?

Perhaps one of the snares of the mission field is not putting first things first. It is often necessary in the work of the Lord among heathen tribes to reduce their language to writing, and teach the natives to read, so that they may read the Word of God. If the supreme idea in teaching them to read is not to make them "wise unto salvation," then the missionary has sunk to the level of being a mere civilising agent. The same can be said of medical missionaries. If their beneficent and admirable work has not the supreme urge of reaching souls through bodies, even as our Lord healed diseases and sicknesses and demoniacal possessions, then the medical missionary has lost his real meaning in the mission field. Our Lord said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10). He did not say that He came to heal diseases, though He healed them more than any.

What was the **testimony** of the Apostle all through his career? We are told that he preached "**repentance** toward God, and **faith** toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 21). This he did not only publicly, but he went from house to house

with this message. If this marked all Christian workers what a revival there would be of gospel interest. It is faithfulness to the fundamental message of the Gospel that the Lord looks for. Modernism and Ritualism do not breed missionaries, nor produce money to carry on the work of the Lord, in a way that firm belief in the Scriptures, and in the fundamentals of the gospel do. We believe this is a **VITAL** matter. It ought to be of the deepest concern to each one. And further the line of success in the mission field is just the same line that will bring success in the home field, in indoor and open-air work, in Sunday Schools, in Bible classes, in visiting hospitals and from house to house. Let us see to it that the message is one that God can bless.

Then Paul was **courageous**. He was told that bonds and afflictions awaited him. These things did not move him. He was ready to die like his Master. He went about testifying "the gospel of the grace of God" (verse 24); preaching "the kingdom of God" (verse 25); and declaring "all the counsel of God" (verse 27).

Then Paul could speak of his **tears**. He was no milksop nor a sentimental girl, whose tears were easily produced and as easily dried up. He was a strong man, virile, and his tears were manly. They disclosed the depths of his sympathies. They showed the deep care that he had for the work of the Lord, and for those he worked among. He served God "with many tears" (verse 19). He

could say to these Ephesian elders, "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (verse 31). Have we ever shed one tear over perishing souls? Do we **really** believe in eternal punishment? Do we **really** care for the straying sheep, or mourn over the grievous wolves that get in among the flock, doing deadly damage?

Paul was not **proud**. He was ready to work with his own hands for the necessities of life, not only for himself but for those that were with him (verse 34). Would this not be a test for many who seek to serve the Lord? Paul was no less a servant of the Lord when he was tent-making for his own support, than when there was no necessity for this.

Finally Paul **kneeled** down and **prayed** with them all. Surely he was the Mr. Greatheart of the Pilgrim's Progress.

To dwell upon his retrospect might indeed give those who are beginning to serve the Lord much direction, and stimulus in the path of service.

Finally the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a last retrospect of our lives. What will it disclose? Shall it be money-making, pleasure-loving, sinking down to mere domesticity, seeking ease that shall have to be faced? Will it be a question of quarrels, unkindness, a careless use of the tongue, that shall have to be remembered and faced? Shall it be found that we were mere doctrinaires, and not

doers of the word? Or shall there be something in our lives for Christ, for God, for eternity? God grant that it may be so.

A. J. POLLOCK.

FAITH AND ITS COUNTERFEITS

“**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.**”—ACTS 16: 31.

THE first great landmark in the history of the soul is reached, when the cry of the conscience-stricken jailer of Philippi is wrung from it: “What must I do to be saved?”

The reply is to-day, as it was of old: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou **shalt** be saved.” The words are plain, unequivocal, and it is recorded that the jailer “rejoiced, believing in God.” How, then, shall we account for the fact that the same happy result so rarely attends the preaching of our day? Why, too, is it that so few Christians, relatively, are in the enjoyment of settled peace with God? Why do many reach that state only after lengthy wanderings on rugged and devious paths, and some attain it not at all?

The causes are doubtless many and complex, and it would be no easy task to disentangle them. But in the course of nineteen centuries, it is not the way of salvation, but the method of its presentation, that has changed. And we believe that the **subjective** light in which the Gospel is freely

presented to-day—the preaching of faith, instead of Christ—has been largely instrumental in producing the present state of things.

Coin which has long been in active circulation can seldom retain a clear-cut superscription. Paul's memorable words still furnish the text for an ever-flowing stream of tracts and addresses, but there is a marked tendency to substitute "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ" for "Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST." In other words, the act of believing is too often pressed at the expense (and sometimes almost to the exclusion) of the Object of faith. The exhortation of the evangelist is, "Believe, believe"; our very hymns follow up the admonition, reminding us that—

"Nothing now remaineth but salvation to receive.
And the way to get it is—to just believe."

But in all this there is a vagueness and an indefiniteness which, to the troubled inquirer, is perplexing to the last degree. He is hampered in his search after peace, by finding that salvation by faith has become embedded in a dialect which is well-nigh unintelligible. To tell the anxious sinner that he is "just to believe" is to baffle, rather than enlighten, him. The cry of "What must I do to be saved?" gives place to the despairing: "What must I believe?" and "How may I believe?"

It may help us, therefore, to examine the true nature of faith, and its place in the conversion of the soul; and it will assist us, by clearing the ground for our inquiry, if we consider in the first place what faith is NOT.

Faith is NOT historical belief.

Let us say at once, then, and emphatically, that the saving faith of Scripture is not a mere belief of historical facts concerning Christ.

The reader who does not hold the scriptural record of Christ's life on earth, with all its miracles, and of His death and resurrection, to be as really and as properly historical as **any** event in the sphere of history is either too incompetent, or too intellectually dishonest, to express an opinion at all.

The fierce light of the criticism which for the past half-century has beaten upon the inspired records of the life of Christ has had a striking, though inevitable, effect. The profound influence of the modern historical spirit on practically every branch of human knowledge is undeniable. And just because nowhere else was critical research so actively engaged as in the study of the historical Christ, in no other direction has its effect been so clearly manifested.

Never were historical records, as such, submitted to so searching a scrutiny as the Gospels; the moral issues raised in the soul by the simple story of the life of Jesus intensified the fierceness of the onslaught. Yet never did records emerge from the ordeal in a triumph so complete. And in this connection the memorable words of John Stuart Mill, one of the most competent, if one of the bitterest, opponents of Christianity, are well worth quoting: "It is no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the

Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been super-added by the traditions of His followers."

Who, as Mill himself has asked, "is capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?" To raise the question is to answer it. Imagine that Isaac Newton never lived! Who could have conceived his thoughts, wrought his wonders? None but a Newton.

In the words of one of the ablest of recent Christian writers on this topic: "Artistic inspiration is a fine thing; but it is simply nonsense—it is no use—to say that it reached such an unheard-of height in four Jewish writers of the first century as to enable them, and all of them harmoniously, to draw from their imaginations the lines and colours, the lights and shades, of the life of the Perfect Man. But they did it. **Only one thing accounts for their being able to do it. That is simply veracity.** They had a model, and they copied it faithfully. And because, first, the model was faultless, the reproduction, being faithful, was perfect too."*

To-day the historical facts of Christ stand vindicated beyond all question; the attack, from the historical standpoint, has failed ignominiously. To re-open it now, and to commence afresh to weigh the evidence, is to demonstrate nothing save the critic's grave lack of a due historical sense. Faith in Christ, however, is not a mere belief of

*Carnegie Simpson, THE FACT OF CHRIST, p. 30.

credibly attested facts concerning Him. Such a belief faith clearly involves, but it must strike its roots much deeper. For, as the instance of Mill demonstrates, an acceptance of the Gospel narratives as historically true, is by no means inconsistent with a complete refusal of the claims of Christ Himself.

Faith is NOT a reasoning process.

It was Swift who wisely observed that when a man has been argued **into** a certain belief, it needs only sufficient argumentative skill subsequently to reason him **out** of it. How differently might many a chequered Christian experience read, if only it began with personal contact with Christ Himself—instead of with a mental persuasion, on severely logical lines, that the conditions of salvation had been complied with. It is for this reason that the preaching of salvation as conditional upon the acceptance of a reasoned formula of words, is so deeply to be regretted.

The practice has given rise to the most dangerous, because the most subtle, counterfeit of faith, and it may be helpful if we give a concrete example of its working. The inquirer is hurried through a chain of propositions, which may be reduced to a standard form:—

All have sinned; therefore, you are a sinner.
Christ died for sinners, therefore, He died for you.
And, believing this, you are saved.

The undoubted germ of truth contained by each of the statements made use of, renders it exceedingly difficult to expose the insidious evil of the

process as a whole. Scripture can be readily adduced in support of each link in the chain. It witnesses that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3: 23); that "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5: 6); and that "who-soever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3: 16).

But faith, to be a vigorous plant, must have a healthy growth (2 Thess. 1: 3); it cannot be forced. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; **and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God**" (Eph. 2: 8). And it is against the practice of working the mind mechanically through a mere syllogism, composed of statements provable from Scripture, and of pressing onwards to a purely **logical** conclusion of salvation, that a loud and solemn warning is urgently needed. Wherein lies the fundamental error of such a method? Surely it is in the underlying assumption that souls can be reasoned into salvation, without the reaching either of the conscience or the affections; and in the substitution of an introspective process of the mind for the personal dealing of the soul with Christ.

Does not the supreme danger of such a method—devoid of attraction to a personal Saviour, and therefore of stimulus for practical daily life—lie in its putting off the soul with a mere theory of salvation? And is not its outcome that "faith" which, for its practical unreality, an inspired apostle has denounced in terms of the most uncompromising sternness? (James 2: 14—16).

It is one thing to watch the lifeboat launch for practice on a summer afternoon, when the sea is like a pond; to admire the ingenuity of its latest improvements, and to accredit in an effortless and abstract way the fact that it is capable of saving life.

It is doubtless another and a very different matter to cling to the rigging of a sinking wreck, when the wintry sea is running mountains high; to watch the wave-crest, and to **believe** that here at length is your one hope of safety. The one case calls for mental assent to a fact; the other demands active faith in the rescuers.

Here we reach the crux of the whole question. **Scripture nowhere states that the sinner is saved by believing in a doctrine of justification by faith.** Salvation is to be found, not in a doctrine or a creed, but in a Person — the Lord Jesus Christ. **“Through this Man** is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by **Him** all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13: 38, 39). **“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4: 12).

Why, then, has the quest of peace in the history of so many of us remained so long a fruitless one? How many an anxious soul has been urged through a series of propositions of the kind we have mentioned, which proved **logically** enough that the conditions of salvation had been fulfilled! But when the process was completed, the soul was still

in the Slough of Despond; not one cloud had lifted; the joy and peace of believing seemed as far as ever away.

What remained to be done? Tract after tract was read to solve the difficulty. Often it seemed that you were nearing the goal, and that the next sentence, the next page, would yield the secret of settled peace with God. Or you eagerly listened, week after week, month after month, to the exhortations of the preacher. You have hung upon his lips as he dealt with assurance of salvation, in the hope that the next word would supply the long-sought clue, and set your doubts at rest for ever. But the end of the tract or the Gospel address was reached, and you were still unrewarded!

Why did the answer never come? Because the search was a mistaken one. Your soul has all this time been thrown back upon itself and its experiences. You felt that if only your faith were stronger, or if only its sufficiency could be evidenced by some mystic, inward rapture of the soul, all would be well. It is easy thus unconsciously to exalt faith to the position of the Saviour ; to subject it daily to a close scrutiny, watching its fluctuations with unwearying concern, and forgetting that Scripture deals, not with its quantity, but its **quality** (Mark II: 22). The result is only too often that sheer preoccupation with faith in the abstract, is the one insuperable obstacle in the way of the soul's personal contact with Him who alone "satisfieth the longing soul"

(Psalm 107: 9). Truly, indeed, can many of us say—

“I sighed for rest and happiness,
I yearned for **them**, not Thee.
But while I passed my Saviour by,
His love laid hold on me.”

The search for “rest and happiness” was foredoomed to failure, just because causes alone produce effects. Why, then, did He allow you these weary months, or even years, of dismay and unrest? The search for “the Philosopher’s Stone” failed simply because the stone was non-existent; yet it resulted incidentally in other discoveries of great practical importance. And the fruitless quest of peace outside of Christ, has graven deeply on many a heart the priceless lesson that—

“None but Christ can satisfy.”

In the higher mathematics there are some propositions which do not admit of direct proof. But they are not readily recognizable, and it is usually only when he finds that the customary methods of analysis are inadmissible, and one after another break down, that the mathematician is led to adopt, as a final expedient, what is known as “proof by induction.” In the history of the soul, when peace has been sought on every side in vain, then, and often not till then, is the sinner ready to utter the cry of Job—so despairing and yet so swift to meet its answer: “Oh, that I knew where I might find—HIM!” (Job 23: 3).

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 8: 41 — 10: 16).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

THE disciples had witnessed the triumph of their Lord over opposition both on the lake and in the Gadarene country, they were now to see further triumphs on the Capernaum side of the sea. The underworld of demons had owned His power as well as the elements of nature: now disease and death are to yield in His presence. It is worthy of note that the one who approached the Lord first was not the first to receive the blessing.

Jairus was a representative son of Israel; death was invading his house, and he appealed to the Lord, meeting with an immediate response. On the way Jesus was intercepted by this unnamed woman suffering from an incurable disease. Her touch of faith brought her instant healing. Though later in coming and irregular in her proceedings she was the first to experience the delivering grace of the Lord. We may trace here an analogy with the present ways of God. While still He is on the way to raise up to life and blessing the "daughter of Israel" others, and those mainly Gentiles, are giving the touch of faith and getting the blessing.

It was only **a touch**, and it was only **the hem** of His garment, yet the blessing was hers in full

measure—thus illustrating the fact that the measure of our faith does not determine the measure of the blessing that grace bestows—for she was **perfectly healed**. We also see that a touch in itself brought nothing, for Peter's word of remonstrance showed that many had for various reasons been brought into contact with Him. Only the touch of faith counted. In other words, **faith** was the all-essential thing, and **that** we may exercise to-day, though the touch of faith can now only be given spiritually and not physically.

By His questions Jesus brought the woman to the point of confession. In accord with the spirit of the Gospel the faith of her heart had to be followed by the confession of her lips, and that brought her an accession of blessing, for she got the words, "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." Apart from that word her mind might have been overshadowed by the dread of the recurrence of her plague. Her faith, expressed in the touch, brought the healing; but her confession brought forth the word of assurance that set her mind at ease. How many there may be to-day who lack the full assurance of salvation because they have lacked courage to confess fully His Name.

At that moment came the news of the death of the damsel, and this furnished a fresh opportunity for the importance of faith to be emphasized. To men death is the dispeller of every hope; yet the word of Jesus was, "Fear not: believe only." To her parents and friends it was death, but it was

only sleep to Him: yet the very unbelief of those who bewailed her enables us to see that she really was dead, as we speak. The mocking unbelievers were all put out and only a few who believed saw His work of power. At His word her spirit came again and she was restored to life.

The charge "that they should tell no man what was done" was entirely contrary to all human ideas. Men love notoriety, but not so the Lord. He wrought to make God known, and only faith understood His works, and was confirmed thereby.

The disciples had now had full opportunity of learning their Master's spirit and methods and power; so they were sent forth, and verses 1--6 of chapter 9 tell us how they were commissioned. "Then He **called** . . . and **gave** . . . He **sent** . . . He **said**" The order of the four verbs is very instructive. His is the choice and not ours. But then He not only calls but also gives the authority and power adequate for the service to which He calls. Not until that power is given does He send. And then in sending He gives the specific instructions that are to control and guide them in their service. The instructions He gave them were exactly suited to men who were sent to support the testimony rendered by the Messiah, the Son of Man, present personally on the earth.

The testimony we are called upon to render to-day is not that, but rather to the Christ who is risen and glorified on high; still any service we can render is subject to just the same conditions. He

must call and send. If He calls any of us He will give the power and grace that is needed for the work; and when sent we too must be careful to observe the instructions that He has left us.

The disciples went forth with the power of their Lord behind them, and the testimony thus being multiplied the attention of even an ungodly monarch like Herod was drawn to the Lord. The great question was, "Who is this?" The people asked it and indulged in speculations. Herod asked it with an uneasy mind, for he had already beheaded John. His wish to see Jesus was fulfilled, but hardly in the way he had anticipated—see 23: 8—11.

All details of the disciples' mission are passed over in silence. In verse 10 it is recorded that they returned and told their Master all that they had done, and He took them aside in private. Thus it will be for all of us when we reach Him at His coming. That will mean being manifested before His judgment seat; and it will be in the privacy and rest of His presence.

On this occasion there was very little rest for Him. Desert place though it was, the people flocked after Him, and He turned no one away. He received, He spoke of the kingdom of God, He healed and, when the evening drew on and they were hungry, He fed them.

The disciples were like ourselves: they had much to learn. In spite of having been sent forth

as His messengers they had no adequate sense of His power and sufficiency, and hence they judged as to the difficult situation in the light of their own powers and resources instead of judging everything by Him. When He said to them, "Give ye them to eat," they thought of their loaves and fishes—pitifully few and small. They might have said, "Lord, it is to Thee we look: we will gladly **give them all that Thou dost give to us.**"

How easily we can see what they might have said, and yet fail in just the same way as they did! We have to learn that if He commands, He enables. He did enable on this occasion, and the disciples were employed in dispensing His bounty. Thus they were instructed as to the fulness of supply that was in Him.

Before multiplying the loaves and fishes Jesus looked up to heaven, thus publicly connecting His action with God. In verse 18 we again find Him in private prayer, thus expressing the dependent place which He had taken in Manhood. The grace was the grace of God, though flowing to men in Him.

Having given His disciples this glimpse of His fulness, He warned them of His approaching rejection, and of its results as far as they were concerned. The people were still completely in the dark as to who He was, but Peter—and doubtless the other disciples too—knew that He was God's Christ, or Messiah. This confession of Peter's was met by the Lord's command to tell no man that

thing. This injunction must have been a great surprise to them, as up to this point the joyful tidings that they had found the Messiah must have been the chief item of their testimony. Now however the moment had arrived for them to know that what lay before Him was not the earthly glory of the Messiah but death and resurrection. In breaking the news of this the Lord spoke of Himself as the Son of Man—a title with wider implications. The Messiah is to rule over Israel and the nations, according to Psalm 2: the Son of Man is to have all things under His feet, according to Psalm 8.

In speaking of Himself in this way, the Lord was beginning to lead their thoughts toward the new developments that were impending, though not as yet unfolding what the developments were. Still He did intimate very plainly to them that if death lay before Him, it would also lie before them. This surely is the significance of the words, "deny himself, and take up his cross daily." To deny oneself is to accept death inwardly—death lying upon the motions of one's own will. To take up one's cross daily is to accept death outwardly, for if the world saw a man carrying his cross it knew him to be under its sentence of death.

Verses 24—26 amplify this thought. There is life according to the reckoning of this world, made up of all the things that appeal to man's natural tastes. If we seek to save that life we only lose it. The path for the disciple is to lose that life for Christ's sake, and then we save life in the proper

sense, that which is life indeed. The man of the world grasps at the life of this world and ends by losing himself; and that is loss of an irreparable and eternal kind. The disciple who loses the life of this world is no loser in the end. Verse 26 only speaks of the one who **is** ashamed. The converse however is true: the one who is **not** ashamed will be acknowledged by the Son of Man in the day of His glory.

The Lord knew that these words of His would fall as a blow upon the minds of the disciples, and therefore He at once ministered to them great encouragement, not by words so much as by giving them a sight of His glory. This was granted not to all but to the chosen three, and they could communicate it to the rest. In the transfiguration they saw the kingdom of God, since for that brief moment they were "eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1: 16). The expression the Lord used—"taste of death"—is worthy of note. It would cover not only actual dying but also the spiritual experience which He had indicated in verse 23. The same thing stands true for us in principle. It is only as we see the kingdom by faith that we are prepared to taste of death in that experimental way.

Once more we find Him praying, and it is only Luke who puts on record that the transfiguration took place as He prayed. It is a striking fact that it was the praying, dependent Man who shone forth in glory as the King. Long before this David

had said, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in fear of God" (2 Sam. 23: 3). Here we see the One who will take up the kingdom and hold it for God, ruling as the dependent Man. All the elements of the coming kingdom were there in sample form. The King Himself was manifested as the central Object. Moses and Elijah appeared from the unseen, heavenly world, representing heavenly saints who will appear with the King when He is manifested: Moses representing saints who have been raised from the dead, and Elijah those raptured to heaven without dying. Then Peter, James and John represented the saints who will be on earth, blessed in the light of His glory.

While the disciples were heavy with sleep the heavenly saints were conversing with their Lord concerning His approaching death, which is to provide the basis on which the glory must rest. Luke speaks of it as His "departure" or "exodus," for it meant His going out from the earthly order into which He had entered, and His entrance into their world by resurrection from among the dead. When the disciples did awake Peter's only thought was to perpetuate the earthly order, and keep his Master in it. He would have detained Moses and Elijah in it also, had he been permitted to make his three tabernacles. As yet he did not grasp the reality of the heavenly order of things just displayed before his eyes, and he had as yet no proper apprehension of the supreme glory of Jesus.

Hence at that moment there came the cloud—evidently the well-known cloud of the Divine pre-

sence—which overshadowed them with its brightness, and silenced them with fear. Then the Father's voice proclaimed the supreme glory of Jesus and marked Him out as the one and only Speaker to whom all are to listen. No Moses, no Elijah is for one moment to be coupled with Him. Jesus is indeed to be "found alone." Though Peter did not at that moment understand the full significance of all this, and therefore "told no man in those days," he did afterwards, as his allusion to it in his second Epistle so plainly shows. It confirmed for him, and for us, the prophetic word, giving the assurance that in anticipating "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" we are not following "cunningly devised fables" but resting in solid truth.

How great the contrast when the next day they came down from the hill! Above, all had been glory, the power and glory of Christ, with its accompanying order and peace. Below, all was under the power of Satan, with disorder and distraction. The nine disciples left at the foot of the hill had been tested by the child possessed by a particularly virulent demon, and had failed. The distracted father appealed to the Lord, though evidently with but little expectation that He could do anything. Jesus instantly acted for the child's deliverance, and "they were all amazed at the mighty power [majesty] of God." The majestic power He displayed amid the disorders at the foot of the hill was equal to the glory that had been displayed on its crest the day before.

Then once more, just when He had thus manifested His power, He spoke of His death. Said He, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." What sayings? we may ask, for Luke has not recorded any particular sayings in connection with the casting out of the unclean spirit. The words refer perhaps to the sayings on the holy mount, where His decease had been the theme. But that was the trouble with the disciples at that moment: they could not tear away their minds from expectations of an immediate kingdom on earth, so as to realize that He was about to die. The sad consequence of this is seen in verse 46.

By nature we are self-important creatures, loving prominence and greatness above all else; and the flesh in a disciple is no different from that in an unbeliever. Jesus countered the thought of their heart by the object lesson of the little child, and by words that indicated that true greatness is found where the littleness of a child is manifested, and where that "least" disciple is truly a representative of his Master. To receive an insignificant child is to receive the Divine Master, if the child comes "in My Name." The significance is in the Name, not in the child.

This episode evidently stirred John's conscience so that he mentioned a case that had occurred some time before. They had forbidden some zealous worker because "he followeth not with us." They had attached far too much importance to the "us" which, after all, is but a group of individuals each

of which is of no importance in himself. All the importance, as the Lord had just shown them, lay in the Name. Now the one who had cast out the demons—the very thing they had just failed to do—had done so “in Thy Name.” So he had **the power of the Name** and they had **the imagined importance of the “us.”** The Lord dealt gently with John yet firmly. The man was not to be forbidden. He was for the Lord and not against Him.

Luke now groups together four further incidents in the close of the chapter. It seems that the Lord having displayed to the disciples the power of His grace and of God’s kingdom, is now instructing them as to the spirit that befits them as those brought under both; and He also warns them of things which would be hindrances thereto.

The first hindrance is obviously **selfishness**. This may take an intensely **personal** form, as in verse 46. Or it may be **collective**, as in verse 49. Yet once more it may be **under cover of zeal for the Master’s reputation**, and this is the most subtle form of all. The Samaritans were wholly wrong in their attitude. But He was going up to Jerusalem to die, while James and John wished to vindicate His importance—and incidentally their own—by bringing death upon others. Elijah had indeed acted thus when confronted by the violence of an apostate king, but the Son of Man is of another spirit. That was the trouble with the disciples; they did not as yet enter into the spirit of grace—the grace that characterized their Master.

The three incidents which briefly close the chapter show us that if we would be disciples indeed, and fit for the kingdom, we must beware of mere **natural energy**. An energy which is more than natural is needed if we would follow a rejected Christ. Also there must be no **half-heartedness** and no **indecision**. The claims of the kingdom must take precedence over all else.

The disciples having been instructed in this way, the Lord still further extended the scope of the witness that had to be rendered in connection with His presence on earth, by appointing and sending forth seventy other disciples, two and two before His face. This saying as to the greatness of the harvest and the fewness of the labourers, seems, according to Matthew 9: 37, 38, to have been uttered on another occasion. There, the prayer is answered by the sending forth of the twelve: here, by the sending forth of the seventy.

The instructions which the Lord gave to the seventy are similar to those given to the twelve. There was to be the same simplicity and absence of self-seeking, the same dependence upon Himself for the supply of their needs. They had however additional warnings which indicated increasing opposition from the people. They were told they were to be as lambs amongst wolves, a very striking simile. Yet, in spite of refusal, they were to make it very plain that the kingdom had come nigh to the people.

These seventy had not the distinguished place of the twelve, but nevertheless they fully repre-

sented the Lord, as verse 16 makes manifest. This verse establishes the same principle as verse 48 of the previous chapter, only here the Lord carries the matter back to "Him that sent Me." Humble folk the seventy might be, yet much depended on the attitude of men towards their message. Capernaum and other cities of that day, having this testimony, would have greater responsibilities; and refusing it, would merit severer judgment than cities that had never had such testimony rendered to them.

F. B. HOLE.

THE TIDE OF GOD'S PURPOSE

On the far reef the breakers
Recoil in shattered foam,
Yet still the sea behind them
Urges its forces home;
Its chant of triumph surges
Through all the thunderous din—
The wave may break in failure,
But the tide is sure to win.

O mighty sea thy message
In changing spray is cast:
Within God's plans of progress
It matters not at last
How wide the shores of evil,
How strong the reefs of sin—
The wave may be defeated,
But the tide is sure to win.

(EXTRACTED).

THE SAVING FAITH OF SCRIPTURE.

(A continuation of the paper in last month's issue, entitled, "Faith and its Counterfeits").

WE pass to the consideration of the faith of which Scripture treats. Salvation comes by "believing," but when eternal issues are involved, we must not allow ourselves to be put off with mere phrases. It is because faith, as a term, recurs so constantly in the Gospel address, and because its meaning is almost invariably taken for granted, that a careful explanation, so far from being superfluous, is essential. That faith is neither a notional belief about Christ, nor the mental acceptance of a doctrine or set of facts represented as necessary to salvation, we have already seen.

How, then, **shall** we define it? Faith is a living trust in a risen Saviour. Its function is to believe **in**, and not **about**, Him—to rely on Him, to confide in Him wholly for salvation, to venture on Him, to lean hard upon His finished work. But a few striking examples of faith from Scripture itself will assist us far more than colourless definitions.

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Faith trusts God in the teeth of appearances. It was typified when, on the Passover night, the Hebrew parent slew the lamb, dipped the hyssop in its blood, and with it besprinkled the lintel and

the two side-posts of his door. The materialist dilates upon the insipidity of faith; the rationalist claims that since, without it, he can live as morally and as uprightly as those who possess it, such a line of demarcation between believer and sinner is an impossible one. The shallowest of sceptics may raise questions which the profoundest of believers finds it difficult to answer. And doubtless the blood-sprinkled lintel and its explanation excited widespread derision in Egypt on that fateful night.

But faith heeded the warning of the pending judgment, accepted the offer of salvation that accompanied it, and reposed on the Divine promise: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12: 13). And from the moment when faith had sprinkled the doorposts, in obedience to the Divine command, the safety of the first-born within was as complete as it was independent of his feelings!

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Faith reposes solely on the atoning work of Christ, and its operation is beautifully prefigured in the directions concerning the sin-offering. Before actually offering his sacrifice, the sinner was to commit an act of the deepest significance: "**He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin-offering**" (Lev. 4: 29). The act was symbolical of complete identification. It effected the transfer of the sin to the victim, and as the result, all the consequences of the offerer's guilt were borne by his offering. The lamb "without blemish" was substituted for the person of the sinful offerer, suffered

in his stead, received his deserts. So "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Can the reader say of Him, by faith—

"My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear,
When hanging on th' accursed tree,
For all **my** guilt was there"?

But stupendous as this is, it is only the very fringe of the blessings secured for faith by the death of Christ. We have to travel further.

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Faith invests the believer with all the perfect acceptance of the Saviour Himself in the sight of God. The laying of the offerer's hand on the victim's head—the distinctive act of faith—preceded also the actual offering of the **burnt** sacrifice (Lev. 1: 3, 4), and constituted them one before God, but in a sense essentially different from that attaching to the sin-offering. For the burnt sacrifice was a "voluntary" one, expressive of Christ, not as Sin-bearer, as in the former case, but as offering Himself to God for the accomplishment of His will (Heb. 10: 7, 8).

When, therefore, the offerer laid his hand on the head of his offering, they were identified in point, not of guilt, but of **acceptance**. From that moment the offerer himself ceased to be regarded; it became a question solely of the acceptance of his sacrifice by God. The offerer was contemplated only through his offering. Both were accepted, or both were refused. The mind of God concerning

both must needs be identical. The acceptance of the offerer was not only inseparable from, but co-extensive with, that of the victim, on which his hand was laid.

What shall this mean for faith to-day? Jesus lives! And "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4: 17). His work is finished. "This Man, after He had offered **one** sacrifice for sins, **for ever** sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10: 12), His present position evidencing His perfect acceptance. And the newest convert, the feeblest believer, is viewed by God in the very selfsame acceptance of Christ Himself. There can be no vestige or shadow of difference, for "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1: 6). Not less truly, then, than gladly, may we sing—

"Safe in Christ, the weakest child
Stands in all God's favour."

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Faith is the outward look of the soul to Christ. We will not presume to search for a more fitting illustration than that adopted by the Lord Himself. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **even so** must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3: 14, 15).

The longer the Israelite occupied himself with the venomous bite he had sustained the more he must have become impressed with the hopelessness of his case. Healing was concurrent with the first look **away** from self. "It came to pass that if a

serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. 21: 9). Nothing more required to be done; nothing else would suffice.

So long as the anxious sinner looks within, his despondency increases. He fears that while there may be hope for every other sinner under heaven, his own case is too hopelessly bad; he has sinned so often and so peculiarly against the light, or his repentance is not yet sufficiently real. Look away to Christ! Meditate much, not upon your own helplessness and sinfulness (which He alone fully comprehends), but on His all-sufficiency to save. Faith and self-occupation are mutually exclusive. Peace with God and spiritual progress are the result of an antecedent condition of the soul—of **"looking off unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith"** (Heb. 12: 2). It was **after** the look away from the death-stricken camp to the serpent of brass, that **"the children of Israel set forward"** (Num. 21: 10).

Above and beyond all, faith involves an absolutely individual dealing with the Saviour. "As many as touched Him were made whole" (Mark 6: 56)—and personal contact with Himself is as indispensable to-day. Luke 15 records, in words of imperishable beauty, the search for **one** lost sheep, the quest of **one** missing piece of silver, the vigil for the return of **one** prodigal. **"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me,"** says Jesus, but the swift change from plural to singular is beautiful

and significant: "And **him** that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6: 37). The Saviour has proscribed collectivism; the key-note of faith is a ringing, personal one: "The Son of God loved **me**, and gave Himself for **me**" (Gal. 2: 20).

And we trace the same personal emphasis, characteristic of faith, running through all the Christian experience of the ages that have rolled by since Paul's words were penned. "The greatest wonder in the two worlds of heaven and earth," says Spurgeon, "is this, that He loved **me**, and gave Himself for **me**." Even Calvin in his masterly commentary on the Galatians—usually so severely unemotional and theological—is strangely stirred as he pauses before this priceless gem of Scripture. Exposition becomes impossible. "No words," says he, "can properly express what this means; for who can find language to declare the excellency of the Son of God?" It is simply that He is "altogether lovely."

"The Son of God loved **me**." Faith is appropriative, muses upon His glorious titles, sets them over against the mighty stoop that love demanded. He is "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1: 15); the One whom God "hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;" "the effulgence of God's glory and the expression of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His [own] power" (Heb. 1: 2, 3). Yet He "loved **me**."

He “gave Himself for me.” The atonement was, as Dr. Chalmers has reverently put it, “a problem fit for a God.” Christ has solved it. Faith accepts the Substitute, yet stands all amazed at the sacrifice. For in Him “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3: 16). “Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief” (Isaiah 53: 10). Entering the scene of His creation in all the weakness of the Babe of Bethlehem’s manger, He left it, the Man of Sorrows, in all the humiliation of a shameful cross. God “hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5: 21). The reason?

“No victim of inferior worth
 Could ward the stroke that justice aimed;
 For none but He, in heaven or earth,
 Could offer that which justice claimed.”

Unique in His Father’s counsels of redemption, He “gave Himself for me.” It is the language of faith epitomized. Faith in Himself is all that the Saviour requires; and its very motive He supplies: “We love Him BECAUSE He first loved us.”

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Our survey must be drawn to a close, but not until we have put to the reader a question of vital importance.

On what are you resting for salvation?

Is it on the depth of your repentance, the strength of your faith, the happiness of your feelings—something, in fact, that you have done, or a

state to which your own unaided efforts have enabled you to attain? Or do you rely solely on the merits of Another, on the blood of Christ in all "its solitary dignity"? "Wilt thou bring thy cowl, thy shaven crown, thy chastity, thy works, thy poverty, thy merits?" says Luther, "Paul hath nothing in his hands but Christ!" Faith may wax and wane; feelings must fluctuate; Jesus Christ is "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And it is for a present, whole-hearted trust in Him that we plead.

But you have doubts and uncertainties? You would fain **feel** saved. Whatever the value of the thermometer, it certainly cannot affect the temperature. Turn from self to Christ. Remember that He who took your place at Calvary, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1: 3). His present exaltation witnesses both the completion of His atoning work, and the perfection of His acceptance by the Father. Surely, with Christ seated in glory, it is not assurance, but **uncertainty**, that requires an explanation. If the acceptance of the Substitute be so complete, doubt has not room to lift its head.

Is further assurance needed? Listen to God Himself inviting you to share His rest in Christ. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28: 16). The foun-

dation of redemption was laid broad and deep in the Saviour's death. His work is gloriously complete. Faith presumes not to improve upon it, seeks not to add to it, but, like the stone that the builder lays upon the foundation, rests with its undivided weight on the finished work of Christ.

Our closing counsel is, then—

“Venture on Him, venture wholly—
Let no other trust intrude.”

“For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Rom 10: 11).

E.W.T.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

IN considering the Book of Revelation it is advisable to view it in its twelve sections, and thereafter to acquaint oneself with the details of each. The sections are as follows:—

Chapter 1 contains Sections 1 and 2, the division occurring at verse 8.

Section 3 comprises chapters 2 and 3; Section 4 includes chapters 4 and 5; Section 5, chapters 6 and 7, and verse 1 of chapter 8; Section 6, chapter 8: 2, to the end of chapter 11.

Section 7 takes in chapters 12—14; Section 8, chapters 15—16; Section 9, chapters 18—19; Sec-

tion 10, chapters 19 to 21: 8; Section II, 21: 9 to 22: 5; and Section 12, 22: 6 to the end.

The opening words of the book indicate its divine title, i.e., "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," implying that instead of being an obscure book, as is often thought, it is an unveiling of "things which must shortly come to pass." Its subject is the testimony of Jesus Christ with reference to the coming kingdom.

Verse 3 of chapter 1, with its promised blessing for those who "read" ought to convey a clear message in view of present-day unrest. The word "the time is at hand" was never more true than now.

The address to the Seven Churches begins with the double blessing; "Grace and Peace"; and occurring as it does in a book of governmental dealings, it is most consolatory. Verses 5 and 6 include certain far-reaching and precious glories of Christ as "**the** faithful Witness," which reminds us of His moral glory in humiliation; as the "First begotten from the dead," indicating His pre-eminent glory among those linked up with Him in blessing; and "the Prince of the kings of the earth"—the One in whose hands God places all authority. Faithful in humiliation, He will be faithful in exaltation. The ascriptions of praise and universal dominion would indicate a wider thought than that of the Church. Not only does He put down evil and establish the kingdom at His second coming; but He is the Alpha and Omega, the Source and the End; and in His glory

the blessing of the heavenly and earthly people is wrapt up. So we come to the end of the first section.

The Revelation to John was given evidently in one day; and the instructions "to write" show that he had no monopoly of the revelation. The fact that he heard the voice behind may indicate that his attention (like that of those on the Emmaus road) had been directed in one direction—towards the Kingdom promises. Now his attention is directed to the seven golden lamp stands, figures of the Church according to the divine pattern in its original brightness as a light-bearer for Christ, inasmuch as Church history is to precede the establishment of the Kingdom in power. The dignified features and characteristics of the Son of Man in the midst of the lampstands would show that judgment begins at the House of God, and that the Judge whose eyes are a flame of fire scrutinizes all action, and judges according to motive.

In verses 17—18 He is seen as the risen Man, not only as the Master of the universe, but as having authority over the seen and the unseen. How blessed to hear such an One say to His own, "Fear not" — especially in view of the terrible events to come.

The divinely given title of this book has already been noted: its division is also of divine arrangement. The first part of verse 19 corresponds to chapter 1; the middle part to chapters 2 and 3; and the last part to chapters 4 to 22 inclusive.

The "stars" speak in a figurative way of reflected light seen in a dark place; they are held in the right hand of Him who has said, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

The second and third chapters of the book give a prophetic outline of Church history from shortly after Pentecost to the Rapture, the Church being viewed not as the Body of Christ or as His Bride, but as the witness-bearer. The conditions found in these seven churches may of course be characteristic of individual assemblies to-day.

The first, Ephesus, corresponds to the period from Pentecost to the end of the first century. The presentation of the Son of Man as holding the seven stars shows the power available in testimony, while "walketh" indicates that He is acquainted with all that goes on. Verses 2—3 describe their orthodoxy: they are characterised by order and correctness in ecclesiastical matters; but He "whose eyes are as flame of fire" penetrates externals and discerns motives, showing that the motive of all true service and true church order is love to Christ. "Remember therefore" reminds us of the early apostolic days; and the difference here in the Lord's estimate is very great. Further, if judgment be threatened, the word "quickly" ought to be deleted, as judgment is His strange work. In the word to the overcomer the tree of life is mentioned, speaking to us of Christ in resurrection glory, while eating implies intimacy and communion. The word Ephesus means "desire."

BE OF GOOD COURAGE

WITH the storm at its height, and the darkness intense, with cargo and furniture overboard, and all hope gone, the voice of Paul, the captive was heard, "Be of good courage" (Acts 27: 22, N.Tr.).

When we find the passage rough, and our visible resources small in this dark world, we might well give up all hope, but for God, whose we are, and whom we serve, who is not unseen to faith and says, "Fear not."

Paul's words in that dark hour on the storm-tossed vessel distinguished him as one in touch with God, trusting Him, even though deliverance then meant facing Nero afterwards. May this cheer us, who are sailing across the stormy sea of life, for as Paul must stand before Nero, so we must testify to the world, that God sent His Son, to be its Saviour.

We need not try to escape the trials, as the sailors did (see verse 30), for "God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion" (2 Tim. 1: 7, N.Tr.). Let our testimony of our Lord be enhanced by this strong, yet discreet, spirit. Nor should we be cowards, who serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, while we are longing for "the day" when dangers will be past, we need not starve. Paul gave thanks and they took food together (verse 38). The Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself to be the bread of

life. We are to feed on Him, and live by Him, and like those fearful, hungry voyagers, we may be well fed. May we feed on Christ, and be satisfied!

Panic (verse 42) we should avoid, even if things have gone to pieces, because we shall all get safe to land. This is a real thing to the believer. Storms he is sure to encounter, and Christendom, of which he is part, is a wreck, but if we belong to God, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a safe landing on the heavenly shore is guaranteed us. All got "safe to land" (verse 44).

The world is full of superstition, just like Melita, where they attributed the viper's attack to the working of Nemesis, the Greek goddess of retribution. Moreover it is as vacillating and idolatrous as the people of Melita, who seeing Paul unharmed by the viper, changed their opinion (28: 6) and said he was a god. Superstition should disappear from our lives when we are converted, and what a lot of superstition still survives in Christian lands. God will guide us when superstition will deceive us. Moreover, we are bidden, "Children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5: 21), and ordinary pastimes and entertainments can be idols in the lives of Christians, and with the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, we can be independent of the opinions of a world that is unstable at best.

At Appii Forum, and Tres Tabernae (or Three Taverns) Paul was further encouraged and had cause for thanksgiving (verse 15), because the brethren of Rome, having heard of the approach

of the beloved Apostle, had made, some a forty miles, and some, a thirty miles journey, to meet him. Let us thank God and take courage for all He gives us in fellowship together!

Arrived at Rome, and a prisoner at the Emperor's official residence, Paul called together the "chief of the Jews" (verse 17) to explain that he was a prisoner "on account of the hope of Israel"—their Messiah (verse 20). What grace upon the Apostle to minister even at Rome to the Jews, the nation that had produced such bitter enemies against him, ever since his baptism unto Christ—and now in his bonds, he would persuade them, "concerning Jesus" (verse 23).

Paul is an example of faithful service for the Lord Jesus. He taught them from "early morning to evening," and ceased not in old age. May the Lord give us good courage and also use us in His service.

E. J. GREEN.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 10: 17 — 11: 54).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

NO details are given as to what transpired during the service of the seventy, and one verse (9: 6) sufficed to sum up the earlier labours of the twelve. We note this because Luke was

chosen of God to record the doings of the disciples in the Acts; but that was after the Holy Ghost was given. Before the Spirit was given their work had much less significance, and any light there was in it was eclipsed in the shining of the perfect light in their Master. In verse 17 we pass on to their return at the end of their mission.

They came back with joy, rejoicing mainly in what was more spectacular, the subjection of even demons through the Name of their Master. Now this was indeed a great thing, and a pledge of Satan's ultimate casting out of the heavens. The allusion in verse 18 is not, we believe, to the original fall of Satan but to his final dispossession, as predicted in Revelation 12: 7—9. The past tense is often used in prophetic utterances to describe future events. It is used in those verses in Revelation, as also in Isaiah 53: 3—9. So the Lord confirmed the authority which at that moment He had given them, exerted over all the power of the enemy, but at the same time He indicated something that went beyond all power exerted upon earth.

He said to them, "Your names are written in heaven." It is more than likely that at that moment they did not appreciate the wonder of that statement. Later on they must have done so, and we should appreciate it, since it applies also to us. The figure is a simple one. Our names are enrolled in the city or district, **where we are domi-**

ciled. The Lord said to these men in effect, a heavenly citizenship is to be yours, and that is a greater cause of rejoicing than any power conferred on earth. Luke's Gospel specially gives us the transition from law to grace and from earth to heaven, and this verse is a distinct landmark on the way. It was the first intimation of the truth which comes fully to light in Philippians 3: 20, "Our conversation [commonwealth] is in heaven."

In that same hour—the hour of the rejoicing of the seventy — Jesus Himself rejoiced. He saw not only the coming fall of Satan, with the consequent overthrow of all his evil designs, but the Father's action towards the establishment of all His designs. At the basis of those bright designs lay this, that He Himself is to be perfectly revealed and known, and that "babes" rather than the wise and prudent of this world are to receive the revelation.

The Son had entered into Manhood that thus He might reveal the Father to men. And not only this, He is Himself the Heir of all things. The dependent Man on earth knew that all things had been delivered to Him of the Father. Moreover, the very fact that He had become Man adds an element in His case which defies all human grasp. He became Man that the Father might be known: as Man He is the Heir of all things: yet let no man pretend to fathom the mystery that must surround so infinite a stoop. If we esteem ourselves

to be wise and prudent we may attempt it to our own undoing. If we indeed are babes we shall accept the mystery with humble and subject minds, and rejoice rather in all that He has revealed to us of the Father and of the Father's designs.

Having thus rejoiced in His own mission, and in the grace that took up the insignificant "babes," the Lord turned to the disciples to show them the greatness of their present privilege. They were seeing things which had been the desire of the godly of past ages. They saw and heard things which had to do with the manifestation of the Father upon earth, and the doing of a work which would result in the calling of a people for heaven. All this was for the moment private to the disciples.

Publicly there was nothing but conflict. The question of the lawyer, recorded in verse 25, apparently so sincere, was really asked with an evil ulterior motive. He asked what he should do, and the Lord who knew the man's motive, took him up on the ground of his doing. It was the law that demanded doing from man: hence the Lord's question. In saying that the supreme demand of the law was for love; firstly towards God, and then towards one's neighbour, the man answered rightly. Jesus had simply to say, "This do, and thou shalt live;"—not, "have eternal life," but just, "live." There is no life for earth except the law be kept.

The lawyer set out to entrap the Lord, and now

found himself entrapped by his own answer. Desirous of justifying himself, he enquired who was his neighbour; as though he would infer that, granted he had sufficiently attractive neighbours, he would find no difficulty in loving them. This enquiry was met by the parable concerning the Samaritan, and the lawyer was left to judge who was the neighbour. Again the man answered rightly in spite of the antipathy felt by the Jew for the Samaritan. Thus judging, he answered his own question, and was left under the obligation of acting as the Samaritan on the one hand, and loving the Samaritan as himself on the other.

The teaching of this parable however goes beyond the mere answering of the man's question. In the action of the Samaritan we can see a picture of the grace that marked the coming of the Lord Himself. Priest and Levite, representatives of the law system, passed by on the other side. The law was not instituted to help sinners, much less to save them, and had the half-dead man died on their hands, both priest and Levite would have been defiled, and for a time disqualified from the exercise of their office. Like the Samaritan, Jesus was the rejected One, and yet He was the Minister of grace and salvation. If in verse 20 we see the transition from earth to heaven intimated, in this parable we see intimated the transition from law to grace.

In the light of this it is also plain that the Lord Jesus was the best and truest Neighbour that man

ever had—the perfect Neighbour, in fact. He was also God, perfectly revealed and known. In Him God and the Neighbour were united, and in hating and rejecting Him, men broke at once and hopelessly both counts of the law.

But not all rejected Him: some received Him. And so there follows, in the end of this chapter and the early part of chapter 11, very happy intimations of the ways in which such are put into touch with Him. There is the virtue of **His word**, there is **prayer**, and the coming gift of the **Holy Spirit**.

Mary had discovered the power of His word. It opened to her a door of entrance into the thoughts of God, so she sat at His feet and listened. It would seem that, in serving, Martha was only doing the duty that rightly belonged to her. Her trouble was in aiming at **much** serving: she wished to do the thing in very special style, and this “cumbered” or “distracted” her. Her distraction was such that she spoke in a way that was an aspersion not only on her sister but on the Lord. Mary, she thought, was neglecting her duty, and the Lord was indifferent to her neglect. Martha represents distraction and Mary, communion.

Martha’s distraction was the result of having too much service on hand, a thing which itself is quite good. She became careful and troubled about many things, and missed the one thing that is needful. Mary had discovered that all she could

do for the Lord was nothing compared with what He had to convey to her. To receive His word is the one thing needful, for out of that will flow all service that is acceptable to Him. It is the good part, that shall not be taken away.

We believe that much of the weakness which characterizes present-day Christians may be explained by this one word—**distraction**. So many things from all quarters, and often enough harmless in themselves, are presented to us that we are distracted from the one thing of importance. We may not always be careful and troubled about them; we may be merely fascinated and occupied with them. But the result is the same: the one thing is missed. Then we are losers indeed.

Once again (11: 1) we find the Lord in prayer, and this awakened in His disciples a desire to be taught to pray. As yet they did not possess the Spirit as we do to-day, and hence "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20), and the help and intercession of the Spirit, of which Romans 8: 26, 27, speaks, could not be known by them as we may know it. At this period the Lord was their "Comforter" and Guide from without: we have "another Comforter," who is within. In response, the Lord gave them the pattern prayer, and added to it an illustration to enforce the need for importunity. If a man will rise at the midnight hour at the earnest solicitation of a friend, we may well come with confidence to God.

The Lord had instructed His disciples to address God as Father and the assurances He gave in verse 10 fit in with this, as also the statements of verses 11—13. The Father in heaven is not to be conceived of as less interested and considerate than an earthly father. He will not give that which is useless or harmful in answer to requests for necessary food. Nor, we may add, will He give what is useless or harmful if we foolishly desire it and ask for it. Many an unanswered prayer is, no doubt, accounted for by this.

Man in his evil condition knows how to give good gifts to his children; the heavenly Father will give to those who ask Him the greatest of all gifts—the Holy Spirit. Here we see the Lord in His teaching leading on to the developments that were soon to come. The Holy Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified, as we know from John 7: 39; but when He was given, He came upon a band of men and women who were continuing in prayer and supplication, as Acts 1: 14 records. We live in the day when the Spirit has been given; and so we may rejoice in the fruit of His presence, as well as in the power of the Word of God and of prayer.

In the next paragraph (14—28) we get the definite rejection of the grace displayed, and of the Lord Himself who displayed it; which leads the Lord to unfold the fearful result of this rejection and also to further emphasize the importance of obedience to the Word.

The dumb demon being cast out, the change in the man who had been his victim was impressive and undeniable. Many of the people however adopted the plan of vilifying what they could not deny. The remark about Beelzebub is not attributed to the Pharisees, as it is in Matthew. Doubtless they instigated it, but the common people supported them in it, as Luke records here. Others, shutting their eyes to the many signs already given, had the effrontery to demand a sign from heaven. In His reply, Jesus firstly showed that their accusation was wholly unreasonable: it involved the absurdity of Satan acting against himself. Secondly, He showed that, if true, their accusation would recoil on the head of their sons, if not on their own.

But thirdly, and this most important of all, He gave the true explanation of what He was doing. He had arrived on the scene stronger than Satan. Before His coming Satan had held his captives in an undisturbed peace. Now the stronger One was releasing these captives. His coming presented a test to all of them: they were either with Him or against Him. Not to be with Him was tantamount to being against Him, for there could be no neutrality. Men might appear to be gathering together, but if not **with Him** it would prove to be but scattering. This is a point we do well to note. There is a great urge to-day for gathering men together in all kinds of associations and groups; but if not with Christ, central and dominant, it is a process of scattering, and will ulti-

mately be manifested as such.

Verses 24—26 are evidently prophetic. At that moment the unclean spirit of their ancient idolatry had gone out of Israel, but though they were "swept and garnished" in an outward way, they were engaged in refusing the One sent of God to occupy the house. As a result the old unclean spirit would return with others worse than himself, and so their state be worse than at the beginning. This word of Jesus will be fulfilled when unbelieving Israel receives Antichrist in the last days.

Not all were refusing Him however. A woman of the company perceived something of His excellence, and pronounced His mother to be blessed. This He accepted, for the first word of His reply was, "Yea." Yet He indicated something more blessed still. The truest blessedness for us lies in the receiving and keeping of the Word of God. The spiritual link formed by the Word is more intimate and enduring than any link formed in the flesh. The Lord was leading the thoughts of His disciples to these spiritual verities, and the hearing of the Word is that good part, as we have just seen in the case of Mary.

The Lord now proceeded to speak of the insensibility that characterized the people of His day. They were asking for a sign as though no signs had been given to them. Only one sign remained for them, which He speaks of as "the sign of the prophet Jonas." Jonah preached to the Ninevites but he was also a sign to them, inasmuch as he

appeared among them as one who had come up out of what looked like certain death. The Son of Man was about to go into actual death and come forth in resurrection, and that was the greatest of all signs: moreover He was displaying among them wisdom far greater than Solomon's and His preaching went far beyond that of Jonah. Why was it that the people were not moved?

It was not because there was no light shining. Men do not light a candle in order to hide it, as verse 35 says. The Lord had come into the world as the great Light and His beams were shining upon men. What was wrong was wrong, not with the light but with the eyes of men. This is emphasized in verses 34—36. The sun is the light of our bodies objectively: but our eyes are light to us subjectively. If the sun went out, there would be universal darkness, but if my eye went out, there would be absolute darkness for me. If my spiritual seeing faculty be evil, my mind is full of darkness: if single, all is light. In other words, the state of the one upon whom the light shines is of great importance. The state of the people was wrong, hence their insensibility to the light that shone in Christ.

But, if the people did not receive the light to their blessing, the Lord at least would turn the searchlight of truth on their state. He began with the Pharisees, and the rest of the chapter gives us His indictment of them. The Pharisee who invited Him was true to type; a critic, and obsessed

with ceremonial details. The hour had struck for the critic to be criticized and exposed. Nothing could be more trenchant than the Lord's words. As we read them we may form some conception of how men will be searched in the day of judgment.

Their **hypocrisy** is the point of verses 39—41. Ostentatious cleanliness where the eyes of men reach, filthiness where they do not. And further, rabid **self-seeking** lay under their apparent piety. They were full of "ravening" or "plunder." The word, "give," in verse 41, is in contrast with this. If only they became givers, rather than plundering other people, all things would be clean to them, inside as well as outside. Such a radical change as that would imply true conversion.

Verse 42 points out their **perverted judgment**. They specialized on things that were neither important nor costly and ignored things of utmost weight. Verse 43 shows that **love of notoriety** and the adulation of men consumed them. Hence they became unsuspected **centres of defilement** for others, as verse 44 indicates. They damaged others as well as themselves. A terrible indictment indeed, but one that sadly applies in varying measures at all times to those who are exponents of a merely outward and ceremonial religion.

At this point one of the doctors of the law protested that these words were also an insult to such

as himself. This only led to the indictment being more closely pressed home against himself. These teachers of the law busied themselves with laying burdens on others. They legislated for others, and coolly **ignored the law for themselves**. Moreover they were marked by the rejection of God's word and of the prophets who brought it, though after the prophets had been killed they honoured them in building their tombs, thus hoping to gain the prestige of their names now that they were no longer tested by their words. A cunning device, that! But one not unknown even in our day. It is easy to laud to the skies a century after his death a man that would be fiercely opposed during his life of testimony. The Lord's words imply that what their fathers had done would be done again by the sons. The generation to whom He spoke were guilty not only of the blood of the former prophets, but of the Son of God Himself.

Finally, in verse 52 we find that just as the Pharisees defiled other people (verse 44) so the lawyers took away the key of knowledge, and so did Satan's work in hindering others from entering into the true knowledge of God. They **slew the prophets, and blocked the way of life**.

The Lord evidently uttered these tremendous denunciations with calmness of spirit. The best of men would have spoken differently. Hence to us comes the injunction, "Be ye angry, and sin not" (Eph. 4: 26). We easily sin in being angry against sin. He needed no such command. His opponents

thought they had but to provoke Him further and He would easily succumb. He did no such thing as they anticipated, as the next chapter shows.

F. B. HOLE.

John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. It is his place and privilege however then, as a Christian, which is spoken of, not the prophetic period into which he entered. In the day of resurrection—his own place—the day on which Christians meet, the Apostle, removed from the society of Christians, still enjoyed the special elevating power of the Holy Ghost, though alone; and is thus used of God, allowed to be banished for the purpose, for what he could not, in an ordinary way, have communicated to the assembly for its edification. The persecuting emperor little thought what he was giving us when he banished the Apostle; no more than Augustus, in his political plans as to the census of the empire, knew he was sending a poor carpenter to Bethlehem, with his espoused wife, that Christ might be born there; or the Jews and Pilate's soldiers, that they were sending the thief to heaven, when they broke his legs in heartless respect for their own superstitions or ordinances. God's ways are behind the scenes; but He moves all the scenes which He is behind. We have to learn this, and let Him work, and not think much of man's busy movements: they will accomplish God's. The rest of them all perish and disappear. We have only peacefully to do His will.

J.N.D.

“WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH.”

FAITH is being sorely tested to-day. Whichever way one looks there is room for much disquietude. If we had been told ten years ago that Germany, the home of the Reformation, the land of Martin Luther, should call upon the pastors of that land to sign a document in which Germany is put before God, nationalism before Christ, and a dictator's edicts before the Bible, and submit to state dictation of a pagan nature, in order to retain their posts, we should have said it was not possible. Yet, so it is.

And what is the result? Many pastors have taken firm ground. Many are in prison for refusing to conform to a pagan state. The persecution has indeed outwitted itself, in that it has driven these pastors and many in their congregations to the conviction that their faith is worth standing up for, and if necessary to die for. Many have swung from modernism to fundamentalism. Persecution is vivifying and purifying the Church.

News comes from Mexico, that if a missionary, say of American or British nationality, leaves the country on furlough he is not allowed to return.

They are bent on strangling Protestant missions in that land.

Italy is using repressive measures to make gospel effort in that land more and more difficult. She thrusts Protestant missionaries out of Abyssinia with scant courtesy.

Russia—holy Russia as she was called—is dominated by an anti-God campaign.

And what shall we say of heathendom, enslaving millions in its terrible grasp, India, China, Japan, Central Africa, the Sudan, and many other lands?

When we come to the homeland, we find modernism sapping the faith and vigour of gospel effort at home and abroad. Two or three out of every hundred alone darken the door of church, chapel or meeting room, and many alas! of this small minority are mere formalists. Worldliness marks the profession of Christianity. Sin is ignored. Hell is a myth in the judgment of many.

Well might the Lord, with prophetic gaze, looking down the centuries, exclaim,

"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18: 8).

In answering the demand of the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God should come, our Lord referred to ancient history.

Look at the days of Noah. Things were pretty bad. Who paid any attention to this preacher of righteousness as he implemented his preaching by an outward and visible sign, even the building of the ark on dry land, far removed from the waters of sea or lake? Scripture tells us eight alone out of all the population of the world availed themselves of the ark, and millions perished in the waters of judgment. Our Lord also referred to Sodom and Lot. How many of the guilty cities of the plain escaped the fiery tempest? Only four persons; indeed only three, for Lot's wife became a pillar of salt.

It will be thus when the Son of Man comes.

What then is our remedy? Our Lord tells us—“to **pray** and not to faint” (Luke 18: 1). We must keep up our link with God. Prayer is the antidote to fainting. Do we faint? We do not pray. Do we pray? We do not faint. Prayer, linking up with God and heaven, is our great resource.

Our Lord stressed **importunity**. He instanced in parable the case of a judge, who feared not God, nor regarded man—a judge you see again and again delineated in the pages of Josephus, the Historian of the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus—a judge without principle or compassion.

A widow pleads her case, a woman bereft of her natural supporter. Who cares for a widow?—her influence is nil, and the judge cares not one straw

that her adversary should have justice meted out to him.

But she persevered in importunity, and at last the judge gave her what she wanted and what justice demanded, not because of equity, but simply to escape her importunities. They wearied him, and he would fain be free of what wearied him, and for his own ease, and not justice, did he at last act, and so the widow won the day.

So graciously does the Lord exhort to importunity in prayer in these days of difficulty. It is evident the Son of Man must take up the reins of government. God doubtless is allowing evil to come to a head, so that the day may be hastened when the prophecy shall be fulfilled, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is: and I will give it Him" (Ezekiel 21: 27).

He will overturn all that is of evil and sin, rebellion and lawlessness. "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come" (Haggai 2: 6, 7).

What a day that will be when the Son of man cometh! There may be widespread declension on every hand; the apostasy is surely well on its way. Faith must cling all the more to God. Things are surely moving towards the time when the Son of man shall come.

And before the Son of man comes to take His rightful place in this world, He shall come into the air to call His own to glory, and the cheering word to us is, "Behold, I come quickly," and the exhortation is, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." May the hope cheer us, and the exhortation find us paying heed to it.

A. J. POLLOCK.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

SMYRNA (i.e. suffering) corresponds to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries; and serves to show how suited is the character in which Christ presents Himself to the saints of that period. To His poverty-stricken followers, threatened by death, He makes Himself known as the First and the Last, which was dead and is alive; the word of encouragement being, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Ere Satan could act, there must be divine permission—and with it divine limitation of trial—"ten days." It is well to remember in our day that these early Christians believed in the lake of fire (verse 11).

Pergamos (i.e. lofty or marriage), covering the period from the fourth to the seventh centuries, most probably represents the time when Chris-

tianity was outwardly adopted by the world power. Constantine professed conversion, and myriads became nominal Christians, an unholy alliance being formed between the Church and the World. Some church histories speak of this state as being the brightest, while in reality it was almost the worst. What hinders the individual hinders the church, and **vice versa**. Satan's seat is really Satan's throne, and at the beginning of the book the Church as a witness sadly fails, Israel is scattered and Satan is on the world's throne. At the end of the book the Church is in glory, Israel is regathered to God's earthly centre, and Satan is in the bottomless pit. Verse 14 teaches that separation from evil is God's principle for His people whether in Old or in New Testament times. Further, from verse 15, in which the Nicolaitans (i.e., conquerors of the people) are mentioned, we gather that there is no special priestly class with power to usurp authority over the rest. Manna refers to Christ in incarnation, but the "hidden manna" is Christ in glory. The communion here may refer to our learning above more of His pathway when He was here. If a black stone is a secular sign of condemnation, the white stone here is the symbol of divine approval.

Thyatira (i.e., dunghill or cesspool) covers the period of the Dark Ages, from the 7th to the 16th centuries. His title here of "Son of God" reminds us of those most blessed words, "My Church," that followed Peter's confession in Matthew 16; but how sad and searching to consider the Thya-

tira state of things. Jezebel is an evident allusion to the Papacy; and both her doctrine and her practice have brought into the Church the gravest spiritual corruption. The Word of God alone, and not the Church, is the source and authority as to teaching. There are those however who are faithful inasmuch as they have refused her doctrine and her practices: for them His coming is the only true hope.

Sardis (i.e. escape) describes the condition of the Church following the Reformation. Then was the Word of God recovered for the people, and as a result we have had an open Bible for just four centuries. But Protestantism lapsed into a state of spiritual death—with a name to live, yet dead, having works but not such as are esteemed before God. The call to remember what had been received refers among other things to the great truth of Justification by Faith. Sardis is characterised by what is nominal. In the **Lamb's** Book of Life is written the name of every believer; but in the book of life, as here, there is the record of Christian profession real and unreal. The unreal will be blotted out, the real publicly owned—not as at Pergamos privately owned.

Philadelphia (i.e., brotherly love) describes a revival period. Saints were aroused, the truth of God in great measure recovered. For such Christ is the Holy and the True, indicating that there is in Him what should find an answer in the Church. The "key of David" is earthly authority in re-

ference to Israel: but He is not dealing directly with Israel. Soon He will do so. Meantime a heavenly door of blessing is opened. Verse 8 implies allegiance to His name. Verse 9 would warn against the Judaizing of Christianity. In Matthew the Lord Jesus gives instructions for the elect of Israel during the great tribulation: protection is assured (Matthew 24: 22). This is not needed for the Church as verse 10 of our chapter shows. She shall be kept out of that hour, just as Enoch was translated before the judgment of the Flood.

To-day the Christian character is that of stranger and pilgrim. In the coming day, the overcomer is to be made a pillar (signifying prominence and permanence) in the temple of God.

Laodicea (i.e. judgment of the people) would indicate the rule of the people, a Christless period. Their lukewarm condition signifies, not a measure of love to Christ, but absolute indifference to Christ. Hence it has no reference to a believer, however feeble in his affections. What mere profession says is to be found in verse 17; but what is vital is in verse 18—the gold (divine righteousness), the white raiment (moral likeness to Christ), eyesalve (spiritual discernment). This is necessary where the indifference is such that it is not deemed necessary to contend for any Christian truth whatsoever. That state is addressed as from outside; but the individual may respond to the Lord's appeal; and Lord will meet him; and he becomes an overcomer.

THE CONSCIENCE CLEARED

Read Hebrews 10: 1—4, 11—18.

IT is of the greatest moment that we should distinguish clearly between the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, and the work and various operations of the Holy Spirit. Neither the new birth, nor the indwelling Spirit, nor any of the experiences through which the Holy Spirit may lead us, can form the basis of **peace**. I speak now, not of the peace of communion, but of the peace of salvation. There is a difference between the two. The true basis of peace with God is the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews 9 and 10 (two chapters which form one section of the epistle), the Holy Spirit brings before us with remarkable clearness and fulness the finished work of the Lord Jesus. The epistle was, of course, addressed to Hebrew Christians, but though the truth contained therein be cast in a mould eminently suited to meet the difficulties of Hebrew minds, it is a mould and form very useful to us.

Notice first of all those five words, “**no more conscience of sins.**” The worshippers, once purged, should have no more conscience of sins. Suppose one were to ask you to explain those five words, would you have any explanation to offer? It would be useful if, in our private reading of the Scriptures, when we come across a passage like this, we were to say to ourselves: “Can I explain these words in a way that would at least be satis-

factory to myself, even if it were not helpful to another?" How then would you explain, "No more conscience of sins"? Let me tell you how I should explain those five words.

Suppose there is a man here in London who finds himself in financial difficulties, and has to call his creditors together and lay before them a statement of his affairs. As a result it is seen that instead of being able to pay twenty shillings in the pound he is only able to pay five. He is an honest and upright man, and feels keenly the position in which he finds himself. The creditors can do nothing else but accept his five shillings in the pound; but though they accept it, and he is free from all legal obligations as regards the remainder, he is at times very much troubled about it. His conscience is very uneasy as to the whole matter.

In process of time that man finds himself in easy circumstances. The sun of prosperity has once more broken through the clouds and shone upon him, and he is in a position to call his former creditors together, and to say to them, "Gentlemen, you will recollect the last time we met, when I had to lay before you a statement of my affairs, and could only pay five shillings in the pound. I am glad now to be able to tell you that I am in a position to pay you the remaining fifteen shillings, with interest from that date to this," and he hands each creditor a cheque for the amount. Of course their confidence in that man is very much established. But what about the man himself? He has no more conscience as to those debts. His conscience is

now perfectly at rest. He can sleep soundly upon his bed without one disturbing thought, for all his obligations have been fully and completely met.

And has a similar thing been done in respect of our sins? Who, if I may use a figure of speech, has paid our debt? Could we ever have paid it ourselves? Could we have offered any composition at all in reference to that terrible debt? No indeed, our condition is exactly described in the parable of the creditor and the two debtors, the one owing fifty pence, and the other five hundred (see Luke 7). They had nothing wherewith to pay. They were in a state of hopeless insolvency, without one penny to pay towards the liquidation of those debts.

Who is it that has come and taken our debts upon Himself? Who is it that has paid them to the uttermost farthing? Who is it that has made an atonement for our sins, so that all the claims of divine justice are fully satisfied in respect of them? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. When I understand that, then it is that I understand the meaning of these words, "No more conscience of sins." No more an uneasy conscience in reference to the great burden of my sins. Christ has paid it all. Blessed be His dear and holy name!

Do not let us bring into this subject the question of our communion with God. That is another matter. Communion with God is a very tender and fragile thing, and easily broken. But, remember, the very failure, or the very sin, if we call it

by its true name, that breaks the fragile link of communion with God, was among the sins for which the Saviour suffered on the cross, and which by His atoning work have been cast into the depths of the sea. Do you now understand those five words, "No more conscience of sins"? Do you understand that what the many sacrifices under the law could never do for those on whose behalf they were offered, the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ has done? That gives to us, if we understand the import of it, the peace of a perfected conscience.

We read further, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (verse 14). For how long has He perfected the conscience? Mark the next two words: "For ever." He has given to us a perfect conscience, a conscience perfected for all the days, and weeks, and months, and years of our earthly life. Nothing can ever invalidate the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It abides in all its infinite value before the eyes of God, and the conscience of the believer who understands that is perfected for ever.

But there is something further. If you examine the eleventh verse you will see three things. First there is the priest, one of the sons of Aaron. Then observe the word, "standeth." Thirdly, notice the work in which the priest was engaged. He daily ministers, and offers oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Now look at verse 12, and you will find three

things stated which are in striking contrast with these three. In contrast with "every priest" in verse 11, it is THIS MAN, the Lord Jesus Christ. The eleventh verse speaks of sacrifices continually offered. He has offered ONE SACRIFICE for sins. Then what follows? In verse 11 the priest is standing; his work is never completed. In verse 12 we read this Man for ever SAT DOWN. Mark well these three contrasts. There is the priest in his sacrificial robes, and here is the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. There is the priest offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, and here is Christ who has offered one sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. There is the priest, always standing; here is Christ who has sat down on high, His work on that line being for ever finished.

Now I ask you to notice another thing. After saying in verse 14, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," verse 15 adds, "Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us." What does this mean? A witness is one who bears testimony, who speaks of something within his knowledge. The Holy Ghost takes the place of a witness. You might be a witness in a court of law, in order to give evidence in connection with some case. You pass into the witness-box, and are sworn, and answer the questions that are put to you. Now it is none other than the Holy Ghost Himself who takes the place of a witness. To what fact does this divine and heavenly witness testify? It is this: **"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."** Whose witness is that? The

witness of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews? Nay, it is the witness of the Holy Ghost. In Jeremiah 31 the words are found in their original setting. They refer to the time when God will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The terms of that covenant are there, and in this passage He gives those Hebrew Christians to understand that before the new covenant is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (for it has not yet been made), all the blessings of the new covenant, and more, belong to them. Their sins and their iniquities God will remember no more.

Have any of us received this witness of the Holy Ghost? What is it to receive it? It is to believe it. What would it be to receive your witness in a court of law? If the presiding judge received your testimony, it would mean that he believed what you said. In the same way I believe the witness of the Holy Spirit, and in believing it I have the comfort and the joy of it.

W.B.

PROVISION FOR THE MAN OF GOD

(2 KINGS 4: 10).

HOW very graciously the blessed Lord cares and provides for His servants! He, the greatest of servants, had not where to lay His head. He, the poorest, thinks of His own, meeting their need when they need it most.

The great woman of Shunem could say of Elisha, "Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually." This shows how the walk of the believer speaks. The prophet's holy walk, manifesting the atmosphere of heaven, told of his personal acquaintance with God, and brought a response in the heart of the woman. She spoke to her husband, proposing that they make provision for him in his pilgrimage.

Note the provision that was made. (1) A little chamber on the wall. (2) A bed. (3) A table. (4) A stool. (5) A candlestick.

(1) A chamber indicates a place of quiet, where one can be shut in from the outside world. The Shunammite woman realized that Elisha was a busy servant, frequently passing as he ministered to many needy souls. He needed a friend and a place of quiet. Said she, "Let us make a little chamber . . . on the wall." Note the place—the wall. Not in the street or alley, full of noise and dust. No, "on the wall," a place of elevation and of security.

Walls in the east were generally wide and lofty, being well built on very solid foundations; hence, fortified and secure, they were not easily broken down. In the Revelation John speaks of the Holy City with its walls and foundations, and the blessed Saviour Himself spoke of Himself as the Rock, on which He would build His church. Every servant of God needs his "little chamber" secure and above the noisy world, where he can be

in quietude.

(2) The chamber was furnished with a bed. This at once turns our minds to rest. Here the wearied prophet could lie down and have the happy experience of repose. After seasons of spiritual activity we all need seasons of rest. The blessed God Himself rested on the seventh day after His work in creation, and we who believe are going to enter into His eternal rest. Meanwhile times of rest give renewal of strength for the journey, the labours, the trials, the many disappointments which cross our pathway. The Psalmist says, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

(3) There was also a table. This speaks of food: in the case of Elijah it was the supply of his temporal needs; but there is also spiritual food. "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. 8: 3). We need the living food of God, which is abundantly provided in Christ. "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John 6: 57). He is our food, but we need an appetite made keen by the Holy Spirit to desire such heavenly provision.

(4) Then next a stool. The bed is for rest, and we do indeed "lie down in green pastures," but we also are privileged to sit in the presence of the King. Our living Lord Himself is seated, for having finished the work He sits at the right hand of God. He has the throne, but we have the stool. The prophet, having done his daily task, would

no doubt sit upon the stool and meditate on many wonderful experiences. What holy contemplation! The knowledge of his Master: the many victories, the many failures, the grace given, the nearness of the God of Israel in those dark days. What worship, praise, and prayer! We may do the same.

(5) Lastly the candlestick, or lampstand. How necessary is light for our journey through the world. Darkness reigns because of sin, but Christ is the light for us. As darkness fell upon the land so the prophet would welcome the light in his little chamber on the wall. The Word of God is "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path," so the psalmist said. So it is for us, and Jesus is to us, "The bright and morning Star," and "The Sun of righteousness." We do not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

W. H. AYRES.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(Luke 12: 1—13: 35).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

INSTEAD of being provoked by the vehement opposition of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord improved the occasion by calmly instructing His disciples in the presence of the enormous

crowd, that the controversy had drawn together. He had just been turning the search-light of truth on the religious leaders: He now turned the same light on the disciples and their path.

In the first place He warned them against the hypocrisy, which He had just been unmasking in the Pharisees. It is indeed a "leaven;" that is, a type of evil which, if unjudged, ferments and grows. The hypocrite aims at having things "covered" from God in the first place, and then from the eyes of his fellows. Everything however is coming into the light, so that in the long run hypocrisy is futile. Still, while it exists, it is absolutely fatal to the soul having to do with God in any way. Hence from a moral point of view the warning against it must come in the first place. For the disciple of Christ there must be **no covering** of anything from the eyes of the Lord.

In the second place He warned them against the fear of man—verses 4—11. He did not hide from them the fact that they were going to encounter rejection and persecution. If they were to be free of hypocrisy in a world which is so largely dominated by it, they could not expect to be popular. But, on the other hand, if they were to have nothing covered from the eyes of God, they would be able to stand forth with **no cowardice** in the presence of persecuting men. They who fear God much, fear men little.

The Lord did not merely exhort His disciples to have no fear of men, He also made known to them

things which would prove great encouragements to that end. In verse 4 He addressed them as, "My friends." They knew that they were His disciples, His servants, but this must have set matters in a new and very cheering light. In the strength of His friendship they, and we, can face the world's enmity. Then, in verses 6 and 7, He set before them in a very touching way the care of God on their behalf. So intimate is it, that the very hairs of our head are not merely counted but numbered.

In verse 12 He assures them that in their moments of emergency they could count upon the special teaching of the Holy Ghost. They would have no need to prepare an elaborate defence when arraigned before the authorities. The hatred and opposition of men was to lie as a liability upon them: but what marvellous assets are these—the **friendship** of Christ, the **care** of God, the **teaching** of the Holy Ghost. And in addition to this, their confession of Christ before hostile men would be rewarded by His confession of them before holy angels.

At this point in His discourse the Lord was interrupted by a man who wished Him to interfere on his behalf in a matter of money. Had He been the social reformer or socialist, that some imagine Him to have been, here was the opportunity for Him to have laid down correct rules for the division of property. He did nothing of the kind: instead, He unmasked the covetousness which had led to man's request, and spoke the well-known parable concerning the rich fool. To reconstruct

his barns, so as to conserve all the fruits given to him by the bounty of God, was just ordinary prudence. To lay all up **for himself**, and to neglect all the Divine riches for **the soul**, was the substance of his folly.

The rich fool was filled with covetousness, since he regarded all his goods as guaranteeing the fulfilment of his programme—"take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." This is precisely the programme of the average man of the world to-day—plenty of leisure, plenty to eat and drink, plenty of fun and amusement.

Now the believer is "rich toward God," as verse 32 makes very plain. So, when the Lord resumed His discourse to His disciples, in verse 22, He began to relieve their minds of all those cares which are so natural to us. Since we are enriched with the kingdom, **no covetousness** is to characterize us; and we are to be burdened with **no care**, since God's care on our behalf is all-sufficient. His words were, "Your Father knoweth." Thus He taught His disciples to know God as One who took a fatherly interest in them, and in all their needs as relating to this life.

But this He did, in order that they might be set free in spirit to pursue things that at the present moment lie outside this life. There is no contradiction between verses 31 and 32. The kingdom is given to us and yet we are to seek it. We must seek it because it is not yet in manifestation; consequently it is not found in the things of this life,

but lies in the spiritual and moral realities connected with the souls of those who are brought under the Divine authority. Nevertheless the kingdom is to be a manifested reality in this world, and the title-deeds of it are already sure to the people of God. As our thoughts and our lives to-day are filled with the things of God and the service of God, we seek the kingdom of God.

Hence the lives of the disciples were to run on lines diametrically opposed to those of the votaries of this world. Instead of laying up goods for an easy time of pleasure, the disciple is to be one who is a giver, one who lays up treasure in heaven, one whose loins are girded for activity and service, and whose light of testimony is shining. He is, in fact, to be like a man waiting for the return of his master. We have already noticed the things which are **not** to characterize us: here we have the things which **are** to characterize us.

As servants we are to be waiting for our Lord, and not only waiting but "watching" (verse 37), "ready" (verse 40), and "doing" (verse 43)—doing that which is our allotted task. The time of reward will be when our Lord returns. Then the Lord will Himself undertake to minister to the full blessing of those who have watched for Him. This, which we find in verse 37, indicates a reward of a general sort. Verse 44 speaks of a reward of a more special sort to be given to those marked by faithful and diligent service in their Master's interests.

The Lord's discourse to His disciples extends to

the end of verse 53. A few salient points are these:—

(1) **Heaven** is again set before the disciples. In chapter 10, as we noticed, they are instructed that their citizenship is to be in the heavens. Now they are taught so to act that their treasure may be in heaven, and consequently their heart there too. They are to live on principles altogether opposed to those governing the rich fool.

(2) The Lord **assumes His rejection** all through, and speaks of it yet more plainly towards the end—verses 49—53. “Fire” is symbolic of that which searches and judges, and it had been already kindled by His rejection. By His “baptism” He indicated His death, and until that was accomplished He was “straitened,” that is, narrowed up, or restrained. Only when expiation had been accomplished could love and righteousness flow forth in full power. But then, the fire being kindled and the baptism accomplished, all would be brought to an issue, and the line of demarcation clearly drawn. He would become the test, and division take place even in the most intimate circles. In the anticipation of all this, the Lord **assumes His absence**, and consequently speaks freely of His second coming.

(3) To Peter’s question (verse 41) the Lord did not give a direct answer. He did not definitely limit His remarks to the small circle of His disciples, nor enlarge the circle to embrace the thousands of Israel who were standing round. In-

stead He rested the whole weight of His words upon the responsibility of His hearers. If men were in the place of His servants—no matter how they got there—they would be recompensed according to their works, whether they proved to be faithful or evil. The evil servant does not desire the presence of the Lord, and consequently in his mind he defers His coming. Being thus wrong in relation to the Master, he becomes wrong in his relations with his fellow-servants, and wrong in his personal life. When the Lord comes his portion will be with the unbelievers, inasmuch as he has proved himself to be only an unbeliever. Verses 47 and 48 clearly show that penalty as well as reward will be graduated with equity in keeping with the degree of responsibility.

(4) The marks of the true servant are that he devotes himself to his Master's interests while He is absent, and he waits for his reward until He returns. Three times in this discourse does the Lord refer to eating and drinking, as a figure of having a good time. The worldling has his good time of merriment (verse 19), which ends in death. The false servant has his good time when he begins "to eat and drink, and to be drunken" (verse 45), which ends in disaster at the coming of his Master. The worldling was only merry; he was **drunk**, which is worse. As a matter of fact, when unconverted men take the place of being servants of God, they seem to fall more easily under the intoxicating influence of seductive religious and philosophic notions than anyone else. The true servant waits for his Master, who will make him to

sit down to eat and drink and be the Servant of his joy (verse 37). His good time will be then.

In verse 54 the Lord turned from His disciples to the people with words of warning. They were in a most critical position and did not know it. They were well able to read the signs of the weather, but unable to read the signs of the time. By their rejection of the Lord they were forcing Him into the part of their "adversary," that is, the opposing party in a law-suit. If they persisted in their attitude, and the case came before the Judge of all, they would find themselves altogether in the wrong and the penalty to the uttermost would come upon them. They would have to pay "the very last mite."

Just at that moment some of those present mentioned the case of certain unhappy men of Galilee, who had paid the extreme penalty under Pilate. They had the impression that they were sinners of the deepest dye. The Lord charged home upon His hearers that their own guilt was just as great, and that they too would perish, and He cited the further case of the eighteen slain by the fall of the tower at Siloam. In the popular view these were exceptional happenings indicating exceptional wickedness. The people listening to Him were committed to worse wickedness by failing to understand their opportunity; and, rejecting Him, they would not escape. Thus He warned them of the retribution coming upon them.

In the parable of the fig tree we have the ground

of the retribution stated (13: 6—10). God had every right to expect fruit from the people; He sought it but found none. Then for one year there was to be **ministry to** the tree instead of **demand from** the tree. Jesus was amongst them, ministering to them the grace of God instead of pressing home the demands of the law. If there was no response to that, then the blow must fall. In all this His teaching flows on from the end of chapter 12: there is no real break between the chapters.

Now comes the beautiful incident, verses 10—17, in which is set forth figuratively what the grace will accomplish, where it is received. The poor woman, though bowed together and helpless, was one who waited upon the service of God in the synagogue. Her physical condition was an apt figure of the spiritual plight of many. They were full of spiritual infirmity, and the law they found to be an oppressive yoke, so much so that under its weight they were bowed together, unable to straighten themselves and look up.

This woman was a “daughter of Abraham,” that is, a true child of faith—see Galatians 3: 7. Yet Satan had a hand in her sad state, taking advantage of her infirmity. Moreover the ruler of the synagogue would have used the ceremonial law to hinder her being healed. But the Lord brushed all this aside. By His Word, and by His personal touch, He wrought her immediate deliverance. Many there are who would say, “With me it was law, and infirmity, and hopeless bondage, and the power of Satan, until Christ intervened in

the might of His grace: then what a change!" Deliverances such as these shame the adversaries and fill many with rejoicing. They are indeed, "glorious things that were done by Him."

At this point the Lord showed that even the introduction of the grace and power of the kingdom was not going to result in an absolutely perfect state of things. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, brought in here, indicate that, while there would be much growth and expansion in the outward form of the kingdom, it would be accompanied by undesirable elements, and even by corruption.

With verse 22 of our chapter a distinct break comes from an historical point of view. The Lord is now seen journeying up to Jerusalem, teaching in the cities and villages as He went. But though this is so, there does not seem to be any marked break in His teaching recorded. The question in verse 23, seems to have been prompted by curiosity, and in reply the Lord gave a word of instruction and warning which was much in keeping with what has gone just before. If the incoming of the grace of the kingdom was going to result in the mixed condition of things, pictured in the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, then the narrow way of life must be sought with much sincerity and earnestness.

The word "Strive," in verse 24, does not signify **work** of any kind but **earnestness** of such intensity as to be almost an agony. It is as though He said,

“Agonize to enter in at the narrow gate while the opportunity lasts.” Many seek a wider entrance through things of a ceremonial sort, as indicated in verse 26. But only that which is personal and spiritual will avail. There is no real entrance save through the narrow way of repentance. So again here the Lord shows the futility of a merely outward religion. There must be inward reality.

The parables of verses 18—21 show there will be mixture in the kingdom in its present form; but verse 28 shows that in its coming form there will be none. Then the patriarchs will be in it and the mere ceremonialists thrust out. Verse 29 gives an intimation of the calling of the Gentiles that was impending, for grace was about to go out world-wide with mighty effects. Grace, as we saw much earlier in this Gospel, cannot be confined within Jewish limits or forms. Like new wine it will burst the bottles. The Jew was first historically, but in the presence of grace his ingrained legalism often hindered him, so that he came in last. The Gentile, not hindered thus, becomes the first when grace is in question.

The chapter closes on a very solemn note. Now it is not the Jew but Herod who comes up for judgment. Herod hid his animosity with the cunning of a fox, but Jesus knew him through and through. He knew also that His own life, characterized by mercy for man, was to be perfected by death and resurrection. The hatred of Herod was however a small thing. The great thing was the rejection of Christ, and of all the grace that

was in Him, by Jerusalem. They were the people that God had appealed to by the prophets, and that now He would gather together by His Son. The figure used is a very beautiful one. The prophets had recalled them to their duties under the broken law, while predicting Messiah's coming. Now He was come in the fulness of grace, and the shelter of His protecting wings might have been theirs. All however was in vain.

Jerusalem boasted of the beautiful house which was in the midst of her. Jesus had spoken of it earlier as "My Father's house," now He disowns it as "your house," and He leaves it to them desolate and empty. Jerusalem had missed her opportunity, and soon would not see her Messiah until the cry of Psalm 118: 26 is heard, which proceeds, "out of the house of the Lord." That cry will not be heard on the lips of Jerusalem until the day of His second advent.

F. B. HOLE.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." There was an old Roman proverb to the effect that, "Nothing does more good than sunshine and salt." In His analogy our Lord lays stress upon that special quality in Christian character which forms an antiseptic to the corruption which is in the world.

The genuine Christian, whose goodness is not negative but positive, exerts an energetic moral reaction upon every evil which he meets.

WISDOM.

IT was a great moment in the history of the youthful king, Solomon, when the Lord appeared to him in a dream by night, saying, "Ask what I shall give thee" (1 Kings 3: 5). The response to this was very beautiful. He might have been intoxicated by pride of his position. He might have asked for success in arms. He might have asked for enlargement of his kingdom. He might have asked for riches or long life. He asked for none of these things.

How beautiful is Solomon's response! "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in . . . Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad" (1 Kings 3: 7—9).

The Lord was well pleased with his answer. He bestowed upon the youthful monarch wisdom, superior to any before him, and not to be attained by any after him. His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country and all the wisdom of Egypt. God gave him also long life and riches.

In short Solomon was the wisest man the world has ever known, or will know. The Book of Pro-

verbs bears ample testimony to this. It is indeed a notable book. It has a unique place in the Word of God. If young men would pay heed to its pages they would be saved many blunders, sins and sorrows. It consists of just thirty-one chapters. Some business men have made a practice of reading a chapter each day of the month to their great advantage.

And yet, and yet, the wisest man that ever lived failed, and failed egregiously. Solomon in his old age married heathen wives—women of Egypt, of Moab, of Ammon, of Edom, of Zidon, and of the Hittites. Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines was folly and madness indeed. His wives turned his heart from the Lord. He went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites.

The Lord was angry with him, and no wonder: "I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and give it to thy servant" (1 Kings 11: 11). This came to pass, not in Solomon's reign for God had respect to his father, David. In the reign of his utterly foolish son, Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided—ten tribes going with Jeroboam, Solomon's servant; Judah and Benjamin remaining with Rehoboam. It was a big price to pay for his folly and sin.

What a lesson we may learn from this! What is wisdom? Wisdom is not mere knowledge. The more knowledge a man has, if he has not wisdom,

the greater mess he can make of things. What is wisdom? It is the right application of knowledge to the circumstances of life. Learning a lesson from Solomon, we find that even wisdom is no sufficient safeguard. Knowledge **without wisdom** makes knowledge a dangerous possession. Wisdom without wisdom **from above** is not enough.

Look at the case of Solomon. He wrote, "The fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of wisdom" (Proverbs 9: 10). Wisdom without the fear of the Lord is not the wisdom that is "better than rubies." Without the fear of the Lord the very A.B.C. of wisdom has not been learned. A man may be accounted wise in the learning of the schools, or in diplomacy, or in military strategy, but if he has not the fear of the Lord, he has no true wisdom. He is out of touch with what really matters. He has not adjusted himself to God. He is building on sand and not on the rock. His efforts end with fitful time, and enter not into eternity.

Solomon is a beacon to warn us. Was it the fear of the Lord that led him to marry heathen wives, to go whoring after heathen gods, and wreck his splendid kingdom? Surely not!

It is after all not a question of the head, but of **the heart**. Solomon himself in the Book of Proverbs lays much stress on the heart. "My son, give me **THINE HEART**" (chap. 23: 26). "Keep **THY HEART** with all diligence; for out of it are

the issues of life'' (chap. 4: 23). ''When wisdom entereth into THINE HEART . . . discretion shall preserve thee'' (chap. 2: 10, 11).

Solomon continually exhorts his son to listen to the voice of wisdom, and refuse the voice of folly. How multitudes of young men on premature deathbeds have rued the folly of going the pace, forgetting God, paying no heed to the voice of wisdom. We are ever listening to the voice of wisdom, or of folly, and we assuredly reap what we sow.

But Solomon strikes a wonderfully high note in chapter 8. Wise as he was, intellectual as he was, learned as he was, he never could have attained to this knowledge by his own powers. He speaks of that which is too wonderful for man to search out. ''Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?'' (Job 11: 7). **No, this must be a matter of REVELATION.**

Solomon speaks of Wisdom as a PERSON. There is a Fountain-Head of wisdom. There must be some Source from which it flows. We may drink of a little trickling stream, but where does the stream come from? Whence is the Reservoir?

Solomon traces it to a time when there was no beginning. He writes as if Wisdom personified were speaking, ''I was set up [**anointed**] from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth

was" (chap 8: 23). This could only be said of One, who is God. It is Deity, who speaks here. Again, "I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me" (verse 17). You can admire a quality. You cannot love a quality. We can love a Person, and in this case rejoice that this wonderful Person loves us.

The New Testament confirms us as to who Wisdom is. "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us WISDOM" (1 Cor. 1: 3). We have the key to Proverbs 8 in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the one great Mediator between God and men, the fulfilment of Jacob's ladder set up on earth, which stretched to heaven. "Unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the POWER of God, and the WISDOM of God" (1 Cor. 1: 24).

So we read, "Then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him" (Prov. 8: 30). Here we read of two Persons — One is WISDOM—who enjoy an eternal and reciprocal flow of affection. It must be so. Never in all the searchings of philosophy did such as Socrates or Plato reach to such a height. It remained for a simple fisherman, called from his boat and nets by the Sea of Galilee, to write three words, which the greatest philosopher never dreamed of, "GOD IS LOVE" (1 John 4: 16). Surely this was **revelation** pure and simple. In heathen lands, where men have fashioned gods

after their own liking, we find they are marked by frightfulness, cruelty, lust and every evil passion, —gods of fear and dread. To have such gods as the object of adoration is frightful and debasing in its results.

But if "God is love," and God is eternal, then it follows that the interflow of love must be eternal and so we have it here. How was it that Solomon could anticipate John's sentence, "GOD IS LOVE"?

But Solomon goes further. He rises to the heights, none higher. We get a peep by the Spirit of God into the eternal relation of the Father and the Son—the Father delighting in the Son, the Son rejoicing in the Father, and that without a beginning. But Solomon goes one further, and in this we are intimately interested. He says, or rather the Word of God says, "Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men" (verse 31). Why should we have revealed to us the Persons of the Godhead, if there were not the blessing to flow to us? Why should the Fountain-Head be unveiled, if the stream of blessing were not to reach us?

So we get Proverbs 8: 30, 31 unrolled to us by the four Gospels of the New Testament in the Person of Christ, who has revealed God and made Him known to us. Surely we find that His delights were with the sons of men, when we hear

Him saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11: 28); when we see Him blessing the woman that was a sinner, the outcast, the fallen; probing the proud Pharisee, "Ye must be born again" (John 3: 7); arresting Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road with the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts 9: 4). We know His delights were with men when He died for mankind, that there might be a new creation scene of blessedness, composed of a multitude that none can number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.

Let us not forget the wisdom inculcated by Solomon—WISDOM in its source from which every blessing flows; wisdom as we may begin to exercise it—"the fear of the Lord."

Let us clearly grasp it, that wisdom is not merely the application of **human** sagacity to human circumstances, but it must be in connection with Him," who of God is made unto us WISDOM" (1 Cor.: 1: 30). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom" (Prov. 9: 10). "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days" (Prov. 10: 27). Have we begun with wisdom? Let us learn a lesson from the wisest of men. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto **thine own understanding**. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3: 5, 6).

A. J. POLLOCK.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

THE fourth and fifth chapters, like the second and third, go together. While no rapture of the saints is mentioned, the translation of John in spirit to Heaven gives us a picture of it. The throne of verse 2 is a sign of governmental ordering from Heaven. The Sitter thereupon is likened to a jasper and a sardine stone—the former symbolic of His glory; the other rose-red speaking of His redemptive work. The rainbow is part of the throne, signifying mercy in its widest aspect after judgment cleanses the scene.

In the Old Testament (and by implication in the Gospels) the four and twenty priests were a representative company. So here the redeemed are represented above, seated upon thrones, clothed in priestly raiment and crowned in royal character. To-day the throne's aspect is one of grace; in that day it is marked by symbols of judgment; in the millenium it is a throne of blessing. The sea of glass evidently refers retrospectively to the laver, which in turn has in view the necessity of feet-washing now. In Heaven it will be a set condition of absolute purity—a sea of glass like unto crystal.

Four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind, are the ministers of God's throne, — expressing perception and discernment as to what is

due to the throne. In the past the cherubim represented God's governmental dealings on earth (Genesis 3: 24); the seraphim expressed God's holiness (Isaiah 6: 2). The divine titles in verse 8 refer to creatorial power and glory, while in chapter 5 we shall find His power and glory in redemption.

In chapter 5 the book is taken by the Man of God's counsel, as being alone able to bring all things unto complete harmony with God's will. The "Lamb as it had been slain" indicates how fresh to the memory of Heaven is Calvary. The seven horns and seven eyes are symbolic of perfect power to put things right but also the knowledge of how to do it. As the Wisdom of God, He takes up and solves all the problems and perplexities of the eyes; King Solomon answering the hard questions of the Queen of the South being but a faint picture of Himself.

The elders, seeing the Lamb, fall down before Him—an experience which, in spirit, the saints of to-day also have. In the song, mention of His worthiness is particularly in relation to what He has done, and constitutes along with the glory of His person the theme of His praise. The reign of the saints in association with Him will be over the earth. The angels ascribing praise, begin with power and end with blessing — the wider circle, creation, begins with the ascription of blessing and ends with power. The angels, who are marked by power, gladly acknowledge Him who has

supreme power: Creation, which for thousands of years has waited for blessing, now owns that Creation's Lord is the One in whom it is found. Here the millennium is anticipated — a picture of redemption in keeping with the wide scope expressed in the song of the elders.

Chapter 6 brings the reader to the commencement of prophetic events having reference to the earth. During the interval between the 69th and 70th week, spoken of in Daniel 9, the Church of God is called out to await the Lord's return. When He comes the saints go home and the way is again clear for prophetic events. In chapter 5 the elders represent the saints in glory, when the Lamb takes the book of God's purposes concerning the earth. This indicates that the events of chapter 6 are subsequent to the rapture, and probably prior to the formation of the revived Roman Empire. The symbols of four horsemen imply that God is not lettings things on earth slip, and the Throne is the source of judgment.

The Lamb opens the first seal; the living creature connected with the throne says, "Come." This twofold action governs the movements under the first four seals. The first horseman enters on his course as a great conqueror, and though armed he appears to accomplish his purpose apart from actual warfare. He wields great political authority, and if he be, as is possible, the little horn of Daniel 7, it would represent the coming into prominence of the head of the revived power, though the Em-

pire at this time may not be actually formed.

The second horse, also indicating a providential act of God through human instrumentality, is red, and a great sword is in evidence. These symbols indicate much strife and bloodshed among men. While the Prince of peace is away there can be no true peace, and not till He returns will swords be beaten into ploughshares. The first two judgments are connected; there is no great difficulty in apprehending the significance of the two following. They are evidently the sequence: the black horse and the pale horse signifying famine and mourning, pestilence and death, the outcome of war and bloodshed. The straitened circumstances of the working classes may be referred to in verse 6. In verse 8 we have divine permission given for the work of destruction, and yet a limitation set—"the fourth part"—the Power behind the powers.

Under the fifth seal a company is seen, who had been slain for the testimony which they had held; that testimony being the fulfilling in part of Matthew 24: 14. They had, during this period in which the "earth-dwellers" claim the earth, testified to the kingdom rights of Christ, and had suffered martyrdom. They are again referred to in Revelation 20: 4.

Under the sixth seal, from verse 12 to the end, men are given up more to their own passions. The symbol of constraint, as seen in the first four seals, is absent. Every power, great and small, superior,

subordinate and civil, is shaken, as symbolized in verses 13 and 14. The result is seen in verses 15—17. The great day of wrath has not yet fully come, but God has spoken in warning tones.

THE BREADTH OF THE WORD OF GOD.

WE are creatures of but little minds. There is therefore a tendency with us, when God speaks, to narrow down what He says, so as to bring it within the compass of our thoughts. We rather like to be able to put our finger upon any given statement of Scripture and say, "That means just this, and nothing else." To be delivered from haziness, and have crisp, definite thoughts, may be particularly pleasing to some, but we all like it.

Yet this handling of the Word, though attractive, is dangerous. We will illustrate the danger by drawing a contrast between the rich young ruler of Luke 18: 18—21, and the Psalmist in Psalm 119: 96. The former, when faced by the Lord with five of the commandments dealing with man's duty to his neighbour, at once said, "All these have I kept from my youth up." The latter had discovered that the Divine commandment is "exceeding broad," and consequently he had to confess, "I have seen an end of all perfection."

In both cases the commandments of the law were in question. The one took them at their plain face value, as forbidding certain acts—that and nothing else. There was no indefiniteness about his thoughts. He could put his finger upon the exact thing forbidden, with the virtuous feeling that he had complied. The other realized that under the prohibition of a certain act there was expressed the Divine condemnation of many subtle processes leading up to the act, and consequently there was a broad sweep about the Word, which brought all men within its range, even those who had escaped committing themselves to the overt act. Realizing this, he became conscious of nothing but imperfection, whether in himself or in others. Perfection was nowhere to be seen, for a thousand years had yet to pass before the Son of God appeared in Manhood. Had Christ been before his eyes, he would have had a different story to tell.

The Lord's words, recorded in Matthew 5, show how fully He endorsed the Psalmist's estimate of the commandment as being exceeding broad. He took up several of the commandments, which He quoted to the rich young ruler, and showed the breadth of their application. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, to which He alluded in verse 20, was based upon the narrowest application of the law. He gave it the broadest application in the succeeding verses, so broad as to convict us all. All human perfection disappears in the presence of His words.

If we carefully note the way in which Old Testament prophecy is quoted in the New, we shall discover also that the Word of prophecy is exceeding broad. Without a doubt there is some great event which is **the** fulfilment of the prophecy, but again and again we find there is some intermediate event which is **a** fulfilment of what is said. An example of this is found in Acts 2, where Peter says of the happenings of the Day of Pentecost, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." He did not say, "**Then was fulfilled** that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," for that would have signified that the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the ultimate and final fulfilment of that word. He said, "**This is that . . .**" which signified that it was a sample of the thing of which Joel had spoken. It was an event within the scope of his prophecy, though the prophecy itself looked on to the great outpouring of the Spirit, which will usher in the millennial age.

Those of our readers who have J. N. Darby's New Translation, large size, with full notes, might turn to Matthew 2: 23, and read the footnote against that verse. The gist of it is this: that there are three Greek words used in connection with quotations from the Old Testament. The first, "in order that it might be," is used in Matthew 1: 22, signifying the object of the prophecy. The second, "so that it might be," used in Matthew 2: 23, signifying not simply its object, but an event which was within the scope and intention of the prophecy. The third, "then" was fulfilled, as in

Matthew 2: 17, giving merely a case in point, where what happened was an illustration of what was said in the prophecy.

Thus, again and again we find the New Testament quoting the Old in such a way as to show that there is a breadth and fulness about the Word that goes beyond all our thoughts.

The same thing is true, doubtless, about the still more wonderful revelations which fill the pages of the New Testament. Take the sayings of our Lord as recorded in the Gospel of John, and see how full and broad they are. Take just one of them as an example—John 5: 19. The Son has stooped into Manhood, and has taken that place in such perfection that He only acts in complete dependence on the Father. How marvellous is this! But does the verse say that, **and nothing else**? Gaze at it again, and see if it does not also signify that the Son is so essentially one with the Father that it is inherently impossible that He should ever think or act save as the Father thinks and acts? In these words the Lord Jesus certainly stated the perfection and grace of His Manhood: He also stated the essentiality and fulness of His Godhead.

It is just the same with all those practical instructions which we find towards the end of the various epistles. They are very broad. Let us not try to narrow them down so that we may feel quite comfortable in their presence, as did the rich

young ruler in the presence of the commandments. The rather let us allow them to appeal to us in all their breadth. Our consciences will then be kept in a state of healthy exercise, and we shall catch a little of that humility of mind which characterized Paul in his service, as he tells us in Acts 20: 19.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 14: 1—16: 31).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

IN the closing verses of chapter 13 the Lord accepted His rejection and foretold its results for Jerusalem; yet He did not cease His activities in grace nor His teachings of grace, as the opening part of chapter 14 shows. The Pharisees wished to use their law of the sabbath as a cord wherewith to tie up His hands of mercy and restrain them from action. He broke their rope and showed that He would at least have as much mercy on the afflicted man as they were accustomed to show to their domestic animals. His grace abounded above all their legal prejudice.

From verse 7 Luke resumes the account of His teachings, and we do not find any further record of His works until we come to verse 11 of chapter 17.

In the first place, the Lord emphasized the behaviour which should characterize those who are the recipients of grace. Fallen human nature is pushful and self-assertive, but grace can only be received as humility is manifested. The guest invited to a wedding enters the feast as a matter of bounty and not as of right or of merit, and should behave accordingly. It may be remarked that in worldly society to-day bold self-assertiveness would not be considered good form. We admit that, and it is a witness to the way in which Christian ideals still prevail. In pagan circles such pushfulness would be applauded, and we shall see it increasingly manifested as pagan ideals prevail.

The abasement of the self-exalted and the exaltation of the humbled is sometimes seen in this life, but it will be fully seen when the One, who in supreme measure humbled Himself, even unto the death of the cross, is highly exalted in public, and every knee bows before Him. In verse 11 we can discern the two Adams. The first attempted to exalt himself and fell: the Last humbled Himself, and sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

In the three verses which follow we find the Lord instructing not the guest but the host. He too is to act in the spirit which befits grace. Human nature is selfish even in its benefactions, and will issue its invitations with a view to future profit. If, under the influence of grace, we think of those who have nothing to offer us, we aim at no earthly recompence. There is recompence however even

for the actions of grace, but that is found in the resurrection world which lies ahead of us.

Teachings such as these moved someone to ejaculate, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." This was said very probably under the impression that entrance into the kingdom was a matter of great difficulty, and the one to eat bread there must be a particularly fortunate person. This remark led the Lord to give the parable of the "great supper," in which He showed that the door into the kingdom is to be opened to all, and that if any do not enter it is their own fault. In this parable there is a prophetic element; that is, the Lord looked forward and spoke of things which have their fulfilment in the day in which we live. It is pre-eminently the parable of the Gospel.

"A certain man made a great supper and bade many." The cost and labour was his; the benefit was to be conferred upon many. Those first invited were people who were already possessed of something—a piece of ground, oxen, a wife. These represent the Jews with their religious leaders in the land, who first heard the message. Taken as a whole they refused the invitation, and it was the religious privileges they already possessed that blinded them to the value of the Gospel offer.

When their refusal was reported by the servant, the master is represented as "being angry." In Hebrews 10: 28, 29, the doing of "despite unto

the Spirit of grace" is said to be worthy of "sorer punishment" than the despising of Moses' law. What we have here is in keeping with that. The anger of the master did indeed mean that none of those who thus despised his invitation should taste of his supper, as verse 24 states, yet it did not shut up his bowels of kindness. The servant was the rather bidden to go out quickly and gather in the poor and needy—those most disqualified from a human standpoint.

But these were to be gathered from "the streets and lanes of the city"; so they represent, we judge, the poor and afflicted and undeserving of Israel—the publicans and sinners, as contrasted with the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord Himself was now turning to these, and amongst such the work continued into the days recorded in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Then the moment arrived when the invitation had been fully declared amongst them, and though many responded, the happy announcement was made by the servant, "Yet there is room."

This led to an extension of the kindly invitation. Still the word is "Go out," and now the poor derelicts of the highways and hedges, outside the bounds of the city, are to be brought in, to fill the house. This pictures the going forth of the Gospel to the Gentiles. It carries us to the end of Acts, where we have Paul saying, "The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and . . . they will hear it."

The parable definitely sets forth the matter from God's side rather than man's. He makes the supper, He sends the Servant, He has His own way, and fills His house in spite of man's perversity. The Servant He sends is the Holy Spirit, for no one less than He can wield a power which is absolutely compelling. The under-servants, even so great an one as the Apostle Paul, cannot go beyond the persuading of men (see 2 Cor. 5: 11); only the Spirit of the living God can so effectually work in the hearts of men as to "compel them to come in." But this, blessed be God, is what He does, and has done for each of us.

Hearing things such as these, great multitudes went with Him. Many there are who like to hear of something which is to be had for nothing. The Lord turned, and set before these the conditions of discipleship. The grace of God imposes no conditions, but the Gospel which announces that grace does conduct our feet into the path of discipleship, which can only be trodden rightly as we submit to very stringent conditions. Four are mentioned here. (1) The Master must be supreme in the affections of the disciple; so much so that all other loves must be as hatred compared with it. (2) There must be the bearing of the cross in our following of Him; that is, a readiness to accept a death sentence as from the world. (3) There must be a counting of the cost as regards our resources; a correct appraisal of all that is ours in the Christ whom we follow. (4) There must equally be a correct appraisal of the powers arrayed against us.

If we do not reckon rightly in either of these directions we shall very likely go beyond our measure, on the one hand, or be filled with fear, and compromise with the adversary, on the other. If, as verse 33 says, we do indeed forsake all that we have, we shall be wholly cast upon the resources of the great Master whom we follow, and then the path of discipleship becomes gloriously possible for us.

Now the true disciple is salt; and salt is good. In Matthew 5, we find Jesus saying, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (ver. 13), but He said that to "disciples" (ver. 1). If the disciple compromises he becomes like salt that has lost its savour, and he is fit for nothing. What a word for us! Grace has called us, and our feet have been placed in the path of discipleship. Are we complying with its solemn conditions, so that we become disciples indeed? May we indeed have ears to hear!

From the two verses that open chapter 15, it would seem that these words about grace and discipleship drew the publicans and sinners toward Him, while repelling the Pharisees and scribes. He did indeed receive sinners and eat with them: such action is according to the very nature of grace. The Pharisees flung out the remark as a taunt. The Lord accepted it as a compliment, and proceeded by parables to show that He not only received sinners but positively sought them, and also to demonstrate what kind of reception sinners get when they are received.

First the parable of the lost sheep. Here we see in the shepherd a picture of the Lord Himself. The ninety and nine, who represent the Pharisee and scribe class, were left not in the fold but in the wilderness—a place of barrenness and death. The one sheep that was lost represents the publican and sinner class; those who are lost, and know it—the “sinner that repenteth.” The Shepherd finds the sheep; the labour and toil is His. Having found it, He secures it and brings it home. His shoulders become its security. He brings it home, and then His joy begins. Never does He have to say, “Sorrow with Me, for I have lost My sheep which was found.”

It is impossible to find on earth the “ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance,” though sadly easy to find ninety and nine who imagine themselves to be such. Yet if they could be found there is more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than there could be over them. All the myriads of holy angels in heaven have never caused such joy as one repentant sinner. What astounding grace this is!

The parable of the lost piece of silver pursues the same general theme, but with a few special details. The woman with her operations in the house represents the subjective work of the Spirit in the souls of men, rather than the objective work of Christ. The Spirit lights a candle within the dark heart and creates the disturbance which ends in the finding of the silver. The joy is here said to

be in the presence of the angels; that is, it is not the joy of the angels but of the Godhead, before whom they stand.

Then follows the parable of the "prodigal son." The opening words are very significant. The Lord had been saying, "What man of you . . . doth not . . . go after?" "What woman . . . doth not . . . seek diligently?" He could not now say, "What man of you," if he have a prodigal son and he returns, will not "run and fall on his neck and kiss him"? We doubt if any man would go to the lengths of the father of this parable: the great majority of men certainly would not. This parable sets forth the grace of God the Father. Once more it is a picture of the sinner who repents, and we are now permitted to see in parabolic form the depths from which the sinner is raised, and the heights to which he is lifted according to the Father's heart, by the Gospel.

In the best robe we see the symbol of our acceptance in the Beloved: in the ring the symbol of an eternal relationship established: in the shoes the sign of sonship, for servants entered the houses of their masters with bare feet. The fatted calf and the merriment set forth the gladness of heaven and the Father's joy in particular. The son had been dead morally and spiritually but now he was as one risen into a new life.

If the younger son pictures the repentant sinner, the elder son accurately represents the spirit of the Pharisee. The one was hungry and went in: the

other was angry and stayed out. The arrival of grace always divides men into these two classes—those who know they are worthy of nothing, and those who imagine themselves to be worthy of more than they have got. Said the elder son, “Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” So he too found his society and pleasure in a circle of friends outside his father’s circle. The only difference was in the character of the friends—the younger son’s were disreputable, while his presumably, were respectable. The self-righteous religionist is no more in real communion with the heart of the Father than is the prodigal; and he ends up still outside while the prodigal is brought within.

These parables were spoken to the Pharisees but the one that opens chapter 16 was spoken to the disciples. They were instructed by it as to the position in which men find themselves before God, and the behaviour that befits them in that position. We are stewards, and have been unfaithful in our stewardship. The steward was accused to his master that he had “wasted his goods.” This phrase gives us a link with the previous parable, for the younger son had “wasted his substance with riotous living.” All that we possess has reached us from the hand of God, so that if we squander upon ourselves that which we may have, we are really wasting our Master’s goods.

The unfaithful steward found himself under notice to quit, whereupon he resolved he would

use certain opportunities, still within his reach in the present, with a view to his advantage in the future. Verse 8 is the close of the parable. The steward was unjust—the Lord plainly calls him so—yet his lord could not but commend the subtle wisdom with which he had acted, in spite of it being to his own detriment. In matters of worldly shrewdness the children of this age excel the children of God.

Verses 9—13 are the application of the parable to us all. Earthly possessions, money and the like, are “the mammon of unrighteousness,” because they are the things in which man’s unrighteousness is mostly displayed, though in themselves they are not intrinsically unrighteous. We are to use the mammon in such a way as to lay up “a good foundation against the time to come” (see 1 Tim. 6: 17—19), or as our verse says, “when it fails ye may be received into the eternal tabernacles” (New Trans.).

Verse 9 therefore shows that we are to act upon the principle so wisely adopted by the steward; verse 10 shows that we are to wholly differ from him in this, that what he did in unfaithfulness we are to do in all good fidelity. The “unrighteous mammon,” which men struggle to obtain so earnestly, and often so dishonestly, is after all “that which is least.” It is not properly ours at all but “another man’s,” inasmuch as “the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.” But there is “the true” mammon, which the Lord speaks of as,

“that which is your own.” If we truly realize that our own things are those which we have in Christ, we shall use all that we have in this life—money, time, opportunities, mental powers—with a view to our Master’s interests. At all events, we cannot serve two masters. Either God or mammon will dominate us. Let us see to it that God dominates us.

Though all this was said to the disciples, there were Pharisees listening and they openly mocked Him. To their covetous minds such teaching was ridiculous. They were great sticklers for the law, and the law had never stipulated things like these. The Lord’s answer to them was twofold. First, they were all for that which was outward before the eyes of men, merely concerning themselves with that which men esteemed. They ignored the God who is concerned with the state of men’s hearts, and whose thoughts are wholly opposed to men’s. Ultimately God’s thoughts will be established and men’s thoughts overthrown.

But second, the law in which they boasted was being superseded by the kingdom of God. The law had stipulated the things necessary for man’s life on earth, and the prophets had predicted God’s coming kingdom on earth. The time of the visible, world-wide kingdom was not yet, but nevertheless it was being introduced in another form by preaching, and already in this spiritual form men were beginning to press into it. The Pharisees were blind to all this, and were staying outside. But,

though the law was being superseded in this way, not one tittle of it was going to fail. In its own domain it stands in all its majesty. It is "holy, just and good," and its moral enactments still remain. The particular enactment which the Lord emphasized in verse 18, was no doubt a tremendous thrust at the Pharisees, who were very slack in such matters, while busily occupied with their tithes of mint and anise and cummin.

This home-thrust was followed by the tremendous parable of verses 19—31, if indeed it is a parable. The Lord uses a few figurative expressions such as "Abraham's bosom," but He relates it all as fact. Verses 19—22 relate very ordinary facts of this life ending in death and burial, and there for us the curtain drops. As we begin verse 23 the Lord lifts the curtain and brings into our view the things which lie beyond.

The rich man acted on precisely the opposite principle to the steward at the beginning of the chapter. All that he had he used for selfish, present enjoyment and he left the future to care for itself. The Lord is not inveighing against riches, but against man's selfish use of riches without God. The rich man was all for the present, all for this world; God's kingdom was nothing to him.

The word Jesus used for "hell" here is **hades**; not the lake of fire, but the unseen world of the departed. He therefore shows us that even **that** is for the unsaved a place of torment. Four times

over does he state that **hades** is a place of torment.

He also shows that once the soul enters **hades** no change is possible. The "great gulf" is "fixed." No transference from torment to blessedness is possible. No "larger hope" is here.

The rich man became quite evangelistic in hell. He desired his brethren to have a supernatural visitation to stop them reaching that awful place. The Lord shows us that no such supernatural event, were it possible, would stop people, if they are not stopped by the Word of God.

To-day God is appealing to men by the New Testament as well as by Moses and the prophets, and in the New Testament is the record of the One who rose from the dead. If men reject the Bible, which is the full Word of God for to-day, nothing will persuade them, and they will reach the place of torment.

Oh, that a God-given conviction of this may possess us! Then, the "love of God our Saviour toward man" also possessing our hearts, we should be full of zeal for the souls of men. We should be more like Joseph Alleine, one of the devoted men ejected from their livings under the Act of Uniformity, who was said to be, "insatiably greedy of the conversion of precious souls!" And we should have the zeal for the souls of men while still it is the accepted time and the day of salvation.

F. B. HOLE.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

THE vision of chapter 7 comes as a parenthesis between the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals. After the Church goes, God turns to Israel, whilst His judgments accomplish His purpose on earth, and in His mercy a remnant are sealed—144,000. These will doubtless carry on the commission of Matthew 10, which was interrupted by Messiah's rejection at that time. Their sealing assures their preservation during the time of trouble, and "in their foreheads" indicates their open confession of God. Their service—for servants they are—is suitably linked up with the manner of the angel's appearing—"ascending from the east"—which refers to Christ's coming as Son of Righteousness, and this is the object of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

This chapter divides itself into two parts: verses 1 to 8, the sealed of Israel; 9 to 17, an innumerable company of Gentiles, the fruit of the preaching of the Kingdom Gospel. These latter are seen as having passed through the tribulation and eventually sharing in earthly blessing. A palm-bearing com-

pany they are, tracing salvation to its source—God and the Lamb (verse 10). As Christians we approach the throne to-day (see Heb. 4: 16), so these will have a standing before it in that day. Their service is priestly, and the sphere of blessing, the millennial kingdom. The promises of verse 16 will be very real and suitable in view of what they have passed through. Thus this parenthetical chapter would cover the period of the tribulation, and go on to the millennium.

The seventh and last seal is followed by silence in Heaven but not necessarily inaction, for in judgment God remembers mercy, and this pause may synchronize with the sealing of chapter 7: 3. Now the proceedings are marked by angelic activity. Seven angels given seven trumpets, not to use indiscriminately, for all is according to divine order, and an event of import intervenes ere the first angel sounds. Faithful saints are on earth suffering—not governmentally as from the throne but at the hand of the earth-dwellers. Their sorrows are real and their prayers are not only heard but actually **move Heaven**. The priestly angel, officiating at the golden altar and brazen altar is the Lord (chapter 8: 3). The golden altar, speaking of His priestly service Godward, connects Him personally as adding efficacy to these prayers. The brazen altar, verse 5, as symbol of the cross, reminds the reader of God's holy nature in dealing justly with sin (see Psalm 22: 1—3). Christ was, and still is, rejected and man's hatred is further shown by the treatment of these faithful followers.

The requirements of the throne are insisted on since the fire came from off the altar.

The four trumpet judgments follow (8: 7—13), and are connected. The details given will be fully apprehended when the hour comes for their fulfilment. It is clear however that the Roman world is here under chastisement, since "the third part" is so often repeated, and this, as chapter 12: 4 shows, is connected with the revived Roman empire.

In the first trumpet, symbols of divine judgment, hail and fire, indicate its nature. This expression of divine displeasure was manifested when God's people of old suffered under Pharaoh—see Exodus 9. Probably there is the additional thought that the boasted prosperity of man, in which he left God out for so long, is dealt with and destroyed. The fertility of nature—"the green grass"—is burnt up.

In the second trumpet, a great power, under special judgment of God, is used to afflict the other nations and a state of destruction prevails—the mountain indicates the power, and the sea is figurative of peoples and nations.

Under the third trumpet judgment, a prominent leader, professedly in relation with God, falls and becomes apostate. His name, "Wormwood," gives his true character. Accordingly the poison of his teaching is instilled into the sources of men's life,

and so all is permeated and becomes death-dealing. Consequently under the fourth trumpet, in a sphere where light had been and the gospel heard, all is darkened. The symbols used represent earthly government and order being smitten and dreadful moral darkness following. In the measure in which man has given up God, he is finally found in the dense gloom, which verse 12 symbolizes.

Chapter 9 gives God's governmental dealings under two "woe" trumpets. The order is first the Jews (verses 1—11), then Gentiles, particularly the Western Powers (verses 13—21). The same order, but with regard to blessing was observed in chapter 7, and also in the Apostle's day—"the Jew first and also to the Gentile."

In John 5: 43 the Lord announced the apostate nation's acceptance of the personal Antichrist, here the evil embodied in the "fallen" leader of verse 1 is traced to its source, the bottomless pit. In Luke 10: 19 the Lord uses "scorpions" as being figurative of Satan's agents. These agents are here seen in fiendish activity, and the description of them, given in verses 7—10, would probably signify the accumulation of every Satanic force and influence. Our Lord in Matthew 12: 45 shows the state of the nation at **the end** and the "seven evil spirits" express how complete and commanding is the influence of Satan. The bait in Eden was that man would gain independency, but instead of that by his act of disobedience, he sold himself into ser-

vitude to Satan, and the evil power here is irresistible as far as human resource is concerned. Also if a claim is made to royalty (verse 7), it is personified in the Antichrist.

At the cross, Satan was the great instigator, here **submission** to him is hinted at in verse 8, and the acknowledging of his **authority** in verse 11.

Under the sixth trumpet one or two interesting references appear. In verse 13 the "four horns" indicate universal power. This is traced to God for He is the Power behind the powers; while the Euphrates, the boundary between east and west, is the limit of the old Roman Empire. In this region a restraining influence holds in check the forces beyond that point; but only until a **certain hour** decided upon by God. That hour is now come. The number referred to in verse 16, two hundred million, may be figurative and would allow for various invasions over a brief period coming from that quarter, commencing by the movements initiated by the King of the North.

There are, it would seem, four great combinations of powers at **the end**, having to do with prophecy: first, the Roman Empire in its revived ten kingdom form; second, the King of the North (Daniel 8: 23, 24); third, Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38 and 39); fourth, the mighty Eastern powers, great in numbers, restrained until the appointed hour, having as their object the west. These hordes are referred to in our chapter 9: 16—17.

Satan's control, now that further restraint is withdrawn, spreads, and in verses 18—19 there is an indication of how a perfect whirlpool of demon and human forces, will be created, carrying all before it. Apostates escaping the plagues mentioned do not repent and go on in their wickedness. Pharaoh's recorded history under Jehovah's hand—when he hardened his heart—being a faint picture of this.

FIVE MOUNTAIN PEAKS.

FIVE events stand out like great mountain peaks in connection with our Lord Jesus Christ.

They are His Incarnation, His Death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, involving His present activities on High, and His Coming again. They stand related to each other, and the one follows the other of necessity.

HIS INCARNATION

“Who is He that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God,” (1 John 5: 5). That word, “**believeth**,” does not indicate a mere matter of acquiescence in the truth of the incarnation, but rather the sincere faith which leads to a realization in one's soul, in one's inner being, that the Lord Jesus is the eternal Son of God. Why was so stupendous a step taken? He, who was in the form of God, was found in the form of a bonds slave. We read, “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus

Christ," (1 John 5: 6). It was in view of His death. There flowed out of the spear-riven side of the dead Saviour blood and water—actual blood and water. These, we find, symbolize the way God effects deliverance for His people. The blood speaks of our deliverance from the **penalty** of sin; the water speaks of our deliverance from the **power** and defilement of sin—water symbolizing the cleansing power of the word of God, applied to heart and conscience in the power of the Spirit.

The Son of God came for God's glory, the Revealer of God, and for blessing to men. If the Lord had lived that wonderful life, which so delighted the heart of God, and had not made atonement, where should we have been? Things for us would have been worse than ever.

But, thank God, our Lord came on purpose to die. He came by "water and blood."

HIS DEATH

There are four great historical types of the death of Christ in the Old Testament, showing what fulness of meaning is found in it.

- (1) The Passover Night.
- (2) The Crossing of the Red Sea.
- (3) The Uplifting of the Brazen Serpent.

(4) The Crossing over Jordan.

It is significant that only in one of these types is blood mentioned. How is this? The reason is the precious blood carries the other three. All that followed flowed out from what took place on the Passover night.

On the Passover night God shut Himself out as Judge, by bringing Himself in as Saviour. The sprinkling of the Israelites' dwellings on the night of judgment sets forth in type the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ in meeting the judgment of God.

It would have been a lamentable thing if God had left the children of Israel under the lash of the taskmaster, making bricks without straw. God would surely carry on His work on behalf of His people, and deliver them from bondage. Hence the crossing of the Red Sea was a necessity—after the sprinkling by blood—type of the believer's deliverance from the world and the power of Satan.

Then the brazen serpent speaks of the flesh being condemned as incurably bad, the only remedy being the introduction of a new life. Those who looked at the serpent of brass **lived**. So we get John 3: 14, 15. How dreadful it would be, if God had left us with nothing but the flesh in us after He had blessed us. The flesh is always in the believer till the end of life is reached, and must be kept in the place of death. That is true, but thank God, new life has been communicated to

the believer, and the power to live it by the Holy Spirit.

And finally if God took the children of Israel out of Egypt, He was not going to leave them in the wilderness. He placed them in the land. Hence the crossing of Jordan. And God is not going to leave us in the wilderness. He is going to lead us into heavenly things, and ultimately to take us to glory.

THE RESURRECTION

Seeing the Lord glorified God about the question of sin at the cross, and had fully met the claims of divine justice on our behalf, the resurrection followed as a necessity. "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," (Romans 6: 4). The resurrection was a divine necessity. Without the resurrection there could be no Christianity. A dead Saviour would be no good to us. We need and have a **living**, triumphant Saviour, risen from the dead—living in the presence of God. He has triumphed over sin and death and hell.

In Genesis 3: 15, we read of the serpent bruising the heel of the woman's seed. This pointed on to the cross. When the Lord died upon the cross Satan no doubt thought he had gained a great victory; but after a few brief hours—a long enough interval to establish the fact that our Lord had really died—He rose again, and Satan knew

that the victory was not his. The victory was our Lord's. Christ to-day is living in the glory on behalf of His people.

Romans 8: 11 is a very wonderful Scripture, showing forth the fact that the Spirit of God, by whose power Christ rose from the dead, is the very Spirit indwelling the believer, the pledge that at His coming, if alive on the earth, the believer's mortal body will be quickened. The believer will be raised because Christ has been raised. This is the whole argument of 1 Corinthians 15.

We have the type of it in Leviticus 23. We read there of the Feast of the First Fruits on the morrow after the sabbath, that is the first day of the week, the day of our Lord's resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15: 23, we read of "Christ the Firstfruits."

Fifty days after we read of the Feast of the new meat offering—typical of the church. The Church was formed on the Day of Pentecost, the anniversary of this feast, and the fulfilment of it. The word, Pentecost, comes from a root meaning fiftieth.

Romans 8: 11 speaks of the **living** saints when the Lord comes as being quickened; 1 Corinthians 15: 23 speaks of the **dead** saints, being raised at His coming — "Christ the Firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

THE ASCENSION

Forty days after our Lord rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven. What is He doing there? is a very important question. One thing is certain, He is not ceasing to love and care for His people. We are told to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3: 1).

As the Apostle our Lord brings God to man; as High Priest He brings man to God. The Lord Jesus revealed God to us. Look at the contrast there is between gods of man's imagination, the gods of heathen lands, monsters of cruelty and lust, and how God is revealed in Christianity. "God is love" (1 John 4: 16). "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1: 5).

Christ on high is our great High Priest. Two Scriptures in Hebrews tell us of His blessed work on our behalf. "We have not an high Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4: 15). That means we have an high Priest who is sympathetic, succouring and sustaining, One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Look at our Lord when on earth weeping at the grave of Lazarus. Is He less sympathetic with His tried and sorrowing saints to-day? Surely not.

And what does our great high Priest strengthen

us for? In order that we may be able to go triumphantly through the wilderness. Yes! and still further that we may consciously enter God's presence and worship there. Here is our second Scripture: "Having an high Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10: 21, 22). The greatest and highest privilege that can be enjoyed by the people of God is to be so filled with a sense of the greatness and goodness of God that their hearts are bowed in worship. With joy we recognize our Lord as the Leader of the praises.

But He is also the Advocate. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2: 1). The high Priest has to do with our infirmities, succouring, sustaining sympathizing. The Advocate has to do with the believer when he sins. There can be no sympathizing with sin. But if the believer sins, how touching it is that we are not given up by the Lord. On the contrary He is active for our recovery. Surely it is the ministry of our Lord so dealing with the sinning saint that repentance takes place, and confession is made, and full restoration to communion with the Father is effected. It is not a question of the sinner and God; but of a saint and the Father; not for the obtaining of salvation, but for the **restoration** of communion. The principle is seen in Psalm 51: 12:—"Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation"—not restore unto me Thy salvation, but

“the joy of Thy salvation.” It may be discipline may come in to this end.

HIS COMING AGAIN

We look back upon the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. We enjoy His high priestly care and rejoice to know of His advocacy—alas! that it should ever be necessary. Now we await His coming again. Soon He will come. He will not leave His church for ever in the wilderness. He wants His Bride by His side. His second coming is the topstone of all we have been considering. He says, “Surely I come quickly.” We respond, “Even so, come Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22: 20).

A. J. POLLOCK.

GOD, OUR SHIELD.

“**A**RE you on the Lord’s side?” I asked of a man, to whom I was introduced.

“Yes,” he replied, “by the grace of God I am; and better still, He is on my side.”

His answer was good, for it proved that he knew the gospel of God’s grace as it is unfolded for us in the Epistle to the Romans, where we read, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8: 31).

But there are many who have trusted the Saviour, who dared not have given such an an-

wer; they would deem it presumption to say that God was on their side, such sinful, faithless creatures as they are; yet though they have not believed it, it is the truth and God would have their hearts established in it.

Let them consider His words to Abraham, 'Fear not, Abram; I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great reward' (Genesis 15: 1). What a glorious statement for a man to hear from the mouth of God! Abram did not question nor doubt the Word of God; for we read in the same chapter, "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (v. 6). How safe he must have felt with God as his shield; he would fear neither man nor devil with those words in his heart.

God as the shield of those who believe is strikingly set forth in the case of the passover in Egypt. Abram's children had multiplied exceedingly and had become a great nation, but they were slaves, groaning under hard and cruel masters. God looked upon their sorrows and undertook to deliver them and make them a free people to serve Him with gladness. But His holy character demanded that this should be done on a righteous basis, otherwise it could not be done at all.

The sprinkled blood of the paschal lamb provided this basis. It spoke of the life of a sinless victim being surrendered and sacrificed on behalf of those who had sinned, and who, because sin-

ners, were under the judgment of God. It was a type of the blood of the Lamb of God which was shed for our redemption.

The word of the Lord came to Moses: "Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, **the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.**" (Exod. 12: 21—23).

The words, "the Lord will **pass over**" you are significant and comforting. They do not mean that He would **pass by** the door where the blood was, but that He would halt before it, and cover all within it from all judgment and harm. The use of the word here translated "pass over" in other Old Testament scriptures will prove this. In 1 Kings 18: 21, it is given as "halt," the sense, as the context shews being to stand still or hover. A remarkable instance of the use of the word is found in Isaiah 31: 5, "As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem, defending also He will deliver it; and **passing over** He will preserve it."

How striking is the figure! With all the tender

solicitude of the mother bird for her brood when danger threatens, so the Lord hovers over them that are His. This is the meaning of "pass over." The Lord Almighty stood as sentinel and shield outside the doors that were blood-marked, and did not suffer the destroyer to enter in.

And God's passover in Egypt is the type of the way He deals with every soul, that, obeying the gospel, flies to the precious blood of Jesus for shelter. That blood bears witness to the fact that righteous judgment has been executed, and the righteousness that inflicted the judgment must now protect those on whose behalf that judgment was borne.

We are sure that His mercy and grace and love are on our side, but His justice and His righteousness are equally so, since Jesus died. He is a just God and yet a Saviour. He is just, and the justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus. The knowledge of this fills the heart with peace and the mouth with praise and we can take up the glorious boast, "If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

J. T. MAWSON.

Christ could not be seduced **from** obedience to the Word of God in the temptation in the wilderness, so Satan tested Him to see if He could be seduced **by** a misquotation of it—Psalm 91: 11. This attempt also failed.

But let us beware of Satan most of all when he quotes or rather misquotes Scripture. It is a good rule to verify the reference and examine the context.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 17: 1—19: 27).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

THE latter part of chapter 16, verse 14 to the end, was spoken to the Pharisees: at the beginning of chapter 17 the Lord again addresses His disciples. The rich man had stumbled over his possessions into hell, and now the Lord tells His disciples that, the world being what it is, "offences," or occasions of stumbling are inevitable. The great thing is to avoid being an "offence" to anyone else, to even the least important. The consequences are so serious that anything is better than that.

Yet this does not mean that we should never speak to our brother for fear of stumbling him. The very opposite: if he should go astray into sin, we are to rebuke him, and immediately he repents forgive him; and this, even if it should repeatedly happen. We might imagine that we should run the risk of stumbling him by rebuking him, but we should really do so by **not** rebuking him. It is of course assumed that the rebuke is administered not in human anger but in the power of Divine love.

Teaching such as this made the disciples feel that they needed to have their faith increased.

The Lord's reply seems to infer that it is not a question of the **quantity** of faith but of its **vitality**. A mustard seed is very small but it is alive! Live faith accomplishes results of a supernatural order. Many a time have heavy paving stones been forced up by tender sprouts, proceeding from live seeds embedded beneath them. Even vegetable life has powers which appear miraculous, and much more so faith which is living. Nevertheless no faith that we have and no service that we render gives us any kind of claim upon God. We can never accomplish more than it was our duty to do. This seems to be the truth inculcated in verses 7—10.

The Lord was now on His way to Jerusalem, and we come to the touching incident concerning the ten lepers. All of them had some measure of faith in Him, for they appealed to Him as Master and they obeyed His direction to go to the priests, in spite of the fact that there was at the moment no change in their condition. Yet when the cleansing reached them nine of them continued their journey to the priests, so as to complete their ceremonial cleansing at the earliest moment. Only one deferred the ceremonial part in order to give the first place to his Benefactor. The Jewish mind was more bound by what was ceremonial: the poor Samaritan was free to render praise and thanksgiving to the Saviour in the first place and receive his ceremonial cleansing afterwards. Sovereign mercy had been dispensed, and he got lifted above the customs of the law

by a glimpse of the Person who dispensed the mercy. In result he got the assurance of being made whole from the Lord's own lips, with the acknowledgment that his faith had been the instrument of it. This was worth far more than any assurance he could get from the priests. Intelligent faith always puts Christ first.

In verses 20 and 21, Luke sets the obtuse unbelief of the Pharisees in contrast with the faith of the Samaritan. They only thought of the kingdom of God arriving with outward show, so as to be observed of all. The Lord told them that it was not at that time coming in that way, but that already it was amongst them, inasmuch as He—the King—was in their midst. The kingdom was amongst them for He was amongst them. The Pharisees were quite blind to this, but the Samaritan had evidently got a sight of it, hence his hurried return to give thanks at His feet.

In verse 22, Jesus again turns to His disciples, speaking of "the days of the Son of Man," and of course it is the Son of Man who is to take the kingdom, when the hour does arrive for its public establishment, as had long before been made known in Daniel 7: 13, 14. Now they, like the Samaritan, had faith and already saw the power and authority of God vested in the Lord Jesus. They would also in due season see the Son of Man revealed in His glory, and of this verse 30 speaks as well as verse 24. But meanwhile His rejection was going to supervene, and the sayings reported

to the end of the chapter were evidently addressed to them as representing saints who should be here until the time in which He is revealed in glory. Many there have been who have desired to see one of His days, and have not seen it.

As the time of His advent approaches two things will become prominent. First, there will be much activity on the part of the powers of evil. Impostors will present themselves in this place and in that, as verse 23 indicates. Second, there will be on the part of men generally absorption with the things of earth. In the days of Noah and of Lot men were absorbed in their pleasures, their business and their schemes; consequently judgment caught them unawares and they all perished. Thus it will be in the day of the revelation of the Son of Man.

The great thought embodied in verse 33 occurs no less than six times in the Gospels, and the Lord seems to have uttered it on four different occasions. The context here makes it very striking. Men immerse themselves in the things of earth seeking to save their lives. In result they only lose them. The believer is to let go these things in favour of the far greater things that are revealed to him. He preserves his life, as will be very manifest when the Lord comes. Lot's wife illustrated this principle. The angels pulled her body out of Sodom, but her heart was still there. She lost everything, and her own life as well. We do well to remember her.

Those who are on earth when the Lord comes will do well to remember her also. If they do they will not think of attempting to retrieve their stuff from the house, or to return from their field. That day will come with the swiftness of a eagle's swoop. Just as the eagles congregate wherever their prey is found, so the judgment of God will reach all who are subject to it. The kingdom, when established, will be marked by discriminating judgment against evil. The sinner will be taken in judgment, and the righteous left to enjoy the blessing, no matter how closely they have been associated together. Had the Pharisees realized that the public establishment of the kingdom would involve this, they might not have wished to raise the question as to when it would come.

It is worthy of note that the three cases mentioned by the Lord in verses 34—36, suppose night-time, early morning and full day-time respectively. When He comes men will be instantaneously arrested in all parts of the earth, just as they are.

In speaking the parable, with which chapter 18 opens, the Lord was continuing the same line of thought, as is shown by His application of the parable in verses 7 and 8. When the kingdom arrives it will mean judgment for the evil-doers, but the days just before its arrival will mean tribulation for saints. Their resource will be prayer. Even an unjust judge will be moved to right the wrongs of a widow, if she is sufficiently importunate; so

the saint may continue waiting upon God with the assurance of being heard in due season.

There is not the smallest doubt about the coming of the Son of Man to answer the cries of His elect. The only doubt is as to faith being found in lively exercise amongst them. The Lord asked the question, "Shall He find faith on the earth?" but He did not answer it. The inference seems to be that faith will be at a low ebb, which agrees with His own plain statement elsewhere that, "the love of many shall wax cold." If we are right in believing that the end of the age draws very near, we shall do well to take this very much to heart, and stir ourselves up to faith and prayer. Only if we **always** pray shall we **not** faint.

The man who prays trust in God. The trouble with so many is that they trust in themselves and in their own righteousness. To these the next parable is addressed. The Pharisee and the publican are typical men. The Lord takes for granted that God's grace, which brings justification for men, was available, but shows that all depends on the attitude of the one who needs it. The Pharisee exactly represents the elder son of chapter 15, the rich man of chapter 16, the unrepentant thief of chapter 23. The publican represents the younger son, Lazarus, and the repentant thief.

With the Pharisee it was himself, his character, his deeds. With the publican, the confession of sin, and of his need of propitiation — the word

translated, "be merciful," is literally, "be propitious." How full of significance is verse 13! His **position**: "afar off," indicating he knew he had no right to draw near. His **attitude**: not lifting "his eyes unto heaven,"—heaven was no place for such a man as he. His **action**: "smote upon his breast," thus confessing that he was the man who deserved to be smitten. His **words**: "me, **the** sinner," for it is **the** rather than **a** here. The Pharisee had said, "I am not as other men," smiting other men rather than himself. The publican hit the right man, and humbling himself was blessed.

How strikingly all this fits in with the special theme of this Gospel. Grace was there in abundance in the perfect Son of Man, but except there be on our side the humble and repentant spirit, we miss all that it offers.

The next incident, which Luke relates briefly in verses 15—17, enforces just the same thing. Mere babes do not count in the world's scheme of things, but of such the kingdom is composed. It is not, as we should have thought, that the babe must reach up to full-grown estate to enter, but that the full-grown man must reach down to the babe's estate to enter. The former might have suited the law of Moses, but grace is in question here.

Again the next incident, concerning the rich young ruler, lays its emphasis on the same point. The Lord had just spoken of **receiving** the kingdom as a little child, when the ruler asks, "What

shall **I** do to inherit eternal life?" His mind swung back to the works of the law, not knowing what Paul tells us in Romans 4: 4, "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." Approaching on this basis, the Lord referred him to the law, as regards his duty to his neighbour, and on his claiming to have complied from his youth up, He tested him further as to his relation to Himself. "Come, follow Me." Who is this **Me**? That was the supreme question, on which everything hinged, whether for the ruler or for ourselves.

The ruler had addressed Him as "Good Master," and this complimentary epithet the Lord had refused apart from the acknowledgment that He was God. In truth He **was** God, and He **was** good, and He presented Himself to the young man, bidding him relinquish what he possessed and follow Him—just as Levi had done some time before. Even the law demanded that God should be loved with all the heart. Did the ruler love God thus? Did he recognize God in the lowly Jesus? Alas, he did not. He might claim to have kept commandments relating to his neighbour; he utterly broke down when the first of all the commandments was in question. In his eyes his riches had in them greater value than Jesus.

With great difficulty does a rich man enter into the kingdom of God, since it is so difficult to have riches without the heart becoming absorbed by them to the exclusion of God. To those who

thought of riches as tokens of God's favour all this seemed very disturbing, but the truth is that salvation is impossible to man, yet possible to God. This brings us back to the point which is in question. The kingdom cannot be earned, much less eternal life. All must be received as gifts from God. And if, in receiving the gift, other things are surrendered, there is an abundant recompence both now and in the world to come.

This saying of our Lord, recorded in verses 29 and 30, is a very sweeping one. In the **present** time there is **manifold more** for **everyone** who has given up good things of earth for the sake of the kingdom. Any difficulty we may have in understanding this is based upon our failure to appraise rightly the spiritual favours which make up the "manifold more." Paul illustrates that saying for us. Read Philippians 3, and see how he reckoned up the spiritual wealth poured into his bosom after he had "suffered the loss of all things." Like a camel stripped of every rag it had carried, he had passed through the needle gate, only to find himself loaded with favours on the other side.

All this would sound very strange to the Jewish mind, but the fact, which explained it all, was that the Son of Man was not at this time going to take the kingdom, but rather to go up to Jerusalem to die. So again at this point Jesus spoke of the death which was just before Him. The prophets had indicated that this was the way in which He would enter into His glory, though the disciples failed to

understand it. And even though He thus again instructed them, they failed to take it in. Such is the power that preconceived notions can attain over the mind.

The Lord was now on His final journey to Jerusalem, and He approached Jericho for the last time. The blind man intercepted Him in faith. The crowd told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, yet he at once addressed Him as the Son of David, and asked for mercy. The rich ruler had asked what he should **do**, when the Lord had just spoken of the kingdom being **received**. The blind beggar said that he would **receive** when the Lord enquired what **He should do to him**. No transaction came to pass in the case of the ruler: a transaction was completed on the spot in the case of the beggar. The contrast between the two cases in very decisive.

The beggar received his sight, and, said the Lord, "Thy faith hath saved thee." This shows that the transaction went deeper than the opening of the eyes of his head. He became a follower of the Jesus, who was going up to Jerusalem and to the cross; and there was glory to God, both on his part and on the part of all the beholders. An equally distinct case of spiritual blessing met the Lord when He entered and passed through Jericho.

If, at this point, Luke's Gospel be compared with Matthew 20: 29—34, and Mark 10: 46—52,

a serious discrepancy becomes evident. Luke most definitely places the cure of the blind man as Jesus **approached** Jericho, and the other two Evangelists as definitely place it as He **left** Jericho. With our limited knowledge it seemed impossible on this point to reconcile the different accounts. But during the last few years the archaeologists have been digging in the Jericho area, and have laid bare the foundations of two Jerichos; one, the old original city, the other, the Roman Jericho, a short distance off. The blind man understood the begging business and planted himself between the two! Luke writing for Gentiles, naturally has the Roman Jericho in his mind. The other Evangelists very naturally are thinking of the original city. We mention this to show how very simply what looks like an insuperable objection vanishes, when we know all the facts.

Only Luke tells us about the conversion of Zacchaeus, which fits in so strikingly with the theme of his Gospel. The publican, though so despised by the leaders of his people, was a fit subject for the grace of the Lord, and he was marked by the faith which is ready to receive it. Zacchaeus had no physical or material needs; his was a case of spiritual need only. The people flung the epithet, "sinner," at him. It was a true epithet, and Zacchaeus knew it, yet it provoked him into an attempt to accredit himself by recounting his benevolences and scrupulous honesty. Jesus however put his blessing on its proper basis by proclaiming him to be a son of Abraham—that is, a true child

of faith—and Himself to be the One come to seek and save that which was lost. Zacchaeus was in himself a lost man, yet he was a believer, and so salvation reached him that day. On exactly the same basis has it reached every one of us since that day.

The Lord had shown the Pharisees that the kingdom was already in their midst in His own Person; He had also again told His disciples about His impending death and resurrection. Yet they still cherished expectations as to the immediate appearing of the kingdom in glory. So the Lord added the parable, of verses 11—27, as a further corrective to these thoughts of theirs. The time of the kingdom would come, when all His enemies would be destroyed; but first comes a period of His absence, when the faithfulness and diligence of His servants would be tested. To each servant the same sum is entrusted, so that the difference in the result sprang from their diligence and skill, or otherwise. According to their diligence they were rewarded in the day of the kingdom. The servant, who did nothing, only showed that he did not really know his Master. In result, he not only had no reward but he suffered loss.

This is another reminder that grace calls us into a place of responsibility and service, and that our place in the kingdom will depend upon the diligence with which we have used that with which we have been entrusted.

F. B. HOLE.

KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT.

A FAMOUS novelist, grandson of a well-known scientist, in one of his books confesses that he has given up his old opinion that the universe has no meaning. How any sensible man could ever have held such an opinion is past all understanding, save on the ground of strong **bias**. The universe has millions of proofs of wonderful design to which bias is as blind as the bat in the light of the noonday sun. Bias is not a matter of the head, but of the heart. "The fool hath said in his **heart**, There is no God" (Psalm 14: 1).

For instance Charles Darwin, when confronted with the human eye, with its wonderful adaptation declared that it made him shiver, and no wonder, when he refused to believe the creation story as given by Moses. To such straits is the evolutionist driven that they tell us eyes originated in the following fashion. We give it in the words of William Jennings Bryan in his book, **In His Image**. "A piece of pigment, or, as some say, a freckle, appeared upon the skin of an animal that had no eyes. The piece of pigment or freckle converged the rays of the sun upon the spot, and when the little animal felt the heat, it turned the spot to the sun to get more heat. The increased heat irritated

the skin. . . so the evolutionists guess, and a nerve came there, and out of the nerve came the eye. Can you beat it? But this only accounts for one eye; there must have been another piece of pigment or freckle, soon afterwards and just in the right place, in order to give the animal two eyes" (p. 98). And we may well ask, why two, and only two, and in right position to work in conjunction? The believer in the Scriptures has reasonable faith; the unbelieving scientist, who can believe such trash as we have just transcribed, is marked by colossal credulity. Fallen man wants to believe anything that will shut out God.

It is extraordinary how the Scriptures touch the spot with unerring hand. The Epistle to the Romans tell us of those, who "did not **like** to retain God in their knowledge" (chapter 1: 28). There we have the reason why otherwise sensible men can hold such debasing opinions. It is a question of what they **like**.

And why did this famous novelist give up his old opinion that the universe has no meaning? He writes, "It was the manifestly poisonous nature of the fruit that forced me to reconsider the philosophical tree on which they had grown." He could not have subjected his belief to a truer or better test. It is indeed but the refrain of the Scripture written nineteen centuries ago, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7: 20). By this test the only philosophy that emerges triumphant is that of the Bible. Evolution and modernism work

in the same direction, for they undermine the authority of Holy Scripture, and in undermining Scripture they strike a blow against morality, and all that that implies.

The great Professor Huxley in his day cast about for something to stem the tide of iniquity. The only Book he could think of that possessed such an influence was the Bible. And though he himself refused to believe in its inspiration, he strongly advised its use in the Public Schools as the only power to stem lawlessness.

The famous novelist writes strongly. He speaks of "manifestly poisonous fruit." He must have seen some evil things. He must have marked the sins of society, extra judges required to deal with the rush of divorce cases, the craze for nudism, business honesty at a big discount, men ready to break their word, if it does not suit them to keep it, home-ties weakened, children disobedient, men loving pleasure more than loving God, nations staggering under terrific taxes to provide munitions of war, poison gases, bombs, death-dealing inventions. With all that in view he came to the right conclusion that such poisonous fruit grew on a bad tree. The idea that the universe has no meaning works out in just this fashion: No God, no responsibility. No fall, no sin, no shame, men glorying in their shame.

The way the Bible was written is convincing. The poet Dryden wrote:—

“Whence but from heaven could men unskilled in arts,
In several ages born, in several parts,
Weave such convincing truths? or how, or why,
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,
Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price.”

It is the only Book that prophesies, **and its prophecies come true.** Whilst there are many most convincing internal proofs of its divine inspiration—of one Mind controlling it from beginning to the end—there is one outstanding proof. When practised it bears nothing but good fruit. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit” (Matthew 7: 18). The truth ennobles the man who receives it, and elevates the nation that comes under its power.

Are the nations, which are manifestly backward, nations upon which Christianity has exerted its power? No, they are heathen nations, wrapped in dark superstition, worshipping hideous idols of cruelty and lust. The nations, which have come under the power of the Bible, have taken the lead as to matters of morality and righteousness. And just in proportion as the Bible loses its power over such nations, do they become decadent. This is the problem confronting men and women to-day. Sunday, the great day of pleasure with newspapers selling in their millions, streams of motor cars and cyclists pouring out of every town into the country; empty churches; all tell the tale of the nation turning its back upon God.

Shall not all this have a voice to each reader? Let each one of us seek to be governed by the

Bible, and thus bear fruit in our lives, pleasing to God. And if we do, our first step must be to trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, and confess His Name, then we may seek to follow **His** steps. This will recommend the Gospel to others, and help forward the work of winning souls out of the world.

A. J. POLLOCK.

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

WHEN Paul exclaimed, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift," he was thinking of the Son of God given to suffering and death for our sakes. The greatness of it overwhelmed him, and he could find no word in any language that could describe it and the love that was behind it—it is unspeakable—God's unspeakable gift! We have not got Paul's large capacity for appreciating the great divine facts of our faith, and our hearts are not as big as his was, yet I am sure that we have often been amazed as we have considered such a verse as John 3: 16. May we wonder at it more and more; for, as we wonder, we worship and grow.

But what next? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." That means that after He has given

“the unspeakable gift” we need not be surprised at anything else He gives. Yet there is another gift which is also overwhelming in its greatness, God has given to us His Spirit. I do not care to put the Holy Spirit among the “all things” of Romans 8: 32. It is a unique gift; it stands alone, it is incomparable from whatever point we view it.

The gift of the only-begotten Son for us reveals God’s wonderful love, the gift of His Spirit to us reveals that same love from another side. We understand His compassion and desire to save us by the first gift; we realize His desire that we should draw near to Him and respond to His love by the second. I remember being greatly helped by a remark by a servant of God as to this. He said “I would not give you my spirit even if I could. Why? Because you would know too much about me if I did.” But God has given to us His Spirit because He wants us to know all that is possible about Him—He wants us to know Him intimately. I had not looked at it like that before, and it drew me nearer to God, for I realized better how great His desire was that I should know Him, not theoretically, not doctrinally merely, but experimentally, as I should know a friend by being in his company and having intimate talks with him.

Most certainly the more we know God the more we shall love Him. And the better we understand His communications to us in His word the fuller

will our worship be. We can only understand them by His Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2: 14, 10).

The gift of the Holy Spirit is many-sided, and the side that I wish to press is that He has come to take charge of us and lead us to our eternal destiny—the glory of God. When God delivered Israel from Egypt the Angel of His presence went with them on their pilgrim journey to Canaan, and Michael, the first prince of celestial hosts, watched over them during their exile in Babylon, but now we have that which is more wonderful, for we are in a closer relation to God than ever Israel was, and our destiny is greater than theirs. We are sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, and we are travelling to the glory, there to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Because of the dignity of the relationship and the greatness of the destiny, no angel would serve as our guide and "paraclete," no less a person than the Holy Ghost, who is one with the Father and the Son in the Godhead, could be capable of the great office.

We do not fully understand the infirmities within us or the foes that beset us in our homeward

journey, yet we do feel them and often we groan because of them; they bend our knees before God and compel us to pray to Him, and yet how inadequate our prayers seem to be. But the Spirit of God, who dwells in us and knows every thing about us and all that there is against us, takes upon Himself the burden of our needs and He makes intercession for us **“with groanings which cannot be uttered.”** (Rom. 8: 26). This is a most amazing word. We could never have conceived it, and would not have believed it if it had not been written; but there it is, thank God, and should fill us with thanksgiving and adoration.

We groan sometimes when our feelings are too intense for words and articulation fails us; but this is not our groaning; it is the groaning of the Spirit of God; and the groans are of such a sort that no utterance can be found for them. Pardon me if I say again that it is wonderful—wonderful! We have an Intercessor on earth, He dwells within us and He knows our deepest needs, all the weakness within and all the difficulties without, and He knows what the will of God is concerning us and intercedes according to that good and acceptable and perfect will. He occupies Himself continually with us and intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Look at that mother on her knees before God; she is making intercession for her only boy who works and lives in the great city; she thinks of his dangers, of the temptations and sins of the

city and as she prays for him words fail her and she can only groan, her groans ascend to the ears of God; and the stronger her love the deeper the groans: **it is love that causes the groaning.** Infinite love lies behind the Spirit's groaning, the love of God, full of compassion and tender pity; love that was first shewn in the death of Christ for us; love that was not exhausted there but continues to serve us, for the love of Father and Son and Holy Ghost is a threefold cord that shall never be broken.

The intercession of the Holy Ghost shall not fail: it shall receive an answer from heaven every day, and finally, full and complete in the glory. The multitude of God's sons, for whom the Spirit intercedes, shall stand at last within the Father's house beyond the reach of need and harm for ever. In that eternal triumph of God the glory of the work of redemption, wrought out by Christ amid the hours of agony on the cross, will be fully displayed; and the work of the Spirit within the saints, making good within them every thought of God about them, will be completed, so that, fashioned after the glorious image of God's Son, they shall find their joy in the Father's presence who is the source of all.

What confidence of heart and quietness of spirit, what joy and adoration should these things produce within us! May we by the grace of God be more under the power of them.

J. T. MAWSON.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

THERE is a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets, which occupies the whole of chapter 10, and chapter 11, down to verse 13. The first seven verses of chapter 10 contemplate a point of time in which the kingdom is about to be established. Referring back to chapter 8, the Lord is seen in angelic garb and priestly character: a similar thought is here, but His character is royal rather than priestly, and hence He asserts His authority. The sun, in verse 1, speaks of the ruling authority in our universe, and the reference to His feet shows that He establishes His authority by governmental judgment. Evidently He intends to make good His claims. Heaven acknowledges them—verse 3—and the whole world, both sea and land, is in view.

The words in verse 6, "time no longer," are better rendered, "no more delay," indicating that man's day is about to end, and simultaneously with this the "mystery of God"—i.e. the mystery of His ways, in bearing with man's wickedness—comes to a close also, to be followed by millennial blessings as formerly declared to the prophets.

The closing verses of the chapter leave room for the prophetic events in the second half of the book, which begins at verse 19 of chapter 11. From that point prophetic dealings are viewed from a dif-

ferent angle, but the first half finishes with the kingdom (see II: 15), just as the second half does.

The first verse of chapter II is characteristically Jewish, and the two witnesses are distinct from the remnant. These witnesses testify in Jerusalem during the tribulation period, 1,260 days. They are empowered to work miracles. When the God of grace introduced the Gospel, He drew attention to it by miracles of mercy: here it is the sovereign "Lord of the earth" (verse 4, N.Tr.), who draws attention to His rights by miracles which express this divine title. These signs call to mind Elijah's day, when Israel was in apostasy, and Moses' day, when they were in slavery; Israel being marked by these sad conditions at this time. The witnesses continue their testimony during the full period, after which God permits them to be killed by the "beast." A public resurrection is accorded them, and their portion is heavenly blessing, as verse 12 shows.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet introduces Christ's kingdom, and looks on as far as to the time of the dead, when evil is not only **subdued**, as in the kingdom, but is **removed** for ever. Thus verse 18 brings us to the end of the sixth section, finishing the first half of the book.

The last verse of chapter II has a Jewish aspect and so has chapter 12, beginning with the sign in **heaven**. This teaches us that God's purpose is known **there**, but the subject of His purpose, the woman, is on **earth**, as the rest of the chapter

shows. The woman is Israel as seen in her millennial glory. Verse 2 has, however, her tribulation sufferings in view, as explained in verses 6, 13, 17. The great red dragon, having seven crowned heads and ten horns, expressive of power and authority, is at this point particularly connected with the Roman earth. The attempt to devour the Man Child refers back to Matthew 2: 16.

This being so, it appears that we have to allow for a double parenthesis: in the middle of verse 5 the Lord's life of 33 years is passed over; and again, between verses 5 and 6, the entire Christian era is unnoticed. Thus verse 6 brings the reader in point of time to the middle of Daniel's last prophetic week of seven years—to the last 1,260 days.

The chapter goes on to show the dragon cast down. Heaven is cleared of the accuser, and his fall is understood there as a guarantee of the arrival of the kingdom, soon to be established on the earth. Consequently Satan knows that his time is short, and the special object of his attack is the remnant, which has the testimony of Jesus. However, God makes provision for those sufferers, and the help of verse 16 would probably come from those who had received the Gospel of the kingdom.

If in chapter 12 we have Satan, the unseen source of evil, in chapter 13 his two representatives before men appear. The character of both is expressed by the term, "beast." The first beast is

the personal head of the Roman empire, revived in ten kingdom form. The second beast is the false prophet, or Antichrist. The chapter in a general way gives the relationship existing between the two, the one a Gentile and the other a Jew. In some sense the revived Roman power absorbs and represents the three preceding empires that are noticed in Daniel 7; at least it bears their characteristics.

When God is set aside, the devil usurps His place; and in our day demon worship is greatly on the increase. Our scripture shows the extent to which it goes in that day, when Satan takes full control. This political leader, at the outset of his career has on his heads names of blasphemy; that is, open **defiance** of God. At the end of his wicked career he makes **war** against the Lamb. Even in the day of grace men go further in defying God than they at first intend; but they submit to the power of Satan, and are driven at his instigation.

The second beast, the Antichrist, is the religious head. Nebuchadnezzar, in his time, saw the importance of linking the political and religious systems, and in a more sweeping way Satan will link and control both through two men. The miraculous signs wrought by the Antichrist recall Elijah's of old, when the prophet drew attention to the true God by the sign of fire from heaven. Here through the Antichrist Satan deceives them that dwell on the earth, his miracles being intended to support the beast's claim for worship. To-day

Christ's miracles of mercy, as recorded in the Gospels, are often objected to, because thought to be opposed to nature's laws. In that day Antichrist's miracles will be accredited, evidently without question.

The heading up of all this is that man is worshipped. This was the very earliest Satanic suggestion, when the deceiver said to the woman, "Ye shall be as gods." Verse 16 shows the result of denying God and deifying man. A fearful state of tyranny is established, even commerce being wholly controlled by the beast. We see ominous signs of this kind of thing in our own day.

Chapter 14 opens by anticipating a scene of millennial blessedness, and then follows a series of six prophetic events. The 144,000 are a special company, mentioned for the first time. They are redeemed from the earth and associated with Mount Zion, the centre of earthly government during the millennium. Mount Zion in Scripture stands as the symbol of grace, but its mention here may also identify them as being of Judah. They had passed through the tribulation, and Satan's religious system had pressed her false claims, but these had not defiled themselves, and now their purity is owned, and they become a nucleus of the glorious system which God is about to establish. The Divine approval is expressed by their "having His Father's name written in their foreheads," for they have refused the mark of the beast, which the great

mass of people will receive in their foreheads, as we were told at the end of the previous chapter.

In verses 2 and 3 we see a heavenly company, distinct from the saints translated at the Rapture—these latter are represented by the elders, in verse 3—representing perhaps those who were martyred during the tribulation, whilst the 144,000 passed through it. There is a connection between the two companies, for the harpers have a special link with the 144,000, who learn their song.

The action of the angel in verse 6 implies great rapidity. The everlasting Gospel, which declares God's creatorial rights, is declared to all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples. The whole empire of earth-dwellers had been worshipping the beast, but here a different class is contemplated, the heathen and not apostate Christendom. A similar testimony is hinted at in Romans 1: 20.

The second event (verse 8) is the fall of Babylon. This is the way Revelation views the apostate church after the Rapture, and mentioned here for the first time. Her fate is announced here, but chapters 17 and 18 give the history of her fall, which occurs apparently in connection with the seventh vial. We judge therefore that what we have in this chapter from verse 9 to the end would take place after the vials are poured out.

Verses 9—11 refer to worshippers of the beast and God's dealings with such. "Without mix-

ture," indicates that God's offers of mercy have been unavailing, and now there is nothing but a cup of righteous indignation. The solemn warning in itself is a mercy, and no one despising it, and tasting the wrath in eternity, will be able to say that God left him under any misapprehension. Verse 12 gives a word of encouragement to the saints, while verse 13 (the fourth event) is a word of blessing upon any enduring martyrdom "in the Lord;" that is, because they are true to Him.

The two events which follow at the close of the chapter are the harvest and the vintage, and the wrath of the Lamb is in evidence. The former links itself up with Matthew 13: 39; the harvest involving the separation of the wicked from the just. The tares are gathered into bundles to be burned, the wheat gathered into the garner. This means a discriminating judgment, and what offends is to be removed in view of the kingdom of the Son of Man. "Ripe," (verse 15) does not mean that He is quick to judge, but that the apostate condition of the people is fully ready for it,

Verses 17—20 present the vintage judgment; and as the vine is so frequently a figure of Israel, "the vine of the earth" introduces a Jewish atmosphere. Judgment here falls upon the very centre of things. The guiltiest part of an apostate earth is that which had received the greatest privileges—here Jerusalem and Palestine, as verse 20 indicates. Matthew 11: 23 shows how great privilege abused means unsparing judgment.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 19: 28—21: 38).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. **Except** the above passage of Scripture be read, it is **hardly** likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

HAVING spoken the parable of the pounds, the Lord led His disciples on the ascent towards Jerusalem, and reaching Bethphage and Bethany He sent for the ass colt, on which He made His entry to the city, according to the prophecy of Zechariah. The colt was unbroken for no man had sat upon it, and consequently it was tied up under restraint. It was loosed from restraint, but only in order that He might sit upon it. Under His powerful hand it was perfectly restrained. A parable this, of how grace sets us free from the bondage of the law.

Though the kingdom was not at this time to be established in glory, He did in this way most definitely present Himself to Jerusalem as its rightful and God-sent King. His disciples assisted in this, and as they approached the city they began to praise God and rejoice. We are told quite plainly in John 12: 16 that at that time they did not really understand what they were doing, yet it is evident that the Spirit of God took possession of their lips and guided them in their words. They acclaimed Him as the King, and they spoke of "peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

At the incarnation the angels had celebrated "on earth peace," for the Man of God's good pleasure

had appeared, and they celebrated the whole result of His work. But now it was clear that death lay before Him and that His rejection would entail a period of anything but peace on earth. Nevertheless the first effect of His work on the cross would be to establish peace in the highest Court of all—in heaven—and to display glory in the highest, Himself going up there in triumph. This note of praise had to be struck at this juncture. God could have made the stones cry out, but instead He used the lips of the disciples, though they uttered the words without full intelligence of their meaning.

Now comes a striking contrast. As they approached the city the disciples rejoiced and shouted blessings on the King. The King Himself wept over the city! In John 11: 35, the word used indicates silent tears; here the word used indicates breaking forth in lamentation, visible and audible. The lament of Jehovah over Israel, as recorded in Psalm 81: 13, reappears here, only greatly accented as they approached the greatest of all their terrible sins. Jerusalem did not know the things that belonged to her peace, hence peace on earth was impossible at that time, and the Lord foresaw and predicted her violent destruction at the hands of the Romans, which came to pass forty years later. The Dayspring from on high had visited them, and they did not know the time of their visitation.

As a consequence, everything in Jerusalem was in disorder. Entering the city, the Lord went

straight to its very centre, and in the temple found evil enthroned. The house of Jehovah, intended to be an house of prayer for all nations, was just a den of thieves, so that any stranger, coming up there as a seeker after God, was swindled in the obtaining of the necessary sacrifices. Thereby he would be repelled from the true God instead of being attracted to Him. Thus in the hands of men the house of God had been wholly perverted from its proper use. Moreover the men who held authority in the house were potentially murderers, as verse 47 shows: so it had become a stronghold of murderers as well as a den of thieves. Could anything be much worse than this? No wonder God swept it away by the Romans forty years later!

Yet in the precincts of the temple the Lord taught daily during this last week of His life, so it is not surprising that He came into conflict with them. The whole of chapter 20 is occupied with details of the conflict. The chief priest and scribes began the conflict, and at the end they were left silenced and unmasked.

They started by challenging His authority. They were the people in authority there, and to them He was but an upstart "Prophet" from Nazareth. Their question assumed that they had the ability to judge of the Lord's credentials, if He produced them; so He called upon them to settle the preliminary question as to the credentials of His forerunner, John. This at once put them in a quan-

dary, for the answer they wished to give would have been resented by the people. They were time-servers, courting popularity, so they pleaded ignorance. To such men as these the Lord did not produce His authority. Instead He proceeded to speak with all the authority which omniscience gives, and they were very soon made to feel its power. There could be no doubt about His authority by the time the verbal conflict ceased.

In the parable, which occupies verses 9—16, He set forth with great clearness the exact position of things at that moment. It reads like a continuation of the historical statements made in 2 Chronicles 36: 15, 16. There it was God appealing by His "messengers, rising up betimes and sending;" but all were mocked and misused until "there was no remedy," and "He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees." Here the story is carried a step further and the "Beloved Son" is sent, only to be cast out and killed. Hence a worse chastisement than the Chaldeans was to come upon them. The Psalmist had prophesied that the rejected "Stone" should become the Head of the corner, and Jesus added that all, who fall upon that Stone, or upon whom it shall fall, would be destroyed. They were at that moment stumbling on the Stone, as Romans 9: 32 declares. The falling of the Stone upon them, and upon the Gentile powers, will take place at the Second Advent, as Daniel 2: 34 shows.

The chief priests and scribes felt the point and authority of His words, as we see in verse 19, but

they were only thereby stirred up to more determined opposition; and they sent forth men of craft and deceit to entrap Him in His words, if possible. They came with the question as to paying tribute to Caesar; and in this both Pharisees and Herodians united, sinking their animosities in common hatred of the Lord.

The Lord's question, "Why tempt ye Me?" showed that He was thoroughly aware of their craft. His request for the penny reveals His own poverty. The superscription on the penny was a witness to their subjection to Caesar. His reply thus was that they must render to Caesar his rights, and yield to God the rights that were His. It was because they had not rendered to God the things that were His that Caesar had acquired the rights of conquest over them. All this was so indubitable, when pointed out, that these crafty questioners were silenced.

The question with which the Sadducees thought to entrap the Lord was founded upon ignorance. No doubt they had often perplexed the Pharisees with it, but then they had no more light than the Sadducees on the essential point which the Lord made so plain. He contrasted "this world" and "that world," using really the word which means "age." Now it will be the portion of some to "obtain that age" as living men on earth, without passing through death and resurrection; but those who "obtain that age **and the resurrection**" will enter upon altogether new conditions of life. They

will be deathless as the angels, and marriage will have no application to them. The Lord was here beginning to bring "to light life and incorruptibility" (2 Tim. 1: 10. N.Tr.); and in result the Sadducees' question, which to their ignorance seemed so unanswerable, became merely ridiculous.

The Lord proceeded to prove the resurrection from Exodus 3: 6. If the patriarchs were alive to God, centuries after they were dead to this world, their ultimate resurrection was a certainty. Thus He answered not only the foolish question of the Sadducees, but the unbelief that lay behind their question. And He answered it with such authority that even a scribe was moved to admiration and approval, and they all feared to ask Him any more questions.

The Lord then asked them His great question, based upon Psalm 110. Matthew records that no man was able to answer Him a word. No answer was possible save to the faith that perceived the Divine glory of the Christ, and they had no faith. They were silent in stubborn unbelief. Answer His question they **could** not: ask Him any further question they **dared** not.

It only remained for the Lord to unmask these evil men, and this He did in few words, as recorded in the two verses which close the chapter. They were hypocrites of the most desperate type, using religion as a cloke to cover their self-seeking and

rapacity. He unmasked them, and pronounced their doom. He did not speak of a **longer** damnation, as though judgment were bounded by time and not eternal. But He did speak of **greater** damnation, showing that judgment will differ as to its severity. They suffer "more abundant judgment" (N.Tr.).

Then He looked up, and here were some of these rich men ostentatiously casting their money into the temple treasury, and amongst them came a poor widow casting in her two mites. We must not allow the break of the chapters to divorce in our minds these opening verses from the closing two of chapter 20. The widow was presumably one of those whose "house" had been devoured, yet instead of repining, she cast her last two mites into the temple treasury. Under these circumstances her gift was truly a great one, and the Lord pronounced it to be so. She went to the utmost limit; casting in her **all**.

Nor must we divorce this touching incident from the verses that follow, particularly verse 6. The widow expressed her devotion to God by casting her two mites into the collection for the upkeep of the temple fabric; yet the Lord proceeds to foretell its total destruction. Already it was displaced by the presence of the Lord. God was in Christ, not in Herod's temple. In her understanding the widow was, as we should say, behind the times; yet this did not mar the Lord's approval of her gift. Whole-hearted devotion He **does** appreciate,

even if the expression of it is not marked by complete intelligence. This should be a great comfort to us.

Luke now gives us the Lord's prophetic discourse, putting on record that part of it which specially answered the disciples' question, as recorded in verse 7. As Matthew's account shows, both their question and the Lord's answer contained in them a good deal more than Luke puts on record. Here the question is as to the time of the overthrow of the temple, and the sign of it. The answer divides itself into two parts: verses 8—24, events that led up to the destruction and treading down of Jerusalem by the Romans, verses 25—33, the appearing of the Son of Man at the end of the age.

It is very noticeable how the Lord presents the whole matter not as a mass of details, appealing to our curiosity, but as predictions which sound a note of warning, and convey instructions of the utmost importance to His disciples. Everything is stated in a way to appeal to our consciences and not our curiosity.

The first part of the discourse, verses 8—19, is occupied with very personal instructions to the disciples. The Lord does indeed make predictions. He foretells (1) the rising up of false Christs, (2) wars and commotions, together with abnormal happenings in the physical world around, (3) the coming of bitter opposition and persecution, even unto death. But in each case His disciples are to

be forearmed by His warnings. They are not for one moment to be deceived by false Christs, or follow them. They are not to be afraid of the violent movements of men, nor imagine that these convulsions mean that the end is coming **immediately**—for that is what “by and by” means here. They are to accept the persecution as an occasion for testimony, and in testifying are not to rely on a prepared defence but on supernatural wisdom to be granted to them when the moment arrives.

Verse 18 is evidently intended to convey the personal and intimate way in which God would care for them. The closing words of verse 16 show it does not mean that all of them would escape; but even if death claimed them, all would be made good in resurrection. By patient endurance they would win through, whether in life or in death. This seems to be the meaning of verse 19. We can see in the Acts how these things were fulfilled in the Apostles.

Then, verses 20—24, He predicts the desolation of Jerusalem. No word appears here as to the setting up of “the abomination of desolation,” for that is only to happen at the end of the times of the Gentiles: all the things the Lord specifies were fulfilled when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. **Then** the city was compassed with armies. **Then** those who believed the words of Jesus did flee to the mountains, and so escaped the horrors of the siege. **Then** there commenced “days of vengeance” for the Jew, which will not cease

for them until all that is predicted is fulfilled. **Then** started the long captivity which has persisted, and will persist, with Jerusalem under the feet of the nations, until the times of the Gentiles are ended. Those times began when God raised up Nebuchadnezzar, who dispossessed the last king of David's line, and they will ended by the crushing of Gentile dominion at the appearing of Christ.

Consequently verse 25 carries us right on to the time of the end, and speaks of things which will just precede His advent. There will be signs in the heavenly regions, and on earth distress and perplexity; "sea and waves" being expressions figurative of the masses of mankind in a state of violent unrest and agitation. In result men will be "ready to die through fear and expectation of what is coming" (N. Tr.). In view of the state of things that prevails on earth as we write, it is not difficult for us to conceive the condition of things which the Lord thus predicts.

This is the moment when God is going to shake the heavens as well as the earth, as Haggai predicted; and when only things which cannot be shaken will remain. All will lead up to the public appearing of the Son of Man in power and great glory. The day of His poverty will be over, as well as the day of His patience; and the day of His power, of which Psalm 110 speaks, will have fully arrived. Previous to His coming, the hearts of unconverted men will be filled with fear; when He has come, their worst fears will be realized, and

"all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. 1: 7).

But to His saints His coming will wear another aspect, as verse 28 makes happily manifest. For them it means a final redemption, when all creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. That being so, the first signs of His advent are to fill us with glad anticipation. We are to "look up," for the next movement that really counts is to come from the right hand of God, where He sits. We are to "lift up our heads," the opposite of hanging them down in depression or fear. The very things that frighten the world are to fill the believer with the optimism of holy expectation.

Next comes the short parable of the fig tree. It is said to be "a parable," you notice, not a mere illustration. The fig tree stands for the Jew nationally. For centuries he has been dead nationally, and when at last there are signs of national reviving with them, and signs of reviving too with other "trees," of ancient nationalities, we may know that the millennial "summer" is near. Until that time comes there shall be no passing away of "this generation"—by this term the Lord indicated, we believe, that "froward generation . . . in whom is no faith," of which Moses spoke in Deuteronomy 32: 5, 20. When the kingdom is established, that generation will be gone.

Luke's short account of the Lords' prophecy ends with the solemn words in which He asserted the

truth and reliability of His words. Every word of His lips has something in it, something to be fulfilled, and is more stable than the heavens and the earth. Thus verse 33 furnishes the striking thought that the words of His lips are more enduring than the works of His fingers.

He closed with another appeal to the consciences of His disciples, and our consciences as well. No doubt those three verses, 34, 35, 36, have special application to saints who will be on earth just before His appearing, but they have a great voice for the believer to-day. A multiplicity of pleasures surrounds us, and we may easily become overcharged with a surfeit of them. On the other hand, there were never more and greater dangers on the horizon, and our hearts may be laden with forebodings, so that we lose sight of the day that is coming. It is very possible to be occupied so much with the doings of dictators and the progress of world movements that the coming of the Lord is obscured in our minds. The word for us is, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always." Then shall we be thoroughly awake, and ready to greet the Lord when He comes.

In the closing verses of the chapter, Luke reminds us that He, who thus foretold His coming again, was still the rejected One. By day, during that last week, He diligently uttered the word of God: at night, having no home, He abode on the Mount of Olives.

GOD !

AS we write, the dark cloud that has hung over Europe has just lifted, and we join with our fellow Christians in thanking God for His gracious intervention and for His great mercy. Once more we who know Him have had evidence that God is behind everything, and that there is nothing behind God. We are reminded of the confession of King Nebuchadnezzar after his tragic experience : —

“I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation : and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Daniel 4: 34, 35).

It took the mighty monarch a long time to learn this lesson, and only after unparalleled suffering did he own the omnipotence, the sovereignty, the

wisdom of God. 'He doeth according to **His** will.' Kings may decree, dictators may command, politicians may plan, but above all there is God, and "**He** doeth according to **His** will." No one dare question what He does. He may use a potentate to chastise a nation or to exercise His people; behind all is God, and "**He** doeth according to **His** will." During the crisis to which we have referred it seemed to be realised that our only resource was in God, and it was refreshing to note the turning to God when the sky was dark, as well as the acknowledgment of God when He mercifully intervened. At such times we who know God are kept in perfect peace by God. We heed not the confusion of tongues among men. We do not trust the diverse schemes of those who claim ability to put things right, "We trust in the living God" (1 Timothy 4: 10); we realise that "**God** is our refuge and strength," We hear Him whisper in our ear:—

"Be still, and know that I am God"

(Psalm 46: 1, 10), and there we may rest.

This knowledge preserves us from excitement, and enables us without distraction to exercise our privilege to engage in "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks . . . for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2: 1, 2). Might it not be that one reason for God permitting this upheaval

has been to remind His people of this important, but, we fear, much-neglected exhortation?

To leave the affairs of the world, and think of our individual circumstances, our resource is in **God**. Just here we may be much tested:—Illness, sorrow, bereavement, disappointment, a crushing load of one kind or another. We may be tempted to exclaim: "Everything is gone," and just then a Voice seems to whisper in our ear: "Except **God**." The Psalmist could speak of his tears, of his doubts, of the challenging question of his own heart and of his enemies: "Where is thy God?" He could reply to the challenge of his own heart and say: "Hope thou in **God**: for I shall yet praise Him;" and, further, "I will go unto the altar of **God**, unto **God** my exceeding joy: yea upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God my God" (Psalms 42, 43). No matter how severe his trial, or how bitter his experience, or how determined the attack of the enemy, before which he seemed at times to be almost overbalanced, he traced everything back to **God**, and in **God** he found his unailing resource.

When at times trouble arises in companies of believers, there is one resource, and none other; and that is **God**. In his valedictory address to the elders at Ephesus, the last recorded oral ministry of the Apostle Paul, he warned the elders of that favoured Assembly that after his departure they would be assailed from within and without, but, said he, "I commend you to **God**" (Acts 20:

17—35). So to-day, where there is anything for God in a gathering of believers, that becomes the object of the attack of the enemy. Their safety lies not in human means, but in **God**. He will look after His interests; He will jealously guard all that is according to His mind; He will preserve those who seek to walk in the path of His will. The consciousness of this will mean, on the one hand, deep exercise, true confession, real humility, many tears because of the dishonour to the Lord's Name; the reproach to the testimony; and the upset to some of His own when the enemy finds an inroad. On the other hand those who have some little knowledge of God will be kept, amid their exercise, in perfect peace realising that they have an unfailing resource in **God**.

By the time this paper appears in print we shall be nearing the close of another year, and, if the Lord does not come for a few weeks yet, we will soon enter upon a new year. As we survey the past let us sum it up in one Word. As we look on to the few untrodden steps that lie before us; let us review the past and anticipate the future with that one word in our hearts and on our lips:—

GOD!

Then let us sing

“How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend:
Whose love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end!”

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

"BY THESE THINGS MEN LIVE."

(ISAIAH 38: 16).

SO wrote King Hezekiah, who was "sick unto death." God miraculously added fifteen years to his life, giving him a sign in that the sundial of Ahaz should return ten degrees.

What did Hezekiah mean? What did he mean by "live"? Sickness is the negation of health, the opposite of energetic life. How then could Hezekiah's sickness be the means of life?

It is interesting to trace in Scripture what God calls life. We read, for instance, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3: 36). Life in Scripture is life lived in relation to God. So much is this so that Scripture views the unbeliever as "**dead** in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2: 1), and what he needs is life. "God . . . , even when we were **dead** in sins hath quickened us together with Christ" (Ephesians 2: 5). The fact is, a man may be a brilliant success in this life, in scholarship, in the world of finance, in political or military or social life, yet, if he is unconverted, his life is a colossal disaster. He has not known true life at all. He has merely grasped the mere shadow of a brief life in this world, and failed to get the eternal substance of real life.

In nature this is apparent. Let this earth of ours be out of relation to the sun, the controlling factor

in our particular universe, for a very short time, and what would be the result? Utter destruction! And yet man with all his powers will live and die as if God did not exist.

The lesson that Hezekiah learnt was learned by others yet further back in the history of the world. Job, tried in his circumstances, even more than Hezekiah, cried out, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5: 17). The Psalmist learned the same lesson. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law" (Psalm 94: 12). The wisest of men, Solomon, gave good advice to his son. If that son were Rehoboam, then we can pity the wise father that he had such an exceedingly foolish son. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Proverbs 3: 11, 12). In Hebrews 12: 5—13 these wise words of Solomon are quoted, and given an enlargement and scope that are well worth pondering.

The fact is, sorrow, tribulation, trial, the things we shrink from are the very means God uses to teach us what is really life. If life were all blue skies and beds of roses we could do without God, would do without Him, if left to ourselves. But He is too kind to leave us thus. Hezekiah wrote, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is **the life OF MY SPIRIT.**"

There is one great difference between nature and grace. In nature the sun is above the clouds, and let the sky be overcast no sun is to be seen. It still exists, it still shines, but **above** the clouds and invisible to those who look up and see nothing but the clouds. In grace the clouds of sorrow, bereavement and tribulation overspread our sky, but the sun of God's love shines **below** the clouds. Nothing can separate the believer from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Did Seth, the son of Adam, learn this lesson, when he named his son, Enos or Enosh? **Enos** or **Enosh** is a Hebrew word signifying frail mortal sinful man. We read, “Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord” (Genesis 4: 26). They touched life when they realized their personal need of the Lord. We cannot do without Him. We realize this in the great crises of life. The pity is we do not realize it in every phase of our lives—big or little, in joy or in sorrow. It is good when we take our joys into the presence of the Lord, taking them as from His hand. Our sorrows often drive us into His presence. Our joys test us. We never find any life in Scripture that was lived outstandingly for God, that was not marked by the discipline of sorrows.

Look at Joseph. Destined of God at thirty years of age to be the food controller of Egypt, to be in the way of providence the saviour of a famine-stricken world, he suffered the ignominy of being sold into Egypt by his brethren, of imprisonment

for years because of his resisting the blandishments of an immoral woman. We read in Psalm 105 of his feet being hurt with fetters and the iron entering into his soul. Thus was formed in the school of God character that became him in his relation to God.

Look at Moses. Destined of God to face Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel across the desert, He used circumstances that compelled him to flee from Egypt, to leave the palace and no longer to be counted the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and for forty long years he was caring for sheep at the backside of the desert, till God had tempered him into a steel He could use. God taught him to be nobody in order to make him somebody.

Look at David. Follow his history and the same thing is observed. He went through seas of trouble, was often in danger of his life, before he reached the throne. God had to train him.

It is not all who are called to eminence in the service of the Lord, but God loves us too much to leave us to ourselves. We learn God by our sorrows and the knowledge of God it is by which we reach spiritual growth—it is the way by which we learn what life really is.

If ever one comes across a suffering saint one generally finds one who has learned of God, one who is bright in soul and a vindicator of God in all His ways.

May we discern the loving hand of a Father, who makes no mistakes, in the discipline of life, and ever thank Him as much for clouds as for sunshine, for sorrows as for joy.

A. J. POLLOCK.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

IN chapters 15 and 16 we get the seven vials poured out, in which is filled up the wrath of God. In the former part of the book the seals and trumpets are connected with the throne, whilst the vials are connected with the temple; the one speaks of God's authority and the other of His holy nature. The vials refer to His closing providential judgments, just prior to the Lord's return to reap "the harvest of the earth."

The victorious company standing on the sea of glass are similar to that of the previous chapter, verses 2 and 3:—those had passed through the fire of persecution undefiled, but these had suffered martyrdom and now theirs is the "sea of glass"; that is, a fixed state of purity, and they enjoy a heavenly portion.

The song they sing has two sides linking up God's past dealing with Israel through Moses, and His present ways of grace as seen in Christ as the Lamb; this latter title speaking of His sufferings.

God is celebrated as triumphing over all His foes, and righteous in doing so.

In the action of the seven angels everything is seen as under divine control and chapter 16 is needed to complete the vision. There is an intended parallel between the trumpets and vials, though the latter cover a wider sphere and are more searching in character. The first four in both series of judgments have the same object in view, earth, sea, rivers and fountains, and the sun. These symbolically set forth—1st, the ordered state of things without God; 2nd, the unsettled condition marked by revolutionary upheavals; 3rd, the sources which men turn to for joy and refreshment, which are not only poisoned but morally corrupt. The sun refers to the governing authority for earth and here become the means through which men suffer torment. At that time God will permit in a Satan-ruled world the consequences of that which men have chosen.

Under the fifth vial the seat of this Satanic authority itself, so blasphemous in its pretensions, as chapter 13: 1 shows, is scourged, afflicted by the judgments of God.

Great interest has always been manifest in the sixth trumpet and sixth vial, because of their connection with the Euphrates and Armageddon. Under the sixth trumpet the angels of destruction are released. The sixth vial however goes further: the water of the great river being dried up. This, whether taken symbolically or literally, indicates

that governmentally God removes the recognised barrier between east and west so that forces "mighty and strong" (see Isaiah 28: 2) are being brought against the apostate nation, and ultimately to Armageddon. What happens then chapter 19 explains. The events transpiring between chapter 16: 16 and chapter 19 are given in other scriptures. Here we simply learn of the power permitted to gather these forces—see verses 13 and 14. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the church to-day is a check on these demon powers and their activities are thereby greatly curtailed; yet they are manifested even to-day in the terrible power known as Spiritism.

The governmental dealings of God under the seventh vial, to say nothing of other important details, explain **when** Babylon is destroyed. If we connect these things with chapter 14: 8, it shows that in chronological order the "harvest of the earth" and the "vintage" follow its fall.

Babylon's **history** and **how** she is destroyed is the subject of chapters 17 and 18, which though not altogether continuous form a subject by themselves. The opening verses of chapter 17 present the Spirit's view of Great Babylon, as seen by John. Reverting to chapter 2: 20-22, Jezebel represents the corrupt Papal system **before** the rapture of the saints; and of her it is said, "she repented not." This prediction of unchanged evil has chapter 17 in view. This system will have world influence, as verse 15 of our chapter shows.

She will embrace every anti-Christian and apostate sect in Christendom, and be the consummation of pride, independence, idolatry—the Jezebel character fully developed **after** the translation of the true church.

There is a certain grandeur — as man counts grandeur — in the description of the woman as decked out by Satan, so that John “wondered with great admiration”; yet her evil character is given in verse 5, and her persecuting history both past and future in verse 6. The beast on which she rides is identified by its ten horns, but these are not said to be crowned, as in chapter 13, since in this chapter the state is viewed as being temporarily under her influence and rule. The opening verses of this chapter present a number of striking contrasts, as compared with chapter 21: 9, because the mystery of Babylon and of the beast is Satan’s counterfeit of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

The political power dominated by the woman is thus easily identified. Four stages of its career are referred to in verse 8: “was”—its history as a world power to its break up in the 5th century; “is not”—its ceasing to exist as an imperial force; “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit” — its **future** Satanic revival; “perdition” — its doom. Only to Rome could this apply.

Until verses 12—14, the future appearing of the imperial power is referred to, and its overthrow by the King of kings assured. In chronological order

verses 16—17 precede the act of judgment related in verse 14.

Chapter 18 deals with the same subject, but as seen from a different angle. God is the source of judgment now, whereas in chapter 17, the woman has her seat at Rome (verse 18) until overthrown by the **ten kings** (verse 16), these being the subordinate authorities in the Empire.

Spiritism to-day has demon power behind it; and the fundamentals of Christianity are denied by those whom one would expect to stand for the truth: but now we find this universal and apostate "church" has become the "habitation" of devils. It can be readily understood that, since the corrupt seeds of this system became prominent in chapter 2, the injunction "come out" applies wherever the influence of Babylon is exerted. In every age, God's principle for His people in the midst of corruption is **separation**.

In chapter 18, verses 1—8 refer generally to Babylon's destruction, while verses 9—19 indicate the effect of this on those connected with her **outside** the Roman sphere. The lamentation and mourning are due to the fact that she had been to them a source of gain.

The latter part of the chapter, particularly verse 20, gives the effect of Babylon's fall as far as heaven is concerned. God not only purposes the kingdom for His Son, but removes the false bride, ere the true is brought out in display.

CHRIST COMING INTO OUR LIVES.

“**T**HE Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” No words, possibly, are more familiar to us than these. How often we repeat them to ourselves and to one another. And how important it is that we should be constantly reminded of the love of Christ. Apart from Christ all is darkness. Near to Him all is light and warmth and gladness. When the soul has reached Christ, it has reached the spring, shall I say, of everlasting joy and blessing.

Of course we begin by knowing the Lord Jesus as Saviour. There is no start in the soul until that point is reached, but what I am speaking about now is a great deal more than this. We may know Christ as our Saviour, and be so sure about it that not a shadow of doubt shall ever cross our minds, but while we have this knowledge, how easy it is for the heart to drift away from Him. Oh, let us keep near to Christ! Let nothing becloud our vision of Him. If there be one word I would like to say with all the power that God can give me, it is this: **keep near to Christ.** Look up; do not be satisfied with knowing that He died for your sins upon the cross, and that He put those sins away for ever. Seek to know Christ Himself in the glory of God, a living Christ, a Christ for to-day, a Christ for every hour.

It is a blessed thing when Christ comes into the life of the believer. I wonder whether the reader knows what I mean by this. You see an illustration of it in everyday life, when two young people become attached to one another in sweet and proper affection. A powerful factor has entered into their lives. And when Christ, the living Saviour in glory, who loves us, who gave Himself for us, who gives Himself to be the object of our hearts' affections, comes into the life, moulds it, colours it, gives tone and character to it, and the heart, knowing Him more and more, becomes devoted to Him, then Christ becomes everything to that one. I think it was much like that with the beloved Apostle Paul. Thus he says: "The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Let me put it to you: has Christ come into your life like that? We talk of separation. What is the worth of any sort of separation, I should like to know, that is not brought about by that vision of Christ in the glory of God? I believe it was that which long years ago brought out many beloved brethren whom we know by name, from the world, religious or otherwise, into a path of true separation. It was the transcendent vision of Christ in the glory of God.

Let us ask Him, if we have never done it before, to reveal Himself to our souls in all His beauty and glory, so that He shall come into our lives, and be to us every day a living great reality. Christianity,

in its true power, is seen exemplified in the life of a man of like passions with ourselves, in the beloved Apostle Paul. Read Philippians 3, and you will see it there.

But I must not travel over too much ground, or divert the mind from the point I am seeking to emphasize, the transcendent importance of Christ coming into our lives, so that He controls and colours them, and gives tone and character to them. That enables us to turn away from the brightest and the best that the world has to offer, because we have found something superlatively better in Christ Himself. He loves us with a love that no tongue can tell, and no thought can compass; a love deep, and true, and tender; a love that knows neither ebb nor flow. He seems to say to us, "Let Me come into your life. I died for you, washed your sins away in My precious blood. I am going to have you up there with Me in glory presently; but all through your pilgrim days let Me come into your life." Let us say, "Lord, come in," and if we do not know how to throw open the door of our heart to let Christ in, ask Him to open the door Himself. **He that seeks shall find.**

W.B.

To constantly serve the Lord, by doing graciously and carefully a variety of small things, is **no small thing.**

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 22: 1—23: 43).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

AS we commence to read chapter 22, we reach the closing scenes of our Lord's life. The

Passover was not only a standing witness to Israel's deliverance from Egypt but also a type of the great Sacrifice which was yet to come. Now at last the climax approached, and "Christ our Passover" was to be sacrificed for us precisely at the Passover season. The religious leaders were scheming how they might kill Him in spite of the fact that many of the people viewed Him with favour. Satan inspired their hatred, and Satan it was who presented them with a tool wherewith to carry out their wishes.

John, in his Gospel, unmask's Judas for us before the end is reached. In his twelfth chapter he tells us that, consumed with covetousness, he had become a thief. He also tells us in his thirteenth chapter the exact moment at which Satan entered into him. Luke relates that dreadful fact in a more general way; and it shows that the prince of the powers of darkness considered that to encompass the death of Christ was a task of such importance that it should be delegated to no lesser power: he would take charge of the business himself. Yet he

undertook the work to his own overthrow. The compact between Judas and the religious leaders was easily settled. They were consumed with **envy**, and Judas with **the love of money**.

For many centuries the Passover had been observed with more or less faithfulness, it was now, **in its full significance**, to be observed for the last time. Within twenty-four hours its light grew pale in the shining of its Antitype, when the true Lamb of God died on the cross. It is a remarkable fact that the last time it was celebrated in its full significance, there was present to partake of it the One who instituted it—the perfect, holy Man, who was Jehovah's Fellow. He ordered the Passover to be prepared, and He decided the very place where they should eat it. The time, the manner, the place, were all His appointment. The choice lay not with the disciples but with Him, as verse 9 shows.

The Lord's foreknowledge is strikingly displayed in verse 10. Carrying the water was the task of the women; a man bearing a pitcher of water was a very uncommon sight. Yet He knew that there would be a man performing this unusual act, and that Peter and John would meet him as they entered the city. He knew also that the "goodman of the house" would respond to the message delivered by the disciples in the name of "the Master." Doubtless he recognized **the** Master as being **his** Master; in other words, he was one of the godly in Jerusalem who acknowledged His claims,

and the Lord knew how to lay His hand upon him. This man had the privilege of furnishing a guest-chamber for the use of the One who had no chamber of His own, and when the hour was come He sat down with His disciples.

In the account which Luke gives, the distinction between the Passover Supper and the Supper which He instituted is very clear: verses 15—18 give the one, and verses 19, 20 the other. The Lord's words as to the Passover indicate the closing up of that old order of things. His sufferings would mean its fulfilment, and when a spared remnant of Israel enters at last into the blessedness of the millennium, it will be as sheltered by the blood of Christ. As to the cup (verse 17), this does not appear to have been any part of the Passover as instituted through Moses, and the Lord apparently did not drink of it. Instead, He indicated that His day of joy, which the fruit of the vine symbolized, would only be reached in the coming kingdom.

Then He instituted His own Supper in remembrance of His death; the bread symbolizing His body, the cup, His shed blood. The account is very brief, and, for the full significance of it all, we have to go to 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. **Remembrance**, was what the Lord emphasized at the moment, and in view of His long absence we can see the importance of this. Through the centuries the memorial of His death has been with us, and the abiding witness of His love.

The verses which follow (21—27) witness to the folly and the feebleness which was found amongst the disciples. The hand of the betrayer was on the table, and He knew it, though the rest of the disciples were quite unaware of it. There was also strife amongst them, each wishing for the foremost place, and this just as their great Master was about to take the lowest place. Such, alas! is the heart of man, even of saints. It served however to bring out very clearly the fundamental difference between the disciple and the world. **Worldly** greatness is expressed and maintained by taking a **lordly** place: **Christian** greatness is found in taking a **servant's** place. In that greatness Jesus Himself was pre-eminent. Few words are more touching than this—"I am among you as he that serveth." Such had been His life of perfect grace; and such, in supreme measure, His death was about to be.

It is also most touching to observe how He spoke to the disciples in verses 28—30. They were indeed foolish, and their spirit far astray from His, yet with what graciousness He brought into the light the good feature that had characterized them. They were firmly attached to Him. In spite of His temptations, culminating in His rejection, they had continued with Him. This He would never forget, and there would be an abundant recompence in the kingdom. In the coming day He will take up the kingdom **for** His Father, and take it up **by** His saints, and these disciples of His will have a very special place of prominence. In the light of this gracious pronouncement they must surely have

felt how mean and sordid had been their previous strife for a great place. And, **may we feel the same.**

Next, verses 31—34, comes the Lord's special warning to Peter. At this moment he was thinking and acting in the flesh, so Jesus used his name according to the flesh, and His repetition of it conveyed the urgency of His warning. Self-confidence marked him as well as desire for pre-eminence, and this laid him open to Satan: yet the Lord's intercession would prevail, and there was wheat there and not chaff only. This wheat would remain when the winnowing was passed.

The four verses which follow, 35—38, were addressed to all the disciples. They had to bear witness that they had possessed an absolute sufficiency as the fruit of His power, though sent without any human resources; and He intimated that with His death and departure another order of things would supervene. Men would reckon Him among the transgressors in this world, but the things concerning Him had an end in another world. He would be exalted to glory, and His disciples left as His witnesses, having to resume the ordinary circumstances of this world. Their response to these words showed that they were likely to miss the spirit of what He said, by seizing upon one literal detail; so for the moment He left it.

Thus far it has been the dealings of His **love** with His own; now we see the **perfection** of His Manhood displayed in Gethsemane. He faced, as

before the Father, the full bitterness of that cup of judgment which He had to drink; and His full perfection is seen in that, while shrinking from it, He devoted Himself to the accomplishing of the Father's will, whatever it might cost Him. Luke, alone of the Evangelists, tells us of the appearance of the angel to strengthen Him. This emphasizes the reality of His Manhood, in keeping with the special character of this Gospel. So also His sweat being as great drops of blood is only mentioned in this Gospel. The horror of that which was before Him was entered into in communion with the Father.

With verse 47 the last scenes begin; and now all is **calmness** and **grace** with the Lord: all is **confusion** and **agitation** with His friends, His adversaries, and even with His judges. The **communion** in the garden led to the **calmness** in the great hour of trial. Judas reached the heights of hypocrisy in betraying his Master with a kiss. Peter used one of those two swords they had just alluded to, in ill-conceived and ill-directed violence. What he did in his violence the Lord promptly undid in His grace. The violence was to be left to the multitude with the swords and staves. It was their hour, and the hour in which the power of darkness was to be displayed. Against that dark background the Lord displayed His grace.

The account of Peter's fall follows. The way for it had been prepared by his previous desire for the first place, his self-confidence, and his violent

action. Now he followed afar off, and soon got amongst the enemies of his Master. Satan set the trap with consummate skill. First the maid and then the other two servants pressed home their identification of him, leading him to denials increasing in emphasis; though Luke does not tell us how he broke into curses and swearing. That after all was incidental; the essential thing was that he denied his Lord.

Precisely at that moment, just as Jesus had predicted, the cock crew; and then the Lord turned and looked upon him. Just what that look conveyed we may not know, but it spoke such volumes to the fallen disciple that he went out from the enemies of his Master with bitter tears. Judas was filled with remorse, but we do not read that he wept. Peter's bitter weeping was a witness that after all he did love his Lord, and that his faith was not going to fail. The prayer and the look were beginning to prove their efficacy.

This Gospel makes it clear that the trial of Jesus was divided into four parts. First, there was the examination before the chief priests and scribes, as they sought for some plausible pretext for condemning Him to death. The account of this fills the closing verses of the chapter, and it is given with brevity. It is made very plain however that they condemned Him on His own plain confession of who He was. They challenged Him as to being the Christ, and the Lord's answer showed that He knew they were fixed in their unbelief and in their

determination to condemn Him. Still, He claimed to be the Son of Man, who should presently wield the very power of God, and this they interpreted as meaning that He must also claim to be the Son of God. This indeed He was, and His reply, "Ye say that I am," was an emphatic, "Yes." As claiming to be **the Christ, the Son of Man, the Son of God**, they condemned Him to death.

Then second, they led Him to Pilate to get the Roman sanction for the execution of this sentence. Here they changed their ground completely, and charged Him as being an insurrectionary and a rival to Caesar. Jesus confessed Himself to be **the King of the Jews**, yet Pilate declared Him to be faultless. This might seem a surprising declaration, but Mark gives us a peep behind the scenes when he tells us that Pilate knew that the fierce hatred of the religious leaders was inspired by envy. Hence he began by refusing to be the tool of their grudge, and availed himself of the Lord's connection with Galilee to send Him to Herod. The accusation, "He stirreth up the people," was indeed true; but He stirred them up towards God, and not against Caesar.

So, third, there was the brief appearance of the Lord before Herod, who was eager to see Him, hoping to witness something sensational. Here again the chief priests and scribes vehemently accused Him, but in the presence of that wicked man, whom He had previously characterized as, "that fox," Jesus answered nothing. His digni-

fied silence only moved Herod and his soldiers to abandon all pretence of administering justice, and descend to mockery and ridicule. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away.

Hence Herod returned Him to Pilate, and here the fourth and last stage of His trial began. But before we are told of Pilate's further efforts to placate the accusers and release Jesus, Luke puts on record how both he and Herod buried their enmity that day in condemning Him. The same tragedy has been often repeated since. Men of wholly different character and view have found a point of unity in their rejection of Christ. Herod was given up to his pleasures and utterly indifferent: Pilate, though possessed of some sense of what was right, was a time-server and hence ready to do wrong for popularity's sake; but they came to an agreement here.

The story of the final scenes of the trial are given with brevity in verses 13—26. Not one word spoken by our Lord is put on record: all is presented as a matter lying between Pilate and the people instigated by the chief priests; yet certain things stand out very clearly. In the first place, abundant witness is given that **Jesus was faultless**. Pilate had stated this during the earlier examination (verse 4), and now he repeats it twice (verses 14, 22), and states it for a fourth time as being Herod's verdict (verse 15). God took care that there should be abundant and official witness to this.

Then the **blind unreasoning fury** of His accusers is made abundantly manifest. They merely shouted for His death. Again, the choice they made an alternative to His release stands out with crystal clearness. Twice in these verses Barabbas is identified with **sedition and murder**; that is, he was the living embodiment of the two forms in which evil is so frequently presented in Scripture—corruption, and violence; or, to put it in another way, we see the power of Satan working, both as a serpent, and as a roaring lion. Lastly we see that the condemnation of Jesus was the result of the **weakness** of the judge, who “delivered Jesus to their will.” He represented the autocratic power of Rome, but he abdicated it in favour of the will of the people.

The crucifixion scenes occupy verses 27—49. We are struck by the fact that right through nothing happened in an ordinary way. Everything was unusual — supernatural, or bordering upon the supernatural. It was quite usual for professional wailing women to appear on these occasions, but wholly unusual for them to be told to weep for themselves, or to hear a prophecy of coming doom. Jesus Himself was the “green tree,” according to Psalm 1, and perhaps He was alluding to the parable of Ezekiel 20: 45—49. In that scripture God predicts a flame upon every green tree and every dry tree. Judgment fell upon the “green tree” when Christ suffered for our sakes. When the fire breaks out in the dry tree of apostate Jews, it will not be quenched.

Then the prayer of Jesus as they crucified Him was wholly unexpected and unusual. He desired the Father, in effect, that the sin of the people might be counted not as murder, for which there was no forgiveness, but as manslaughter, so that there might yet be available a city of refuge, even for His murderers. An answer to that prayer was seen some fifty days later, when Peter in Jerusalem preached salvation through the risen Christ, and 3,000 souls fled for refuge. The prayer was unusual because it was the fruit of such Divine compassions as had never come to light before.

The actions of the various people involved in His crucifixion were unusual. Men do not ordinarily taunt and revile even the worst criminals undergoing capital punishment. Here all classes did so, even rulers, soldiers, and one of the malefactors who suffered at His side. The power of the devil and of darkness had seized their minds.

Pilate's superscription was unexpected. Having condemned Him as a false claimant of kingship amongst the Jews, He wrote a title proclaiming Him to be the King of the Jews, and, as another Gospel shows, he refused to alter it. This was the overruling of God.

The sudden conversion of the second thief was wholly supernatural. He condemned himself, and justified Jesus. Having justified Him, he owned Him as Lord and proclaimed—virtually, though not in so many words—his belief that God would

raise him from the dead, so as to establish him in His kingdom. He fulfilled the two conditions of Romans 10: 9, only he believed that God **would** raise Him from the dead, instead of believing, as we do, that God **has** raised Him from the dead. The faith of the dying thief was a gem of the first water, beside which our faith to-day loses its sparkle. It is much more remarkable to believe that a thing shall be done, when as yet it is not done, than to believe that a thing is done, when it is done. And further, it was most unusual that a malefactor should wish to be **remembered** by the King, when His kingdom was established. Malefactors usually slink into the dark and wish to be forgotten by the authorities. His wish to be remembered shows his faith in **the grace of the suffering Lord** equalled his faith in **His coming glory**.

The response of Jesus to the thief's prayer was wonderful and unexpected indeed! Not merely in the coming kingdom but that very day he was to experience grace reaching beyond death, and landing his ransomed spirit into companionship with Christ in Paradise. Now Paradise and the third Heaven are identified in 2 Corinthians 12: 2—4. These words of the Lord were the first definite revelation of the fact that immediately death supervenes the spirits of the saints are to be in conscious blessedness **with Christ**.

F. B. HOLE.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

(HELD IN PORTOBELLO, MIDLOTHIAN).

A DISTINCT subdivision of the book extends from verse 1 of chapter 19 to verse 8 of chapter 21. Chapter 19 gives us two events: one private and heavenly—the marriage supper of the Lamb. The other is His appearing to judgment, which is public, and in relation to the earth. From this there follows in the next chapter, as a necessary sequence, Satan's imprisonment in the bottomless pit, which runs concurrently with Christ's reign of a thousand years. After this the Great White Throne of judgment is set up; and finally, in the beginning of chapter 21, the eternal state is introduced. This orderly series of events is introduced by much rejoicing in heaven. We find "Alleluia" four times repeated, expressive of praise Godwards. They refer first to the consummation of God's ways in blessing and judgment; second, to the millennial reign, and third, to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Up to verse 4 of chapter 19, the four and twenty elders have represented the redeemed of both Old and New Testament times in their glorified bodies. Now this figure, having served its purpose, is dropped, because in verse 7 the "wife" of the Lamb is distinguished. The "bride" is to be presented to Christ. The call to "Praise our God, all ye His servants," has its answer in verses 6 and 7, and the "great multitude" embraces all who are in that heavenly scene except "the Lamb's wife." Then we read of the "fine linen" which is **granted** to her, and this implies that, following the translation of the saints and prior to the marriage supper, the judgment seat of Christ has been set up and the saints manifested there. The outcome of this is "the righteousnesses of saints," which the fine linen symbolizes. Then will be seen the fruit of those "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2: 10).

In the Old Testament three kings set forth Christ in His royal character—David, Solomon and Melchizedek—as Man of war, Prince of peace, and Blessor in the millennial age. Verse 11 introduces Him in the first aspect; but yet wider glories rest upon Him, as symbolized in the succeeding verses. The "white horse" signifies victory. Being "Faithful and True," all that He is and does is characterized by righteousness. Having eyes "as a flame of fire," He sees and knows all, and so makes no mistakes. The "Name written," unknown by any save Himself, expresses His Deity. His name being, "the Word of God" shows that

He expresses God in all His attributes. The "sharp sword," out of His mouth, speaks of the authority and power of His word. As King of kings He has universal authority.

In Luke 21, the Christian era comes in between verses 24 and 25. From verse 25 onward, the end of Gentile supremacy is foretold. How that end comes is explained in verses 17—21 of our chapter. Armageddon takes place, involving the destruction of all the kings of the earth as well as of the beast and the false prophet, who are cast down to their doom in the lake of fire. Their followers are dealt with as those who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapter 20, the unseen leader of evil is dealt with. In verse 2, his full character as the personification of cruelty, and of guile, as the tempter and the adversary, is announced, and the bottomless pit becomes his prison for a thousand years. The blessing of those participating in the first resurrection is now stated, and the martyred saints of the tribulation are not left out. Of that resurrection Christ was the Firstfruits, then the saints of both Old and New Testaments at the Rapture, then the two companies of tribulation martyrs on the eve of Christ's reign. Thus all is carried to completion.

The loosing of Satan at the end of the millenium raises the question as to whom he gathers, described as "Gog and Magog." In Ezekiel 38 and 39, Gog and Magog refer to Russia **geographically**,

and to the attack on the land of Israel before the millennium. In our chapter it is Gog and Magog **characteristically**, and applies to the act of rebellion which ends the millennium. Evidently those entering the kingdom at the beginning will be born again, and those who are born during the thousand years will become true subjects of the kingdom only by new birth. This will not be realized by all, and many will render feigned obedience never having experienced this spiritual change. When Satan is loosed such become his followers. This proves that neither law, nor grace, nor even a period of glory, extending over a thousand years, can of themselves change man. Christ said, "Ye must be born again."

The Great White Throne judgment shows us that what God has separated here, He does not confound on the other side of death. No saints are here; the wicked dead are judged by themselves. The devil is finally disposed of, and then, the earth and heaven having fled away, the throne is set in space. This answers in point of time to 2 Peter 3: 7—12. In John 5: 29 the Lord referred to the coming forth of men to judgment; here it is fulfilled, and, soul and body reunited, responsible beings stand before the throne. The twice repeated statement, judged "according to their works," shows that this is the ground of condemnation, and not merely that men have an evil nature. There are the books, and the book of life, speaking of the One who suffered for sinners. The last verse gives the most solemn words in Scripture, as to the re-

sult of refusing God's mercy in Christ.

The opening verses of chapter 21, show that eternity will involve not only a new spiritual state but actually a new heaven and a new earth; and while perfect communion will exist, the distinction between the two spheres will remain. What Peter looked for (see, 2 Peter 3: 13) John now sees. Scripture speaks of three Jerusalems. (1) the earthly centre of blessing, to be established as such, according to Isaiah 65. (2) the Jerusalem above, according to Galatians 4: 26, the heavenly system of blessing. (3) the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, of which verse 2 speaks. The Lamb's wife, in this new character, is seen a thousand years after the marriage supper in the joy and purity of what she is for Him.

The "Behold" of verse 3, indicates something of great importance, for God's original purpose is now fulfilled. It was set aside by the entrance of sin, and then again at Babel, but now God dwells with men in fulness of blessing beyond anything contemplated at the beginning, and every cause and occasion of sorrow is for ever removed by His hand. In verses 5 and 6, we have the assurance of this divinely given, and all the power of the throne of the universe is behind the assurance. All is accomplished by that power, and there are those who stand in the relationship of son to God, and also those whose portion lies for ever in the lake of fire. Nothing now remains to be done. All is the outcome of what God is in Himself.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED.

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the SALVATION of the Lord, which He will show you to-day" (Exodus 14: 13).

"Thus the Lord SAVED Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exodus 14: 30).

ONLY a few days ago you might have seen these descendants of Israel in their houses in Egypt with the blood of the slain lamb sprinkled outside. They were then a **sheltered** people, but now we see them **saved**.

The sprinkled blood had reference to God's holiness and the people's sin. Everything connected with the soul's blessing is based upon the blood. However much God might yearn in compassionate love over those who have sinned, it is impossible that He should bless other than righteously. God must be **just** in justifying men if they are to be justified at all. The blood of Christ, infinite in value, has made this gloriously possible. The Passover is a picture of it. Every believer is now sheltered by the blood. Do we think of the demands of divine justice in respect of our sins? The blood has met them all. Justice lays down her uplifted sword and declares that she is satisfied. Blessed news for a conscience-burdened sinner!

Still the sheltered people of Exodus 12 had yet to be saved. Saved from what? from judgment? from the just wrath of a sin-hating God? Nay, **the blood had settled that question, settled it for**

ever. Saved from what then? we once more ask. Saved from the foe, saved from hard and cruel bondage, saved out of the iron furnace, saved from slavery, saved by the intervention of divine power which, in effecting their deliverance, should overthrow the enemy, and bury his battalions at the bottom of the sea.

But between the hour of leaving their old homes and their crossing the Red sea the children of Israel had to pass through a night of terrible anguish. Little did they suspect that when Pharaoh and his servants, and all the Egyptians, urged them to depart, and gave them jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, that they would ere long pursue them with chariots and horsemen to bring them back again. But so it was. Encamped at Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, all unconscious of what was coming, they "lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid." Disheartened and cowed by long years of servitude no one dreamt of resistance. Nor would it have succeeded; for what could they do against the flower of Egypt's soldiery? Deep indeed was their distress. "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the

wilderness" (Exodus 14: 11, 12). Thus bitterly did they cry in their dejection and despair.

The counterpart of all this is found in the experience of many a soul, especially among the newly-converted. With gladness of heart they quitted their former haunts. They rejoiced in the shelter they had found in the sprinkled blood, and thought not of the restless foe. Not many days pass ere sin and Satan threaten them on every side. Evil thoughts afflict them sore. Horrible temptations assail them. They are incited to things that never entered the mind before. Hell seems to have opened her mouth and belched out fire and brimstone. They wonder if they have ever been really converted, and they wish that they had never said a word about it to anybody. They feel their powerlessness, and are ready to give all up, and own themselves vanquished. They know not that God is for them. "I knew I could never be a Christian. I was sure I could never stand." It is thus they speak. If the eye of such a one rests on this page let him ponder well the scene set before us in Exodus 14.

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Such were the words—bold, brave words of faith—that Moses spake in answer to their piteous, despairing cry.

Whose shall these people be? is the question that now ripens for decision. Two masters claim them. Shall Pharaoh capture and drive them back to toil afresh in his brickfields? Shall they be ground down again beneath his iron heel, or shall Jehovah save them out of his hand that they may serve Him? Ask the people whose they are, and whose they will be, and the answer shall come, as with the voice of one man, "We are the Lord's, and Him would we serve." But the contest lies between Pharaoh and the living God.

It was the hour of Israel's extremity. Cope with the advancing foe they could not. He was more than a match for them. But now was God's opportunity. They should "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." The battle was not theirs, but God's. He should fight for them, and they should hold their peace. Was God for Israel? Then the proud banners of Egypt should assuredly be humbled to the dust. If Israel was feeble, Israel's God was not. Victory and deliverance were assured.

Beautiful and full of meaning was the first step Jehovah took. "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light to these." Jehovah was their light and shield. As a hen covers her chickens with her

wing, so the Lord covered them. He would comfort and encourage their timid hearts by telling them that He stood between them and their adversaries, and that before a spear could touch them God Himself must be overcome.

And, dear believer, is it less true in our day that God is for His people—for **you**? Certainly not. Oh, let your heart receive this blessed fact in all its strengthening power! Be not afraid. Were there ten thousand devils instead of one they should not be able to lead you captive again. God is for you. Your salvation is His work. Stand still and see it and rejoice.

Returning for a moment to the Passover, God is seen there in the character of a holy and righteous Judge, who finds in the blood that which meets every claim of divine justice. But on the shores of the Red Sea He is to be known by Israel as a Saviour-God. They shall see His power displayed for their redemption. The raging waters shall be a wall on their right hand and on their left, but their foes shall find in them a grave. And so it came to pass. "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore." No wonder that the people sang, the timbrels sounded, and the women danced for very joy and gladness. They were out of Egypt now—saved—and their eyes should see no more the land where they had wept and groaned, where they had sighed and suffered. Jehovah had borne them on eagles' wings,

and brought them unto Himself (Exodus 19: 4).

And in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus there is more than shelter—there is **salvation**. For at the cross the power of darkness was overthrown. Death, and he that had the power of it, are conquered. Christ has triumphed, and in His triumph all His people share. Every possible thing that could have furnished a weapon for Satan to scare and terrify is gone. Not only have our sins been put away, but we are brought to God; and this of necessity involves the annulling of Satan's power, and our deliverance from his hand. Stand forth then, dear believer, as Christ's free man. He has broken your chains. The enemy may rage, but you are out of his reach. Delivered from the power of darkness, God has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love; in whom we have redemption (Col. 1: 13). It is yours to know this. Can you think that Jesus died for you and rose again to leave you in Egypt? Never! He gave Himself for us that He might deliver us from this present evil world (Galatians 1: 4); and if Christ has suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God, then we should know that unto God we have been brought.

So, when standing on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel could sing in exalted strains of Jehovah's triumph, and of what He had done for them. "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength

unto Thy holy habitation'' (Exodus 15: 13). They were out of Egypt and brought to God.

Surely our salvation is greater than theirs. That was earthly and temporal; ours is spiritual and eternal. And if they could celebrate God's victory, and the sinking of their enemy like lead in the mighty waters, we too, as standing where Christ's death and resurrection place us, can chant in joyous strains the song of our redemption.

And not only did they sing of what the Lord had done, but they could sing in simple confidence of what He would yet do. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established'' (Exodus 15: 17). As surely as He had led them **out**, so would He bring them **in**. The hand that had delivered them from Egypt should carry them into Canaan. So with us. We may have the wilderness to go through, with its trials and difficulties; but God is for us, and Christ is risen, and is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Sustained by His all-prevailing intercession, hourly supplied with needed grace, and receiving seasonable help, the redeemed of the Lord shall safely reach the heavenly land. Under the leadership of the great Captain of their salvation they shall be more than conquerors, and in glory they shall be the everlasting witnesses that He who had led them out was able to bring them into His own eternal rest.

Reader, are you in the enjoyment of this great salvation? Sheltered by the blood, do you know that God is for you? Are you consciously out of Egypt and brought to God? Do you see that by the death and resurrection of Christ the last link that bound you to Egypt has been broken? It is your privilege to know this and more besides. You will know it in power if you receive in faith the testimony of Scripture as to these things. Thus delivered, and called with a heavenly calling, may your affections be set on Christ in glory. Press forward to the Canaan above, and when you stand among its hills and valleys you shall remember all the way the Lord your God has led you, and shall see how wise and strong was His hand.

W.B.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(LUKE 23: 44—24: 53).

This outline of Luke is brief and condensed. **Except** the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

IF everything was unusual, on the human side, when Jesus died, there were also supernatural manifestations from the hand of God; and of these verses 44 and 45 speak. The three brightest hours of the day were darkened, by the sun being veiled. There was something very fitting in this,

for the true "Sun of Righteousness" was bearing our sin at that time. Also the veil of the temple was rent by a Divine hand, signifying that the day of the visible temple system was now over, and the way into the holiest about to be made manifest—see, Hebrews 9: 8. Our true "Sun" **was veiled** for a moment, enduring our judgment, that there might be **no veil** between us and God.

Luke does not record the Saviour's cry as to the Divine forsaking, uttered about the time that the darkness passed away, nor the triumphant shout, "It is finished," though he does put on record that He "cried with a loud voice," and that then His closing words were, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." In these closing words on the cross we see the One, who all along had been marked by prayerful submission to the will of God, closing His path as the perfect, dependent Man. Having said this, He yielded up His spirit; yet we see He is more than Man, for at one moment there was the loud voice, His vigour unimpaired, and the next moment He was dead. In every sense His was a supernatural death.

Testimony to this was borne by the centurion who witnessed the scene by reason of his official duty. Even the crowds drawn together by morbid curiosity were moved to uneasy fear and forboding, and those who were His friends retreated into the distance. The centurion became a fourth witness to the perfection of Jesus, joining Pilate, Herod and the dying thief.

The prophetic writings had said, "Lover and friend hast Thou put far from Me" (Psalm 88: 18); but they had also said, "He made His grave . . . with the rich in His death" (Isaiah 53: 9). If verse 49 gives us the fulfilment of the one, verses 50—53 give us the fulfilment of the other. In every emergency God has in reserve an instrument to effect His purpose and fulfil His word. Joseph is mentioned in all four Gospels, and John informs us that up to this point he had been a secret disciple for fear of the Jews. Now he acts with boldness when all others were cowed, and the new, untainted tomb is available for the sacred body of the Lord. Not even by the faintest contact did He "see corruption." Men had intended otherwise, but God serenely fulfilled His word.

The closing verses of chapter 23, and the opening part of chapter 24, make it very plain that none of His disciples in any way anticipated His resurrection. This makes the testimony to it all the more pronounced and satisfying. They were not enthusiastic and visionary, inclined to believe anything, but rather of materialistic mind and despondent, inclined to doubt everything.

The women are brought before us in the first place. They had no thoughts but those suitable to an ordinary funeral. Their minds were occupied with the sepulchre, His body and the spices and ointments that were customary. The Jewish sabbath intervened however, and put a stop to their activities — this was of God, for their activities

were wholly unnecessary, and by the time they could have resumed them, the sacred body was not to be found. Instead of the dead body they found two men in shining garments, and heard from their lips that the Lord was now "the living One" and not among the dead. So the first testimony to His resurrection came from the lips of angels. A second testimony was found in the words He Himself had spoken during His life. He had predicted His death, **and His resurrection.** When reminded of His words, they remembered them.

The women returned and told all these things to the eleven; that is, they presented to them the evidence of the angels, and of the Lord's own words, and of their own eyes, as to the body not being in the sepulchre; yet they did not believe. The modern sceptic might call these things, "idle tales;" well, that was just how they appeared to the disciples. Peter however, with his usual impulsiveness, went a step further. He ran to the sepulchre to see for himself, and what he saw so far verified their words. Yet in his mind wonder rather than faith was excited.

Next we are carried on to the afternoon of the resurrection day, and Luke gives us in full what happened with the two going into the country, to which Mark just alludes in verses 12 and 13 of his last chapter. The incident gives us a very striking insight into the state of mind that characterized them—and doubtless they were typical of the rest.

Cleopas and his companion were evidently just

drifting away from Jerusalem to the old home, utterly disappointed and dejected. They had entertained very fervent expectations which centred in the Messiah, and in Jesus they believed that they had found Him. To them Jesus of Nazareth was "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people;" and at that point evidently their faith stopped. They did not as yet perceive in Him the Son of God who could not be holden of death, and so to them His death was the mournful end of His story. They did think that "it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," but then that to them meant redeeming them by power from all their national foes, rather than redeeming them to God by His blood. His death had shattered their hopes of this redemption by power and by glory. This disappointment was the fruit of their having cherished expectations which were not warranted by the Word of God. They expected the glory without the sufferings.

Not a few believers may be found to-day, who have drifted off into the world in rather similar fashion. They too have drifted because disappointed, and they are disappointed because of entertaining unwarranted expectations. The expectations may have been centred in Christian work, and the conquests of the Gospel, or in some particular group or body of believers with whom they were linked, or perhaps in themselves and their own personal sanctity and power. However, things have not happened as they expected, and they are in the depths of dejection.

This case of Cleopas will help in the diagnosis of their trouble. In the first place, like him they have some little "Israel," which engrosses their thoughts. Had Israel been redeemed, just as Cleopas had expected, he would have been in the seventh heaven of delight: as it was not so, he had lost his enthusiasm and interest. He had to learn that though Israel was right in the centre of the bright little picture that his fancy had painted, it was not in the centre of God's picture. **God's picture is the real one, and its centre is Christ risen from the dead.** When Jesus had joined Himself to them, drawn out their thoughts and gained their confidence, He opened up to them, not things concerning Israel, but "things concerning HIMSELF." A certain cure for disappointment is to have Christ filling every picture that our minds entertain:—not work, even Christian work, not brethren, nor even the church, not self in any of its many forms, **but Christ.**

But there was a second thing. True, these unwarranted hopes of Cleopas, which led to his disappointment, had sprung from this thinking too much of Israel and too little of Christ; yet this wrong emphasis was the result of his **partial reading** of the Old Testament Scriptures. Verse 25 shows that their foolishness and the slowness of their hearts had led them to overlook some parts of the Scriptures. They believed **some** things that the prophets had spoken—those nice, plain, easy-to-be-understood things as to the glory of the Messiah—whilst they set on one side and passed over

the predictions of His sufferings, which doubtless seemed to them to be mysterious, peculiar, and difficult to understand. The very things they had skipped were just what would have saved them from the painful experience through which they were passing.

In speaking to them, three times did the Lord emphasize the importance of **all** Scripture — see verses 25 and 27. He so dealt with them as to make them see that His death and resurrection were the appointed basis of all the glory which is yet to come. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things. . . ?” Yes, **indeed He ought!** And as He ought, **so had He done!**

What a walk that must have been! At the close of it they could not bear the thought of a separation from this unexpected “Stranger,” and they besought Him to abide. Going in to tarry with them, He of necessity took the place which is ever intrinsically His. He must be Host and Leader and also the Blessor; and then their eyes were opened and they knew Him. What joy for their hearts when suddenly they discerned their risen Lord!

But why did He withdraw from their sight just as they had recognized Him? For the same reason doubtless as He had told Mary not to touch Him earlier in that same day (see, John 20: 17). He wished to show them from the outset that He had entered into new conditions by resurrection, and

that consequently **their relations with Him must be upon a new basis.** The brief glimpse they had of Him however, coupled with His unfolding of all the prophetic Scriptures, had done its work. They were completely revolutionized. A new light had dawned upon them: new hopes had arisen in their hearts: their disconsolate drifting was over. Though night had fallen, they retraced their steps to Jerusalem, to seek the company of their fellow-disciples. Sick at heart they had sought solitude: faith and hope being revived, the company of saints was their delight. It is ever thus with all of us.

Back they came to tell their great news to the eleven, but they arrived to find themselves forestalled. The eleven knew the Lord was risen, for He had also appeared to Peter. The proofs of His resurrection were rapidly accumulating. They now had not only the testimony of the angels, and the remembrance of His own words, and the account given by the women, but also the witness of Simon, almost instantly corroborated by the witness of the two returned from Emmaus. And, best of all, even as the two were telling their story, in their very midst, with words of peace on His lips, stood **Jesus Himself.**

Yet, even so, they were not at the outset wholly convinced. There was about Him in His new risen condition something unusual and past their comprehension. They were fearful, thinking they saw a spirit. The truth was they saw their Saviour in

a spiritual body, such as I Corinthians 15: 44 speaks of. This fact He proceeded to demonstrate to them in very convincing fashion. His was a body of "flesh and bones," yet though conditions were new, it was to be identified with the body of "flesh and blood," in which He had suffered, for the marks of the suffering were there in both hands and feet. And while the truth was slowly dawning in their minds, He made it yet more manifest by eating before them, that they might see that He was not merely "a spirit." Thus the reality of His resurrection was fully certified, and the true character of His risen body made manifest.

Then He began to instruct them, and first of all He emphasized to them what He had already stressed with threefold emphasis to the two at Emmaus, that ALL things written concerning Him in the Scriptures had to be fulfilled, as indeed He had told them before His death. They were to understand that all that had happened had transpired according to the Scriptures, and was in no way a contradiction of what had been written. Then, in the second place, He opened their understandings so that they might really take in all that had been opened up in the Scriptures. This, we think, is to be identified with that in-breathing of His risen life, which is recorded in John 20: 22. This new life in the power of the Spirit carried with it a new understanding.

Then, thirdly, He indicated that, having this new understanding, and being "witnesses of these

things," a new commission was to be entrusted to them. They were no longer to speak of law but of "repentance and remission of sins . . . in His Name." Grace was to be their theme—forgiveness of sins through the Name and virtue of Another—and the only necessity on the side of men is repentance—that honesty of heart which leads a man to take his true place as a sinner before God. This preaching of grace is to be "among all nations," and not confined to the Jews only, as was the giving of the law. Yet it was to begin at Jerusalem, for in that city man's iniquity had risen to its climax in the crucifixion of the Saviour; and where sin had abounded, there the over-abounding of grace was to be manifested.

The basis, on which rests this commission of grace, is seen in verse 46—the death and resurrection of Christ. All that had just happened, which had seemed so strange and a stumbling-block to the disciples, had been the laying of the necessary foundation, on which the superstructure of grace was to be reared. And all was according to the Scriptures, as He again emphasized by saying, "Thus it is written." The Word of God imparted a Divine authority to all that had transpired and to the message of grace which they were to proclaim.

So, in verse 46 and 47, we have the Lord inaugurating the present Gospel of grace, and giving us its **authority**, its **basis**, its **terms**, the **scope** it embraces, and the **depths** of sin and need to which it descends.

Verse 49 gives us a fourth thing, and by no means the least — the coming gift of the Holy Spirit, as the **power** of all that is contemplated. The Scriptures had been opened up, their understandings had been opened too, the new commission of grace had been clearly given; but all must wait until they possessed the power in which alone they could act, or rightly use what now they knew. Luke draws his Gospel to an end, leaving everything, if we may so put it, like a well-laid fire waiting for the match to be struck which will produce a cheerful blaze. He opens his sequel—the Acts—by showing us how the coming of the Spirit struck the match, and lit the fire with wonderful results.

We have just seen how this Gospel ends with the launching of the Gospel of **grace**, which is in striking contrast with the way in which, in its opening verses, it brings before us the temple service in working order, according to the **law** of Moses. The four verses which close this Gospel also present us with a striking contrast, for the first chapter gives us a picture of godly people with **earthly** hopes, waiting for the Messiah who would visit and redeem His people. It shows us a God-fearing priest, engaged in his temple duties, but possessed of only a little faith, so that he was struck **dumb**. Not believing, he could not speak: he knew nothing worth speaking about, at all events for the moment. Verses 50—53 show us the risen Saviour ascending to engage in His service as High Priest in the **heavens**, and leaving behind Him a com-

pany of people whose hearts have been carried from earth to heaven, and whose mouths are **opened** in praise.

Bethany was the spot from which He ascended, the place where, more than any other, He had been appreciated. He went up in the very act of blessing His disciples. When we remember what they had proved themselves to be, this is indeed touching. Six weeks before all had forsaken Him and fled. One had denied Him with oaths and curses, and to all of them He might have said what He did say to two—"O fools, and slow of heart to believe." Yet upon these foolish, faithless, cowardly disciples He lifted up His hands in blessing. And upon us too, though very like to these men in spite of our living in the day when the Spirit is given; His blessing still descends.

He blessed them, and they worshipped Him. They returned to the spot that He had appointed for them until the Spirit came, and in the temple they were continually occupied in the praise of God. Zacharias had been dumb: no blessing could escape his lips, either Godward or manward. Jesus went up on high to assume His priestly office in the fulness of blessing for His people; and He left behind those who proved to be the nucleus of the new priestly race, and already they were blessing God and worshipping Him.

This Gospel has indeed carried us **from law to grace** and **from earth to heaven**.