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HYMN No. 29. Prayer. HUMN No. 123.

Scripts. Isaiah 6. 1-13. Revelation 1.10-19.

This chapter in Isaiah is very often used as an appeal to the sinner in his sins, and sometimes as a preparatory word for the evangelist, particularly in preaching the Gospel, but the chapter can be taken with other meanings, and perhaps more meticulously.

What we have here is the preparation of a servant of the Lord for a particular service. There is no doubt at all that Isaiah, when this vision was granted to him, already knew the Lord, and was no doubt a pious young man. - But to be a pious young man is not altogether sufficient to be an effective servant of God. There are lessons to be learned, and there was a lesson that Isaiah had to learn.

Briefly, he had to learn TWO lessons - First, the GLORY of the LORD, and secondly, his own uncleanness, his personal defilement, and consequently his unfitness to be a servant at all. He had to have the simplest truths burnt on his very soul in order that he might be a fit vessel in the hand of the Lord to be used of Him, and I think therefore that the scripture has an application to us all, especially in our character as witnesses, servants for our Lord Jesus Christ in such a day as has never been before in the history of the Church.

Now just look a little at this chapter.

In the first place you see a note of time, given in the first verse. "In the year that King Uzziah died". That was the occasion, and those brief words are very pregnant with meaning.

What was King Uzziah? He was a leprous King. One of the seed of David had become a leper, and he was shut out from the privileges that were his as a worshipper of Jehovah, and also from his privileges as a King, and even from his privileges as a citizen in the holy Nation that God had called out for Himself. He dwelt in a house by himself. How did it come about? King Uzziah as a King was coupled among those that had already reigned successors to David. The length of his reign exceeded the reign of David and of Solomon. He reigned 52 years, and they only 40 years. - Not only that, he ascended the throne with great promise. - A young man who determined to walk in the footsteps of his godly father, and he ruled righteously to a great degree, so that God prospered him mightily. The enemy nations round about were subdued under him. He made great improvements in his nation and in the city of David. But he had not removed all the traces of idolatry from his kingdom. There were still high places in the land, and idolatry was winked at. There was the seat of mischief. Instead of his heart giving thanks and glory to God for the blessings that had accrued in his reign, he was lifted up with pride. The more he prospered, the prouder he became. Instead of giving the glory to God, he gave glory to himself. He presumed even to interfere with what were the exclusive rights of the sons of Aaron, and although Nadab and Abihu gave solemn warnings to him of it again and again, he went into the holiest with incense.

He, the King? The High Priest and those valiant Levites who did not fear the wrath of the King, withstood him, but the greatest of all, GOD withstood him. In the Holy Place itself he became LEPER. - immediately under the stroke of God. The mark of leprosy rose up in his forehead, and men saw the rightful heir of David, of the promises of David, and the sure mercies of David, standing there before that company of priests, branded as a LEPER.- Unfit to be within the congregation of Israel. God had smitten him.

"In the year that King Uzziah died". He lived for a long time, but what an ending to that reign! There is another aspect, of a Leper.- Like King - like people. If there is a leprous King on the throne, there will be leprous people in his Kingdom, and the blight of leprosy spread throughout his nation. You have only to read the preceding chapters of this Prophecy, placed there for this very purpose, to show you what an immoral condition prevailed amongst the chosen people. There they were, full of good works, but abominable in the eyes of the Lord. What they did with their hands was denied with their hearts, and God looks not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart.

So Isaiah had lived for some little time with a leprous King, and amongst a leprous people. He was there. Isaiah, a pious young man, was sinful.

It is world-wise to be pious. There are many pious young men who ask questions. - How does it come about that such a person should inherit the purpose given to David? How is it that this nation that God has chosen out of all the other nations of the world to be His people, that they should become like this, more corrupt, vile, than the very nations around? Is there any reality in it? - Pious young men! There are such today, thank God. They look upon the condition of things, and they see people who profess the Name of the Lord, doing things that the world would be ashamed of. They say, "Why is it?" You find people perhaps even in their very families doing it. Why is it? Is there any truth in what they believe? Is there any good in salvation? Is there a Lord Who died upon the cross? Is there any power in the Scriptures after all?

Many a young man has been turned aside. But God had His eye on this young man. He was to be His mouthpiece, to declare the most marvellous things that God ever declared.

But he needed to be educated. He needed to have a lesson taught to him in his soul, in his inner being. He had to learn something directly from God Himself, in order that he might be in the right touch with God, right relationship with Him to understand things from God's point of view.

Beloved friends, - young friends - never read your Bible as you would read any other book. Do not say "I can master this, as I can master a book of Euclid, or a foreign language". - When you come here, it is the voice of GOD, that breathes on every page. A voice that comes in its power and effect to those whose hearts are prepared to receive the voice as from Him. His voice speaks as we wait before Him until it is His pleasure to speak to us and to unfold His mind unto us.

Well, there is the fact, that it was "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple".

He was withdrawn from the scene in which he moved. Those terrible idolatries that were surrepticiously carried on from one end of the land to the other. He was lifted up in spirit to God Himself. - THE LORD. He saw Him. You will observe in what character he saw Him. He saw Him enthroned, exalted, "high and lifted up", and the skirts of His glory filled the temple. The throne and the temple were united in the presence of the Lord. The Throne speaks of GOVERNMENT, the Temple the place of WORSHIP, and what is due to God.

So he learned that amidst the horrible condition of things that surrounded, the Lord was still upon His throne. - Still holding the reins of government, still unaffected in His power, and majesty, and glory, by what was passing through upon the earth.

It was a sight that he never forgot. It riveted his attention. He saw the LORD lifted up. It was the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate days. This we know from the Lord's own lips. The Lord Jesus spoke, as we often find in John, of the time when Isaiah saw His glory. He delivered that message that was commissioned to Isaiah.

The Lord Jesus was there, but He was Jehovah of Hosts. You have only to look through the chapter itself to see that. The Seraphim acknowledge the One sitting upon the throne as the Lord of Hosts. LORD in capital letters. JEHOVAH. All the fullness of the Godhead there.

But it was the Lord Whom Isaiah saw first. Why was that? Because the Lord Jesus has been the centre of the hearts of His people from the beginning of time. It was as the "seed of the woman" that sinful Eve was told about Him. The Lord Jesus Christ from beginning to end that the disconsolate sons of man are told to look upon.

There is power in Him. There is Holiness with Him. There is Glory with Him.

I think we need to have this upon our souls at this very time.. Scripture is full of the message of those times when iniquity is waxing worse and worse, and if we are left here another year, iniquity will be worse in a year's time than it is today, and the declension in the professing Church will be greater in a year's time than it is today.

Are you prepared? What is it that we need to know? We need to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. The One to Whom God has given the task of setting this world right. He sits high and lifted up upon His throne. No other power can touch Him there, and what is given Him to do He will perform duly in His own time. It is for you and me to have that firmly in our souls, that whatever may happen, the earth may tremble, the waters of the sea rise up in tempest, but Jesus sits firm, and no power can unseat

Him there. He is your Saviour, He is mine. He is the Head of the Church, and He will come for His Church in His time. Therefore we need not fear or grumble. Therefore we need not think in terms of despair that He has gone. It is not so. The man or woman who would be a fit witness for Him in these troublous times must first of all have individual contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, somewhat in the way that is described here.

It was for that purpose that I read from the first of Revelation. The same truth is there. John in Patmos, sees the Lord in a way, so far as we know, he never saw Him before. He had seen Him walking in humility through this world with nowhere to place His head, had heard His words of sweetness and comfort to multitudes. He had learned somewhat of the LOVE of God from those lips that knew it all. But here he sees the Lord in His Majesty, as the Ruler, Governor, the One before Whom he falls dead. He has that experience because of the message that is to be committed to him. - The visions that came before him as are recorded in the Book of Revelation. - What heart could bear them! What soul could look unmoved upon the terrible things that are unfolded in the Revelation! First of all he needed to feel upon his bowed head the hand of the Lord of Glory, telling Him to "Fear not". Then he was strengthened to behold what the Lord showed him, and to learn those lessons, of the devastations that will come upon the earth, and the ending of it all, the new heavens and the new earth

But do not think that because Isaiah, Moses, and Peter, too, had those special experiences of learning Who the Lord was, and learning something of His glory, that is not for you and me. It is for us all and most of all for those who assay to serve the Lord in this day. You may serve in the wrong way. Your message may not be such a one as the Lord would entrust to you. You must first be before Him in His majesty and in His Might.

Now, Isaiah saw the servants round about the Lord.
 "Above it stood the seraphim.....holy, holy, holy
 is the Lord of Hosts".

Well, that was a very beautiful description of praise to our Lord Jesus, as well as the confession of His Name and His Godhead. It was for the instruction of Isaiah.- But the thing that was impressed upon him was the thrice holy nature of Jehovah of Hosts. Why, didn't Isaiah already know it? I believe he did. I believe he had a very strong idea that everything connected with God was holy, but this is something superior, this is something beyond the ordinary experience of a person.

I may think "The Lord is holy".- But what was the voice of those in the glorious train of Him Who sat upon the throne? - "Holy, holy, holy". Thrice holy. He is holy in a way that mortal man cannot measure. It is a holiness that is beyond the conception of man. It is a holiness that included (?) the trinity of the Godhead.

That is what he has to learn. The excessive holiness of God. Do not think that is an unnecessary part for us. I am sure we are not as scrupulous as we ought to be in our dealings with the Lord. If we stand before Him, if we look upon Him by faith, as we draw near to Him in prayer, as we assay to worship Him.-

You say, "Oh, but the Lord is so good, so gracious". - I know, we cannot measure His love, we cannot fathom His grace, but there is the other side of it.- Holy, holy, holy. Ought we to forget it? Ought we to be so overcome by the sense of the grace of Him Who dies for us that we forget that He is thrice holy, and that an unclean thought, an unsuitable thought within me is incompatible with the holiness of the One that I am addressing?

Is that so, or is it not? Think of it. I wouldn't put any christian in Bonds, but I have the scripture before me, that the servant, even in the very presence of the One sitting on the throne, says, not to Isaiah, but to another of his fellow beings, "Holy, holy, holy". He said it for Isaiah to hear. It was meant that he should hear it, although it is the common thing among those high angelic inhabitants of the presence of the One lifted up upon the throne.- And if Isaiah needed to learn it, we need to learn it, by getting into the presence of the Lord and having it imprinted upon our hearts once and for all.- the intrinsic, spotless, wondrous holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says, "The whole earth was filled".

Isaiah had seen the days of the glory of the Lord that filled the temple, the skirts of His glory had come down there, and it was filled, but here was another thing. The whole earth is full of His glory. The workings of the Lord extended throughout the whole earth, and the abominations that were exercised at that moment in the land of Israel were but for a moment. The time would come when they would all be swept away, and the uncleanness would be removed, the defilement taken away, and the unholiness of the people and the country they inhabited would disappear, and the whole earth would be filled with His glory. They looked forward to that. It says, "The whole earth IS" because in the presence of the Lord TIME does not count. The future is as present as we are before Him.

Well, now, what was the result upon Isaiah. "Then said I woe is me".

I can hear someone thinking "These are the words of an Old Testament Prophet. He did not know the wonders of grace as we do, and we couldn't say a thing like that". Then I am sorry for you, If a person can be consciously before the Lord, not in public, but in private, alone, and have a vision of the marvellous holiness of God, and still be a pharisee, he does not know where he is, and he does not know what he is.

"Woe is me". He had learned that the people of Israel were exposed to the woes of the Lord.- Read the earliest chapters, and there you see the woes, one after another, because of their sins. Oh, says Isaiah, "Woe is me".- As I behold the glory of the Lord and think of myself, I am just like leprous Uzziah my king. He was a leper. "Woe is me, for I am undone".- That is, one susceptible to the stroke of justice, just as Uzziah was. "In myself dwelleth no good thing". When I come into the presence of the Lord my uncleanness is revealed as when Uzziah was in the presence of the Lord his uncleanness was made manifest, and men could see the uncovered place on his person, on his forehead.- There was the mark of leprosy.

So, when we come into the presence of the Lord we do not look upon our own foreheads, we look upon our hearts, and we say, if we are men of truth, "Woe is me, for I am undone", I am amenable to the judgment of God. I am in myself as much a leper as any other leper in Israel.

It was the truth about himself. He learned what he was in his own heart, as a man, as one, though he was born of God, yet still had the nature which was inveterate (?) in its position to God, full of uncleanness.

It is here we learn these lessons about ourselves. They are set out in detail in expository form in the Epistle to the Romans. There we find God's provision for the sins that we have committed, but when we get to the 6th, 7th, and 8th chapters, we get there the sin that is within us.- Awful, treacherous thing that can never be cured. There it is. A troubled man who had been justified before God, but had to learn that so far as he is concerned, his case is hopeless. "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" He finds no resource anywhere but in the One that sat upon the throne.- "I thank my God through our Lord Jesus Christ". There was the place.

This man says the truth about himself, he confesses his real state of heart in the presence of the Lord of Hosts. "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips". He SAYS it.- By the LIP. Out of the HEART comes evil thoughts, but it is with the spoken WORD which indicates what is in the heart. We are all liable to offend in WORD. The utterance declares the uncleanness that is within, and Isaiah, because he had this seed of uncleanness within himself, therefore some time or other it would escape out of his lips. His lips would be defiled.

It is so. The evil word embodies the evil or wrong thought which is offensive, and which needs to be purged, to be cleansed.

Isaiah was learning this lesson, and we have to learn the same lesson. It is something that he never would learn in the school of the Prophets. He would never learn from the law of Moses. No! He said "Mine eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts. I have been before Him, and there I felt my need".

Was it not so with Peter, when he was in the presence of Jehovah of Hosts. Jehovah the Saviour, when he was in the boat and saw the fishes gathering at the word of their Creator and Sustainer, he fell down at His feet and said, "Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord". "The unclean word has gone out of my lips, I have doubted Who Thou art".- "Depart from me, I am a sinful man, O Lord". He felt it. It was sincere from the lips of a man who was not a stranger to the Lord. It was not the first time he had come in contact with the Lord Jesus. But he had seen His power.

Job, when he had seen the Lord.- he had heard of Him before, with the hearing of the ear.- now he says "Mine eyes see Him", and he repented and confessed himself vile, in dust and ashes before Him. Job said that!- a perfect man, who was reputed never to have sinned with his lips.- he says he is a sinful man!

Am I telling you something strange and unwelcome to your ears? It is the way of truth and holiness. It is the way in which we alone can be fit and efficient servants of the Lord. We have got to learn what we are in OURSELVES.- Not merely absolutely helpless.

We can face that. You see, it was not anything that Isaiah was going to DO.- That was not what was troubling him, but he had this vision, he had seen the transcendent holiness of Jehovah, and abhorred himself, and he said this to the Lord. It is not necessary to say it to others. Say it to the Lord, and then you will say what is true. You cannot be a hypocrite in the presence of the Lord.

There it was.- He made this confession, and then it was that "One of the seraphim flew unto me, having a live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar".

How was Isaiah forgiven? We do not find that there was a sacrifice offered. There was no priestly work of offering up some burnt offering or sin offering for his case. What happened was that the seraphim took a burning coal with the tongs, and took it in his hand to Isaiah, and he touched his lips with that coal. It was making contact with Isaiah's lips, unclean lips, and with a sacrifice that had already been offered. The live coal, burning ember, was there a proof that the sacrifice had been offered, and that its efficacy still rose, as it were, and it was a sweet savour to Jehovah. There it was upon the altar. Isaiah was there, but there was need that the two should come together.- Isaiah, having confessed his case, then the contact was made, and so we see the same thing beautifully set out for us, as we all know, in the 1st John, 1st chapter. There we read of the sons of God "walking in Light, as God is Light". They are walking in the light, as He is in the Light, and that light reveals to them their sins, and also their SIN, because "If we say we have no SIN, His truth is not in us". We are deceiving ourselves. But there is the presence of sin within us, and of the actual sin that we commit, the unclean word we speak, there is the provision in the same place for us, because "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

SIN, for the believer, is that which makes him unclean, unfit for God's worship and praise and service, and that needs to be removed. How is it done? "The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin". It abides there in its untarnished efficacy and value.

But there must be the contact, and where does it come? It is at the moment of CONFESSION. Who makes the contact? The sinner? (I mean the believer who has sinned) NO. It is a power outside of himself. Who brought the coal and laid it upon the lips of Isaiah? It was no son of Aaron, no Levite in the Sanctuary, but it was a heavenly Attendant, the one in the presence of Jehovah. He came and put it on the lips, and then there was the assurance, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips".- No-one else but the one who had confessed his sin. What was the result? The result of perfect atonement. The sin was taken away, and the iniquity expiated. It was gone.

The very thing that he needed was that this uncleanness should be removed, and it WAS removed.

Isaiah valued that work of the Lord on his behalf, and we should value it too. But I am disposed to think that sometimes we very glibly confess our sins, as if we were reciting a Litany. There is no heart work, no conscience work. We say "If we have sinned, we confess our sins". We express doubt whether we have sinned or not, but what God wants is REALITY. The person who confesses his sins, is the one who says, like the prodigal,

"Father I have sinned". There is no excuse, no desire to escape its responsibility. He said the truth simply and absolutely. "I have sinned". That was confession, and you must say the same, and I must say the same. It is only thus that we get real contact in the sense we have it here. We learn then the abounding treasures there are in the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ and what is the full efficacy, far reaching efficacy of His atoning work at the Cross. It keeps our hearts clean and meet for the Master's use.

Well then, you see, the one who had seen the Lord high and lifted up, hears next the voice of the Lord speaking to him.- "I heard the voice of the Lord.- not Jehovah, but the Lord, the One Whom he had seen, and to Whom he owed allegiance and obedience, saying, "Whom shall I send? and who will go for US?"

Striking expression! "Whom shall I send? and who will go for US". The whole Godhead sends forth this man, Isaiah, who has been cleansed, chosen and prepared to speak the words of truth in the name of the Lord. He said "Whom shall I send...." "Then said I, HERE AM I".

But he had said "Woe is me, I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips", and a man who said "I am a man of unclean lips" says "Here am I".

That was FAITH, wasn't it? He trusted in that word that came to him, "Thy sin is purged", and having had that brought home to him as a divine word, then he acts upon it in the presence of the Lord, and says, "Here am I", send me." It doesn't mean so much "send ME", because the emphasis is rather on the verb SEND me. That is, "Here am I, waiting. I am in the attitude of expectancy. I do not want to choose my service. I do not want to take up any particular service, but here I am, SEND me". "Entrust me with the message and I will go".

It was of all importance that Isaiah said this when his lips had been cleansed. If he had said it with unclean lips, what would have been the good? But having been cleansed he can speak the words that were fitting in the ears of God. Then he could respond.- Then he could, as it were, volunteer for service.- And the Lord said "Go, and tell this people....."

I take it that Isaiah had never taken up such a message as that of his own accord, because it was not a delivering message. It did not seem to be a message of hope or salvation. It was a judicial sentence, really. It was a message that would not be, so to speak, after his own heart, just like Jannah, who had a message given to him, but because he never had Isaiah's experience, he grumbled when he was sent, and he grumbled at the result of his service. He had not learned the personal truth that Isaiah had learned, and we do come across those peevish servants of the Lord, very often. I do not mean those who talk a lot, but those who are in little meetings, those who are in the corners, so to speak, where there is very little seen, less heard perhaps.- But they are there, as witnesses for the Lord. Lights in the world. Yet they get a little disconsolate, and grumble and complain.

What is the cure for it all? I think the cure is this.- I am in a certain place.- I ought to be there because the Lord has put me there. It is not a place I should choose, and the thing that I have got to say is not what I would wish to say. I may have to withstand brandishment from other people. It is not nice to do it, and I cannot do it, shall not do it unless I have learned that I am one who has neither eyes, ears, heart, feet, any part of my person, that is worthy of the service of the Lord apart from His cleansing and His fitting. It is He Who must give me my message. He must give me my job. He must show me where I must be and what I must be, and if I do not like it, well, I must rest in this.- The Lord has put me here and He has some purpose in it. I do not understand it.- I would much more like to be somewhere else. He has put me here and I must stay.

I think that was the position of Isaiah. It is a most striking thing that this man should have such a doleful message to preach, and that the result of his word would be to make their hearts fat, and their eyes heavy. Yet, strange as they are, they are very remarkable, because they are recorded in the four Gospels by the Lord Himself, and quoted by the Apostle Paul at the end of the Acts, as the word of the Spirit for that day.

They are words of immense importance, and Isaiah's lips had to be cleansed in order to do it.- (But we cannot go on to the rest of the chapter). The subject is, I am sure, timely, and it can be pursued very much further into. If you look, for instance, in Paul's charge to Timothy before he left this world, he knew that the apostacy was coming, and that dark days were coming upon the Church, and in his first Epistle to Timothy you find that over and over again he refers to the Lord in His POWER, "The King Eternal", the "mystery of Holiness", the "Blessed and only Potentate", the "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords". You do not find that anywhere else. Why? Because he is looking at a day when the authority of God is not in men's thoughts at all. They despise Him and will not have His Word.

It is all the more necessary, therefore, that the saints while they should delight themselves, should learn His POWER, and that He is Ruler and Governor, Who has the reins of things in His hands, amidst all the tangle that exists, He will bring everything up to peace and righteousness here upon the face of the earth.

Let us see to it that we, then, take our commandments (?) from the Lord,- I do not wish anyone to go away with the thought that you can go home tonight and go into your own chamber, and that you can tonight, before you go to sleep, have this vision that Isaiah had. That is not the thought at all! It is not my thought, it is not the thought of the scripture at all. What I mean is this - and what scripture teaches is, that if my heart is sincere to do the will of the Lord, He will make Himself manifest to us, if we are able to bear it, and when we need it.

It is a thing to long for and wait for, and we ought never to be satisfied with just reading the scriptures unless those scriptures bring us into touch with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Many people, especially those who feel the responsibility to others, never seem to think they need the scriptures more than the other people.....(?) The scriptures are for ME, and it was because Isaiah had this message, this vision of the Lord that he was able to deliver those marvellous prophecies that we find throughout the succeeding chapters, the longest in the Bible, full of glorious truths about the Lord, in His exaltation and humiliation and sufferings, too.

It was worth the discipline, the experience that he went through in his own soul.

May the Lord instruct us, and educate us for that service He has in store for each one of us.

HYMN No. 294.

Revelation xxi. 9-27; ch. xxii.1-5.

I read these verses this evening not only as a continuation of what was before us on a former occasion but particularly because they give us that vision of faith and hope which should be continually before the hearts of God's people as they pass through the trials of the wilderness. Faith is the evidence of things not seen; the things of hope it substantiates and makes real and true, for what God has spoken is as good as if it had already been done. Faith knows this, lives upon it and thrives upon it.

It was so with the men of old of whom we have a selected catalogue in Hebrews xi. Take Abraham for instance. He left his fatherland and went out, not knowing whither he went and wandered as a pilgrim and a stranger in Canaan, possessing not so much as his foot stood upon, but he was sustained and lived in great heights of communion with God and of assurance of His will. What was it that sustained that great patriarch, who is the "father of the faithful", the great example whose steps we are to follow, after we follow Christ? It was that he looked forward to what was coming. He looked for a city which had foundations, so the apostle explains in Hebrews. He was in his tent but there was to be a city. He did not set himself to build a city of his own, as Cain did when he was driven out of the presence of the Lord or after the Flood, as Asshur did, who built Nineveh, or Nimrod who built Babylon. They took the situation into their own hands and set up something substantial in this world. Abraham had a city before him which had for its builder, not Abraham but its builder and maker was God. His eyes searched the future, and he looked forward to what was to come and so he was able to triumph in his pathway of faith and trust in God.

So it was with all the patriarchs. They lived in faith, and their hearts were resting in hope as they refreshed themselves with visions of what God would give them in days that were to come. So it was with Moses. Surrounded with all the pleasures and attractions of a worldly nature, and all the dignities, even with royal dignities, he turned from them in his faith, and he accepted the reproaches of Christ. For as Abraham saw the glories of Christ by faith, so did Moses in Egypt, and he went into the desert and pondered for forty years upon what God would do for the blessing of the world in a way that was beyond his conception. But he was a great man in the gallery of faith because of the hope that was before his soul.

But the apostle leads us, as we know, to that greatest of all examples of faith, even Jesus Himself, and bids us look to Him for He is its Author and Completer. What was imperfect in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was perfect in Him. No stain, no flaw, no defect. He was perfect in His pathway of faith. What was it that was before Him from Bethlehem to Calvary? It was the joy that was set before Him. So He endured the shame of crucifixion, so He suffered, because there was the glory to follow, and as a perfect Man He had before Him the sure hope of the glory that God would give Him, and which all the world, too, should see in Him.

So it is essential for ourselves if we essay at all to walk in the pathway of faith that we should comfort and assure our souls with the hope that scripture sets before us. It is our salvation - we are saved by hope, because it is hope that enables us to stretch out beyond the shadowy years, and to reach out to what is before, and we see the solid and the substantial, the glorious and abiding things that are beyond and we say "Those all are mine, by the grace of God. That is my future: there is my place. That is what will most surely come for my participation and delight". How the light will shine through the squalid affairs through which we are passing, the tiresome things of the moment, things which press us down! As we turn away from them, and fix our eyes upon what is beyond, our souls spring up with new energy and we press forward and reach out unto the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.

It is for this purpose I refer to these scriptures, not with an idea of expounding them verse by verse, but to show how God has set these things before us in this attractive way and impressive manner so that we might have the comfort of them in our everyday lives.

In the verses, I have read, we come to John's final vision in that remarkable series we have in the Isle of Patmos. He was there, as we know, for the testimony that he bore. The powers of the world confined him to the Island and restricted him in his labours. He was there a prisoner for the Lord. Was it always to be so, that the powers of the world should triumph over the saints of God? The Lord said that He was sending His disciples as sheep in the midst of wolves, but must they always be the prey of the great wolf? Was there not to be any deliverance? The Book of Revelation is the Lord's testimony, His own unfolding of the future for the comfort of John himself, and for every other saint of God who has the incomparable privilege of suffering for the Master, as he did. The suffering was but a passing thing and the apostle was given to behold in its greatest form the uprising of the powers of evil and the passing upon these powers of the providential judgments of God in the most lurid fashion. God shall speak in the future by storm and tempest, and locusts, - powers that men fear, and so these judgments will come with increasing rapidity and severity. And what is it all for? John was given to see that it was for the removal of evil, not only the distinct enemies, and powerful antagonisms of the world, but that which was deceitful and abominable, that great apostate woman who pretended to so much, but was corrupt to the core. It must all go. The world must be cleared. There is something to come, a new scene which will unfold itself here in this world, a scene of righteousness and peace of glory and of divine power.

John has come to see this final vision. I say final because it is followed in the relation of what will be in the eternal state. We get that in the verses which I did not read in the beginning of the chapter, but in the verses I did read, John was taken by one of the angels (that had the seven vials of the last plagues) to see the Bride, the Lamb's bride, the Lamb's wife is a figure of the church in her relations of affections and esteem for the Lord, or perhaps I ought to put it the other way which is better, that is the relations of affection and devotion that the Lord has for His church. He loved the church and gave Himself for her,

and brought her through the wilderness by His Spirit, and presented her to Himself. It is an exclusive picture of the church in her personal intimacy with the Lord Himself. We have no vision of that. That is within the closed doors of the Father's house: it is between the church and the Lord. But in this vision, we have the Bride, the Lamb's wife, depicted as a city.

Let me first say a word about it. We must dispossess our minds of the common notion that the saints of God here are represented as dwelling in a city. It is not so - they are the city. When the angel bade John look for the bride, the Lamb's wife, he saw a city descending out of heaven from God - that was the bride. The church, - the glorified saints are shown in that symbol, the figure of a city.

A city represents, of course, a place of government, and general control. There is a unity in a city, not exactly the unity of the body or the bride. There is a oneness in a city. All the company form a commonwealth, so to speak, but they may be diverse, so there is no reason to suppose other saints besides the church are included in this figure. (But that is only by the way). They are all those who have participated in the first resurrection and who are glorified and they together unitedly constitute this city, because this is the initial stage of the government of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is now to take His seat as the antitype of Solomon and reign in peace. He had appeared as David and subdued the nations, now He comes as Solomon to reign in peace and prosperity. We do not see the King reigning, but what we do see is the city, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, has this prospect before her that she will be the medium through which the Lord Jesus Christ will spread a complete and perfect righteousness throughout this world, and all nations will rule in harmony with each other.

There will be no wars or rumours of wars, no conflict. There will be no uprising one against another. The virtues of meekness and lowliness will predominate, not self-seeking, no hating, no quarrelling, no evil words, no sickness, or grief - what a scene that will be! and the church will be, not upon the earth enjoying these phenomenal blessings, but will be over the earth, the kingdom of the heavens through which the Lord will reign.

Throughout this description of the city, you will notice how predominant the numeral "twelve" is. There are twelve apostles, twelve foundations, and multiples of twelve, 144 cubits of the wall, and twelve thousand furlongs. It speaks of administration, something that has to be done in order to keep the world right. The Lord Jesus employs His church for this purpose.

When our Lord spoke in His parables in Matthew xiii about the kingdom of heaven, He speaks of the kingdom of heaven now as a very mixed affair, but there is a phase of the kingdom of heaven that is not mixed at all, and He used two parables to show that - the parable of the pearl and of the treasure. The parable of the pearl refers to the church as the Bride of Christ, and the parable of the treasure refers to the church as the city, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven. A treasure is something that can be used, and used for others. And the church

is that. It is a grand and glorious conception that we should enjoy the love of our blessed Lord in its fullness in that day, but it also ought to be a comfort to know that the Lord will be pleased to use us in His service to govern this world in righteousness.

Very well then, this is what we have underlying the verses we have read together this evening. We have a city specially mentioned. We have its wall and we have its gates, and we have its temple and we have the river of life, and the tree of life. All these things are different phases in connection with the church in that day which is to come. All is perfection and all is glorious.

Now taking for a moment what is said about the city. The first striking thing is that it had the glory of God. It is a very striking thing that it should be so. That very fact stamped it as something heavenly. God's glory is seen in it. When man was made to govern in this world, to rule for God amongst the animal creation, he was made in the image and glory of God. He was God's representative. How did he receive his spirit-life? He received it by the breath of the Almighty in his nostrils, and it was this which set him as sovereign over all other objects of creation. He was the ruler, the governmental representative of God.

So this city comes down from God and the first thing is that there is a blaze of glory which distinguishes it from all else. Like that man, standing before the high priest's council. He looked first upon the angry countenances of his judges, and then he looked above into heaven. He saw perhaps angels and principalities and powers and mights, but he looked beyond all these because there was One standing there who had the glory of God - He was Jesus. The glory of God singled Him out from every other celestial object.

So the city will come down from God and all eyes will see that it has the glory of God. We by nature have come short of His glory, but now we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. In so far as our hearts are upon Christ, we see the glory of God in His blessed face and there is some dim reflection of that glory in ourselves, and as we walk among men some glimpses of the glory fall on us. It is a glory that is not of this world; it is of God.

We should be like Moses and wist not that our faces shine, but if we are in line with the One Who is in the glory of God, it cannot be but something of that glory will be seen in us. Oh that it might be more and more now in the day of darkness. Then it will come in all its fullness upon a world that has been so harrowed by persecution and suffering and the cruel powers of evil, Satan having come down full of wrath because he knows his time is short. What sufferings, what untold sufferings there will be amongst the sons of men in that day! But the Sun of Righteousness will rise, with healing in His wings. He will appear as the city having the glory of God and men's hearts will be content as they behold that glory in the church. Let us lay hold of it. It is for us. If we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be in that city and shall form part of it. It is our destination, our ambition, our hope, and our prize.

"Her light was unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal". When the door was opened in heaven in chapter iv. John looked into heaven and saw One seated on the throne and the light of that One was as "a jasper and a sardine stone". Here we get the light of the jasper, not now from God's throne as it was in chapter iv. but in the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem - the light of jasper most precious. There she shines as a luminary in the skies - not that she possesses light in herself, the word will not suffer us so to speak. The word we have here is that which we have in Genesis i. There we read that God made luminaries, or lights, and set them in the heavens, the sun to rule by day and the moon by night. They are luminaries, or light-bearers because the sun is not the originator of light, neither is the moon. Light began before the sun was. It is but a secondary source of light. So it is with the church. It is a light-bearer, the means whereby light shines upon the earth. There is the heavenly kingdom, and the earthly kingdom below is suffused with the light that shines from the city above. The earth will be the abode of light, continual light, and men will rejoice in the light, and walk in the light, too.

Then another thing about the city was, "And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth". It has an aspect towards the four quarters of the earth, and so the powers of government which are vested in the city will go out in all directions throughout the earth, dispensing heavenly righteousness and perfect justice. It will shine upon all men without favouritism, not even upon God's holy land specially, but in all places, north, south, east and west.

But it says further, that the angel with the golden reed "measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs". What is this measurement here? Is it not to show that everything is exactly right. The city is there, but is it exactly according to God. God sends down a standard from heaven, a golden reed and the angel is there and he takes the measurements of this city. Entire correctness, absolute accuracy is essential to good government. The kings of the world recognise that and all civilised nations have their correct standards of measurement. In this country, there is the Standard Department where the exact measures are retained, and there are appointed inspectors to see that men measure things correctly. We all understand how necessary that is. And here, in that day of government, there is the golden reed to show that in the city, everything is according to God. It is a golden reed, incorruptible, that quality which cannot disappear and which cannot be affected adversely in any way. Other metals may tarnish and even disappear but not so with gold. It is not affected in that way and so it is used to speak of incorruptibility.

He measures the city and it is twelve thousand furlongs. This shows us that the figures we have here are of a heavenly nature, and therefore if we try to imagine them from our own standpoint we get confused, because a city which is foursquare, or cubicle, twelve thousand furlongs is inconceivable. Twelve thousand furlongs we take to be fifteen hundred miles. Fancy a city of that dimension! That is not the idea at all. The truth is just this. God is giving us here a city after a

heavenly pattern. When Moses had to make the tabernacle here on earth, he was not to make it from drawings made by his own artificers. He was to get it from heaven. It was after the patters in the heavens that the things were made. That is why there is difficulty, even now, in making an exact model of the tabernacle, because it is of a heavenly pattern and you cannot reduce it to the measurements and ideas of earth.

So here what we have before us is the heavenly Jerusalem. The idea of the fifteen hundred miles is its vastness and also its treasure and its value, for we read that the city was pure gold. What must its value be? If we try to compute it in terms of men, our imagination is staggered, but it has come forth ~~Be a God,~~ and what He is bringing into the world is beyond all human conception of value, and purity and holiness. It is what God will bring into this poor tortured world. People are seeking perfect peace. How can nations walk together in agreement and harmony one with another?..... God has His city which in His own time He will introduce into this world for the world to see and for the world to accept as a source of rule and of government.

I pass on to another thing about this city, that is, it had no temple. That seems strange, if we read that sentence alone. A city coming from God, without a temple! Jerusalem had its temple. It was the city of God, but there was the place where men could worship God. But in this city, there is no temple, no building.

"For the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it". So then it is one vast temple. This city is devoted entirely to the worship of God. God is there - God in that particular way in which He is revealed in the Old Testament, as Lord God Almighty, (not Father, that does not come here). It is the Father's house, but the Lord God Almighty, the Governor of the earth, and the Lamb, the despised One who was crucified as the King of the Jews, He is to be there as the temple. Unblemished holiness pervades that city: there is not a speck of evil anywhere. What a place that will be! The first great thing is that it comes forth, a holy city, devoted to the worship of God. Every heart there beats in perfect unison with the will of God, worshipping Him and displaying His glory to the world below.

Then there comes another thing about it which we must not overlook. This city sheds its light upon the nations below. We read in verse 24: "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it". All the nations of the earth will enjoy the gracious light and communion of this heavenly city. The saints of God have it today as their characteristic attitude that they "walk in the light". God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, and we, if we are Christians, walk in the light and we have the incomparable privilege of having the light of God to shine upon our pathway and if we will we can always discover how we are walking and whether we are pleasing to God, or not.

We are in the light. In the darkness, evil can be hidden. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Light brings out what is good. Light causes what is good to shine in glory and attractiveness and the light of the church will shine down upon this world and the nations will have their exemplar in the heavenly kingdom.

It is all a figure but the point of it all is that what we are trying to do so feebly now, we shall do fully and perfectly then. God wants us now to so walk in the light that we shall shed light on those that are about us. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". If you are walking in the light, then others see the way to walk by your footsteps. It will be so then in a full and perfect way.

Then we find that the kings of the earth and the nations bring their glory and honour unto (not into) it. It means that the church being in the place of heavenly rule over the earth, it will be recognised by every nation and by the kings of the earth. They will bring their glory to the heavenly Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem has its place. If we want to read about that, we must turn to Ezekiel. But let us keep to our text. We are talking about the heavenly kingdom, and that heavenly kingdom will be for the benefit of the nations of the earth, and they on their part will recognise it, and bring their honour. Then they will not put one in prison, send one to the Isle of Patmos and so on. No, they will do homage and fealty to the sovereign power above them.

So, beloved friends, we shall be of some use in the Lord's hands in that day. The world is looking for things to be better. They will be better one day because the Lord will be ruling. He might have left this chapter out of the Book of Revelation altogether and we should just have known that the Lord was going to rule in the day that is to come. "No", He says, "If you love Me and were waiting for Me, I will tell you what shall be your portion in that day when I gather My jewels and display them in their heavenly setting. You shall be there and reign with Me. If you suffer with Me, you shall reign with Me and be a sharer in the glory that is given Me in the day that is to come."

So while we read first about the church, that it has the glory of God, at the end we read that the men of the earth bring their glory to this heavenly Jerusalem. God, as it were, cannot do too much for us. He pours glory from above, and brings glory to us from beneath.

Well now, there is not much time to say much about the other points. The city had "a wall great and high". The wall is for security surely. There were unwall'd cities, but the great cities had their surrounding walls, and this city has a wall. It was great and high - 144 cubits high. If you think of the city for a moment, cubical and one side measuring 12,000 furlongs, and then the wall is only 144 cubits, that is, about 72 yards, the two things do not go together, from an earthly point of view. But here you have the protection that is given to this holy city, and its height is 144 cubits - twelve measures of perfect administration, extended in twelve different ways. So it is perfect in the place God has given it in the figure.

The wall had foundations, twelve foundations, and in them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The twelve foundations are those precious stones, or jewels, mentioned. There is the perfect basis for this city to rest upon. There have been many foundations to the cities of old, but they have been overthrown and have vanished. Here there are twelve. It will be tried in all manners of administration in this world, but the foundations will stand.

The fact that the names are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb shows that God has a special promise for those who followed the Lord in the days of His tribulation, for He had said that they should sit on twelve thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. So they form the foundation of this city. Paul's name is not there. He was the apostle in connection with the unity of the church, but those who followed the Lord, the rejected One, to them He gave the precious promise that they should be singled out to have a place of judicial honour in the regeneration, when all will be made new.

These foundations are all precious stones, each having its significance no doubt, but we need not dwell upon that because the great point was that these precious stones reflect the light and glory of God to the earth below. God's glory will be manifested in the display of His righteousness among men in that day.

The jewel, or precious stone, is of value because it breaks up the light into its component parts and it reflects a certain part of light in a way that is dazzling for brilliancy and coveted for its purity. It is hard and durable, and remains. A diamond, or topaz, shines today as it shone perhaps one thousand years ago. The light is broken up and reflected. Light itself is composed of these seven colours, which the prism reveals - indigo, violet, blue, green, yellow, orange and red, and they all together form our light. When it is broken up, some shine violet, some red, some indigo and so on. It will be so in that day. The varied glories of the light of God will shine in His administrations in this world. Men will look up and will not fear, or dread, Him that is on the throne, but will see the beauties of the precious stones shining in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Then the wall had its gates, in twelve different places, for communication. There must be means of taking things out, and that is through the gate - that is one meaning. And the gate has another meaning in scripture. It is a place of justice. Lot, to his shame, sat in the gate of Sodom, the magistrate and dispenser of justice in that unclean city, and there are many other instances throughout the scripture. The gate was the place where justice and peace sat and had its tribunal and dispensed its decisions. On the gates are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, because they deal with the nations of Israel, who will form the earthly Jerusalem below. There is communication, you see, in that way at the gate. There is the angel there, but the angel is there to serve, not to rule, for God has not put the age to come under the rule of angels. The angels are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation and they stand there to do the porters' duty for the benefit of the inhabitants of that glorious city. What a wondrous sight that will be!

We have spoken of the city, of its walls, and its gates and its foundations. Now there is just a word on that which we read in chapter xxii..... This we know by the opening words "and he shewed me". If you go back, you will find the word occurred previously in the 10th verse of chapter xxi. "he shewed me that great city", so that what we have in the latter chapter is all the city, the heavenly Jerusalem itself, but what we have here is something additional.

"He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" and "the tree of life". What is meant by the river of life and the tree of life? You at once go back in your memories to what we have in the book of Genesis, in the beginning, because there in Eden was the river which went out of it, and parted into four streams to water the earth. There was also the tree of life there, too. So perhaps these two figures, the river and the tree, speak of the new Jerusalem, not only of its bliss for itself but also in the way it exercises its influence on the earth below.

There is the river of water of life, clear as crystal. It is not a fountain, but a river. It is that which comes out and gives refreshment and blessing, and if it is pure, so much the better. A river may be polluted, but not this one. This is pure, and clear as crystal and it is the water of life, the way in which the blessings of the life which is in such fullness in the city itself will overflow to the earth beneath. Our Lord, when He spoke of the coming Spirit, said that when the Spirit came, those who received Him would be the means of diffusing blessing to others. "Out of him shall flow rivers of living water", He said, speaking of the Spirit. So it is in measure here. We receive the water of life for ourselves, and out of us flows the river. Perhaps it may be just a trickle, just a drop now and again, but surely some living water must flow out into the desert around us. Shame to us if it is not so.

Here John saw the river of water of life and it came from the throne of God, and of the Lamb. Ezekiel saw the river coming out of the temple. This river comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is not thunders and lightnings, tokens of judgments, no flaming sword is there, but a river flows. The throne of God is there to reign in righteousness, but then grace reigns through righteousness. What we have here is that from the city, the treasures of grace, God's grace and God's love flow to a parched and famished earth to revive its energies and to give it fresh life.

Then the tree of life is there in the midst of the street of the city, that pure gold thoroughfare, where men can walk and their feet will not be defiled. No basin or towel is needed there; all is pure and holy. And the tree of life bears twelve manners of fruits, and yields her fruit every month and the leaves are for the healing of the nations. There was fruit to satisfy those who are in the city, and the leaves for the healing of the nations, to act as medicine for the nations below.

There was communication, you see, between the earth and the heavens, and the heavens and the earth. Hosea prophesied of the time when the heavens should hear the earth, and the earth should hear the heavens - continual communication between the two. It is not so now. We speak of saints being our being in the heavenlies, but in that day there will be continual communication between the heavens and the earth, and the earth will receive its blessings from the tree of life and the water of life.

That is the future before us, beloved friends, and there is a great deal more in these symbols if we only had time to deal with them, but surely what we have had before us this evening

ought to move us to think of what is really before us. It is not some gorgeous dream that passes before us in the still hours of the night. Sometimes we wake and know that we have seen something strange, but when we try to tell our friends about it, we cannot really recall it. It is but a shadow, a thought that has passed through our minds. No, these are words that speak of solid realities. God has spoken in words that if we have only little children's minds, we can understand. We do not want to draw these symbols as pictures on paper. Let us read them and think of gold as something that is pure, of the city, that which is the source of help and blessing and justice and mercy and grace, and we shall participate in that, not only receiving the blessing but communicating it to others.

I think every health Christian today feels he must do something for his Lord and Master. Having received such benefits, he must show loyalty to the One who has blessed him, and devote himself in some way, and he mourns the little he does and the imperfection of what he tries to do today. But in that day all will be perfect, no flaw in that city. 15,000 miles every way yet not a flaw, everything pure gold which cannot be corrupted in any way. Beloved friends, we shall be there, but to whom will be the credit? It will be the Lord that will bring us, and it is the Lord that gives us these bright prospects. May it sustain our faith and gird our loins and enable us to be valiant for the Lord in the days to come.

Reading:- Revelation xix.1-9, xxi.9-18

The verses I want to draw your attention to especially are ch.xxi.9-10. The angel told John that he would show him the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and what he was shown was a city, the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. So there is an intimate connection between the Bride and the city. Both are figures of the church of God. The church consists of those in this present age who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, while He is rejected on earth but glorified in heaven. Those who believe are connected invisibly, but effectually with Christ as the Head in heaven, and they are the members of His body on earth. That is the great truth that lies behind these two figures which we have brought before us so impressively at the close of the sacred scriptures.

It is not without reason that we need to be reminded of these truths, it is God's way of presenting the church to our notice. No mind of man could ever have conceived that such figures as we have here would apply to the church. They are beyond reason and imagination. As a matter of fact, they seem confused and contradictory but they are God's ways of impressing upon us the value and beauty of His church, the church of God.

It is the more important that we should be reminded of it in these days because it is an historical fact that the truth of the church was absolutely lost to the church itself for hundreds of years. Men who were blessed through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ were glad of that blessing, as well they might be, and they made that the subject and foundation of their praise and thanksgiving to God. But there was something else. There was not only the individual blessing that those who believe have, but there is also the corporate blessing for the whole church, from the Day of Pentecost, when it was formed until the day of rapture when the Lord receives it to Himself. Since that truth is of such transcendent importance in the scriptures, how did it come about that it was lost sight of? It was because the believers in Christ Jesus were content with the things of the present time and the blessings they receive just now and they never considered what was in the future. In the providence of God, this truth was brought to light again more than one hundred years ago. There were those who saw it, and received it by faith, and when they saw it they revelled in it as something that was grand and great. They believed that the Holy Spirit did not revive that truth for no reason. They believed, and were sure, from the scriptures that the great Head of the church was soon coming to receive unto Himself His church, which He loved and for Whom He had died. They saw that they should have in their hearts, His thoughts about the church.

Now, after one hundred years have passed, there is a deliberate attempt by the great enemy to try to rob those who believe and know the truth, to rob them of its beauty and blessedness, to cause them to look upon the dilapidated state in which the saints of God are found now, and to be so concerned about that as to forget that these truths here in the scriptures are just as real and valuable and unchanged as ever they were. It is of the greatest importance that both those who are old and those who are young in the faith of Christ should hold fast

most tenaciously to God's truth about His church; not that it will be realised here on the earth in the beauty in which we find it depicted in Revelation, but the fact is true, the superstructure of it is solid and unchanged and the moment will come when the dazzling beauties set before us here, the wondrous glories beyond conception, will shine out radiantly in this world where we are today. That is my reason for drawing your attention afresh to these truths about the church.

The church is called "the bride", it is also called "the city", and we will briefly refer to the difference between them. The bride is a figure, and the bride as a figure speaks of the perfection of love and regard for one person exclusively, and of loyalty to that person, of devotedness to that person, of yieldingness, of entire surrender to that person, and these are the moral and spiritual truths which lie behind the figures of the bride of the Lamb. The city in scripture always speaks of a place of government, a place of organism, a place from which order and government proceeds; it is a place of permanent residence in contrast with a tent. The church will be that by and by. A city represents the relationship of the church to others, to the nations who are upon the earth. The bride is the relationship of the church to Christ. That is the first difference which comes before us for our attention for a short while this evening.

The church is the Bride and it is presented in scripture in three ways. It is presented in the Old Testament by type, in the New Testament by history and by doctrine, and it is presented in vision in the book of Revelation, so that we have a typical side, an historical and doctrinal side and we have the vision which ought to cheer and encourage and rejoice our hearts more than all.

Well now, in the Old Testament, there is one type which stands out above all others as setting forth the peculiar character of the church. I refer to Rebecca; the bride of Isaac. It is true that Eve, the first woman, also represents the church. She was the consort of Adam in his government of the world and that type is spoken of in the Epistle to the Ephesians, so that we have no scruples in calling her the type of the church. But Rebecca is a type in another way which appeals I think to our affections more than Eve.

Eve sprang from the side of Adam unknown to him, without his intervention in any way. She was God's gift to him, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. That is a very beautiful side of the church too, but Rebecca was different as a type. She was a woman who was called in a foreign country to surrender herself to the love of one whom she had not seen. The history is set out in great detail in Genesis xxiv. That chapter is a history of the church as a whole from Pentecost to the rapture. We cannot this evening go through the details of that long chapter, interesting as it would be, but we can just refer to one or two points which would help perhaps in a further study of that interesting chapter.

One great peculiarity, the first one in the history of Rebecca was this, that far away from her home in Mesopotamia, in Canaan there was a home where great deliberations were going on with respect to her future, of which she was ignorant entirely.

Before she had seen Abraham's servant and knew anything about Israel, counsels went on and came to a determined point in the home, the father's home, in Canaan.

There were three persons in that home, Abraham, Isaac, and Eliezer the chief of Abraham's household. These are the three persons that were specially concerned in the call of Rebecca in her journey across the desert and in her reception in the father's house in Canaan. There was Abraham who had his own scheme for the marriage of his son. He was not to take one of the accursed race of Canaan but he was to get a specified place and there she was to be invited to go to be the wife of Isaac. There was the deliberate counsel concerning the call of the church. That is the simple truth concerning the church of which we form a part. In Ephesians we read "Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.". There was the purpose concerning the church. Israel, God's nation, was chosen in the progress of time, when the time element had come into the history of the world, but for the church we must go back beyond that. So it was in the case of Rebecca. There was her destiny being considered and decided upon by Abraham. He made his servant put his hand on his thigh and swear. If you look at the words used, they are very remarkable, and unique. Abraham refers to "the God of heaven, and the God of earth". Twice he mentions "the God of heaven" and that is peculiar. Nowhere does it occur in the whole of the Pentateuch, excepting once in Genesis, that is when Abraham was met and blessed by Melchisedec. He spoke of God being "the possessor of heaven and earth".

What does that one thing tell us clearly? It tells us at once that the character of the church of Christ is heavenly - it is connected with the "God of the heavens". Rebecca was connected with the deliberations of the God of heaven. She was to set forth something that should be called out from the world to be associated with Christ in His heavenly glory. When the heaven is blessed under Melchisedec, then it will be heaven and earth will meet in Him. The Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth will reign and the heaven will reign over the earth. There will not be the distinction there is now between heaven and earth. The heaven will come down to the earth and put its hand of blessing upon everything that is in this world of ours. So the earth will take on to itself a heavenly character under the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness who shines upon the earth.

Then there was Isaac, the son. There again you have one connected with heaven. In the history of the Pentateuch, Isaac was the only one who did not leave Canaan, so far as history goes. Abraham went down into Egypt and Jacob went into Mesopotamia and Egypt, but Isaac was only read of in the Promised Land, in the place where his father dwelt. So it is that the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ has His relationship to His church. He is the Heavenly Bridegroom, the Heavenly Man that has wooed and won a bride for Himself. She is to reign with Him in heaven. Her place, her designation, and her dignity are connected with heaven, not earth. That stands out in connection with Isaac.

Isaac was, moreover, the true seed of Abraham. It was in Isaac not in Ishmael that the promises were placed. He played that part in the drama on Mount Moriah. He was bound to the altar. He it was who was below the knife uplifted to slay him. He it was whom Abraham received back in figure from the dead. He died and lives again. He was the raised seed, the raised son of the father. So the Lord Jesus did not begin His call to the bride until He had passed through death and had ascended up into heaven. The first sermon preached in Pentecost, after the descent of the Holy Ghost pointed the men of that wicked generation to that same Jesus whom they had crucified but whom God had made both Lord and Christ. It was a heavenly Christ to whom the church was called.

Then there was the servant, unnamed in Genesis xxiv. but no doubt he was Eliezer. However that may be, he is there, and what stands out most in his character is this - his utmost fidelity to his master and his utter disregard of himself, of his own dignity and convenience in any way. That is such a beautiful picture of the place the Holy Spirit has taken in this present age. The Spirit of God is the active power in collecting those who belong to the bride of Christ, in maintaining them and conducting them with unerring faithfulness through the intricacies and dangers of the desert way safely Home to the Father's house where Isaac is.

So we have the blessed Trinity concerned with the call of the bride. That chapter teems with pictures of the great truth concerning the church of God. Look again at the home in Mesopotamia. There was Rebecca. She was not, so far as history goes, what we would call an evil person. She was not like that other bride, Rachael, who came from the same country. She brought away surreptitiously images from that idolatrous country, but Rebecca was a simple, devout maiden, and one who answered to the call of God immediately. God wrought in her heart and He called her, by the servant, to be the bride.

I emphasise this because the members of the body of Christ receive their call and their status as members of that body when they believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were sinners but they became saints. The Holy Ghost does not dwell in the sinner but He does dwell in one who believes and rests upon the gospel of God's salvation. He is the earnest and the seal of the inheritance that lies beyond.

The great point about Rebecca was that she was prompt in obeying the voice of the Spirit, through Eliezer. She heard what he had to say, she listened to his errand and her heart went after that absent one in the far country. She was drawn to him to the extent that she was prepared to leave father and mother and brothers and sisters, and her home, and go away with one she knew very little about. She only knew from the report of Eliezer, yet when the question was put to her "Wilt thou go with this man?" she said "I will go". She was prompt in obedience. So it is written upon the character of the bride of Christ, that one word obedience - obedience.

Obedience is that which Christ looks for. I am speaking now to try and awaken in your heart a sense of responsibility about the truth of the church. The truth of the church wants seeking. You want to be like Rebecca ready to go because so far

as I read the narrative she knew very little about Isaac and his plans and his history until she got on the way with Eliezer. Then she learned all about it. And it is those who set themselves to learn what God has written, what the Holy Spirit has written concerning the church, those are the ones that are taught, the faithful and devoted persons who learn the grand truths concerning the church of God.

Beloved friends, you cannot thank God sufficiently for the deliverance of your soul from the flames of hell. That is perfectly true, but has God exhausted His grace by saving us in that way so that we are His now and we shall be His in the day of His glory. Is that nothing to you? Do you not want to know something about it? You can only learn it in one way. When you have set your heart on the way Home, filled with the hope of seeing Him, wanting to see Him, counting the days as they go by because they bring you nearer to the moment of nuptials with Him, then the ear is opened to listen to the voice of the Spirit concerning the glories of Christ.

What tales Eliezer told Rebecca on the way there. Of Abraham called from Mesopotamia, of Melchisedec, that strange priest, who blessed Abraham, of Isaac given after long years of waiting, of Ishmael, and how the child of the bond-woman was cast out, of the great love of Abraham for Isaac, of what he suffered as he led his boy to Mount Moriah, and then the wondrous story of his sacrifice, and of his resurrection, of God's promise that he should be the seed through whom the blessings would come, not only for the seed of Abraham, but for the whole earth. The days soon sped away because she was being taught the truths of her future, and of what it meant to be associated with Isaac in that way.

Well then there was the coming home. Isaac was waiting and he went into the field. He was now in the south country and he went to meditate in the field, to think of the bride that was to be his. Then behold the camels were coming, and there was the meeting. Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw Rebecca, and Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac. Then that spirit of obedience that had been inculcated in her heart by Eliezer asserted itself. She descended at once from her camel and covered herself with a veil and so she walked in humility, in modesty and subjection to her future lord. And Isaac took her into his father's house, he introduced her to the tent of Sarah. Sarah had passed away, a woman, the figure of the law, and there was the place for the church, and there the happy time began. Rebecca was now for Isaac. She belonged to him. She was his peculiar property. She came to him in a unique way and in that country she was to be associated with him in all the blessings of the land.

So it will be with the Lord Jesus. He will come for His church. Those here this afternoon will remember the text which was referred to in Revelation xxii, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come". Eliezer and Rebecca were both looking for and expecting that encounter with Isaac. There was unanimity, there was fellowship. Eliezer was preparing Rebecca's heart to be in tune with Isaac's. There was Isaac in his love waiting for his union with Rebecca. Is not that a possible thing today.

Beloved friends, jealously guard the affections of your hearts. You say "You are speaking about the church". Yes, and you belong to it. When the Holy Spirit works in your heart and you are looking to Christ, then all the other hearts in the church of God similarly affected are in unison with yours, and the Lord Jesus Christ in glory looks down and sees in some, ought I to say, in all our hearts, affection and devotion for Him. He has the first place and the best place. He is the One for Whom we live and wait. He looks for that. Elsewhere He sees it, on the Continent, in the far East, all over the world there are hearts beating true for Christ, longing and waiting for His coming. It is the Spirit forming the desire for the Lord's coming in the heart of His own. The Spirit and the Bride say Come, and the Lord Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly".

Our time is passing but the subject is very attractive. Neither can we go very far in the next step - the history and doctrine of the church. The history of the formation of the church began in the Acts. There we find the Holy Spirit using men to speak about the risen Christ, and the great theme you will find throughout the Acts is that men were preaching the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the risen Lord, the ascended Christ to whom men were turned. They knew He had been to the cross, delivered for their sins, but now He was living in glory. In the Epistles, we have the Holy Spirit writing the truth concerning the church. We must always remember that the truth about the church is not what we read in history books. There are ecclesiastical histories, and they are the most doleful of all histories because they are full of the sorrows and defeats and shames of those that call themselves Christians. But the real truth about the church is found in the holy scriptures. There God gives us what He sees in the church.

If we look around at the various assemblies that take upon themselves the name of Christians, our hearts may well ache because of the contradiction of things we see, but in the scriptures we read what is absolutely true and what we know to be true. Do you really believe that Christ is the head of the church, and that everyone who belongs to Him here in this world is known by the Lord? "The Lord knoweth them that are His". They are united to Him by a tie that cannot be severed. They form part of that wonderful organism, His body, as He calls it, which receives its life from the Head in heaven. Get the truth into your hearts. Do not read church histories, but read the scriptures. There you have the facts as God has given them.

The epistle which gives the heavenly character of the church is the Epistle to the Ephesians. There we have the most marvellous truths that could enter into the heart of man, in fact they are things that have not entered into the heart of man, but God has revealed them in the scriptures, and therefore we ought to love them. Even if we do not understand them, read them over and over again. I remember a young convert who used to get up in the morning, even in the cold winter mornings at four o'clock, and what he read was the Epistle to the Ephesians. He read it, not to understand it, but there was something fascinating about it. In chapters iii and iv. we have the unfoldings of the ages, God looking down and calling out those

to be His own, predestinating them, determining their future glories with Christ. Study these truths and get them into your hearts and then the church will not be a dull subject to you, but something worth standing for, and worth losing all to possess it. The great object of the enemy is to put the world in the place of the church in the lives of those that profess His name.

Then in Revelation we have the church in vision. The first scripture I read in chapter xix. If you read the two chapters that precede this, you will see why it is that it opens with a song of praise, those four-fold Alleluias. There is joy in heaven, not now over the sinner repenting but over the just judgments of that false and corrupt thing, the false church, the false bride, that which had consorted with the powers of this world, and lived in luxury and dissoluteness, that which had called itself by the name of Christ and yet had made herself drunk with the blood of the saints - the false church. The true church had been removed, and there was nothing left but the corrupt, rotten shell. Now at last it had been judged. The very nations that had served her purpose turned upon her, through the agency of God, and she was destroyed completely, wiped out, exterminated, gone from the face of the earth. Heaven had looked and wondered upon this evil thing that had pretended to be the bride of Christ. Now her judgment had come and heaven rejoices over it.

Then we read of the wife of the Lamb - the bride. The marriage of the Lamb has come. The Lord spoke of Himself as the Bridegroom, and He also spoke of those who were the friends of the bridegroom, but the time had not come to reveal who the bride was until He had been rejected and crucified by His ancient people to whom He came as Messiah and King. When they deliberately refused Him and nailed Him to the cross, then it was that Israel was set aside and there was the heavenly bride called out for Christ. And now the marriage of the Lamb had come.

The church as you know is represented in Revelation from chapter iv. as the twenty four elders. The church, and no doubt the Old Testament saints, are included in that figure. The twenty four elders and the bride are two separate figures, but after we read of the bride and the marriage of the Lamb, we never read of the twenty four elders again. They are mentioned in this chapter for the last time. Then we read of someone else - those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. These are the friends of the Bridegroom, no doubt the Old Testament saints who share the marriage festivities but who are not the bride of Christ.

The great feature of the bride of Christ is this. She is composed of those that believed on Christ when nobody else would. Israel and the Gentiles united to crucify Christ. The bride is composed of one here and another there who are united in this, that they esteem Christ above all, they worship and serve and wait for Him. He is everything to them because they believe in Him in a day when He is cast out and despised. He has exalted the church to a place of glory with Himself and when the time comes it is called the marriage of the Lamb. It is not that the saints who were called up at the coming of Christ have not been with Him. They are with Him, but not in the character of the bride. There was something that was necessary - the making ready for the marriage.

I suppose that when Rebecca went into the tent, the marriage was not consummated then. She was in the home, but there were the preparations and arrangements to be made before the formal marriage took place. So when the Lord comes, He will call the living ones to be with Himself, united with those who have fallen asleep, and all to be for ever with the Lord. But when we get into the presence of the Lord, the Lord will have something to say to us, because we have been passing through the desert, we have gathered up traces of the desert, our behaviour in the desert has not been revealed in its true character, and things have to be adjusted. There is what we speak of in another way as the judgment seat of Christ. It is nothing to frighten us, but it is the Lord's way of dealing with us. Were the disciples afraid when the Lord took the basin and cleansed their feet? They were surprised, but the Lord showed that He could not have intimate connection with them, they could not have any part with Him, and real fellowship with Him, until their defilement was removed. This is true now. We cannot have fellowship in the Spirit with Him until defilement is removed. How much more will it be so in the glory. There will be the remembrance of that which is past, of our failures and mistakes, of unconfessed sins. All that must be passed under review in the presence of the Lord, He looking on and we looking on and our lives passing before us in the pure light of His holy presence, so that we see ourselves and our ways in His presence, as He saw them. That which is good will be attributed to us, that which is evil will pass away. We shall see it, but it will disappear for ever.

So the wife makes herself ready for the Lord. She is clothed, not in those garnished vestments of Babylon, not with scarlet and gold and pearls, but in fine white linen, something that can be cleansed by water, fine white linen, the righteousnesses of the saints, those things that have been done here in this world to the glory of Christ. There they are attributed to each member of His body and when they accompany Him out of heaven with the armies of angels, they will be clothed in that fine linen and that will be seen.

So there is the marriage of the Lamb and the bride takes her place in heaven in the Father's House, with the Bridegroom. Who shall tell what are the joys, what will be the joys of the Bride with the Bridegroom? They are secret, known only to the bridegroom and the bride. They are not even revealed in scripture. The Lord is in the Father's house and we shall be with Him. He is preparing a place for us, and is preparing us to take the place. What delights will be ours are to be learned in that day. We are not told now. How could we be? The love of Christ passeth knowledge. We know it in part but there we shall drink of its fullness and revel in its lavishness and display on such unworthy ones as we. The joys of the bride are unrehearsed, but they are so true.... The Apostle prays in that beautiful epistle to the Ephesians, that we might be taught to "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge".

Then the next step is in chapter xxi. The first part refers to the eternal state, but in verse ix. there is a reversion to what had been spoken of before, to the history of the Bride. What for? She has known and tasted the joys of her Lord's presence. What has she to do? She has a relationship to the world, to the millennial kingdom. The

angel says to John, I will show you the bride, "the Lamb's wife". He speaks of her in these endearing terms because she is coming out of the Father's house, out of heaven. There she has been with her Master, now she comes forth, and when she comes forth she takes another character, a character that Israel, God's restored people, can understand. They can understand the character of a city, but the intimate joys of the bride of Christ, they know nothing about them. The Old Testament speaks about Israel as an earthly bride but the heavenly bride has a character altogether superior to that. Just as heaven is higher than the earth, so the joys and bliss of the church are higher than those of the earthly bride. But they will see the city coming down out of heaven. It will be with the sight of the bride coming to reign with Christ over the earth.

Our time has sped away and we must leave it for the present. You can read the verses in connection with what has already been said. The Lord here unfolds in vision what His church is going to be in the eyes of those that see it from the great and high mountain. They will see the church as this marvellous city, surrounded by these walls, with its foundation and its gates and its streets of pure gold. That is the bride itself. So many folks read this chapter as if it speaks of the place which Christ has gone to prepare, where we shall dwell. No, we are the city, the church, the glorified saints, they form the city. They are that cubicle structure, and are seen shining, brilliant with the light of the glory of God.

We speak of the days of darkness now, but when the church has gone, the darkness will deepen. It will be a darkness even worse than that in Egypt. That darkness could be felt, but when Christendom rises to its worst, and the lawlessness of nations reaches its height, the darkness will be more intense still. But that darkness will be dispelled when the Sun of Righteousness, but over the earth in dazzling radiance, so that all the nations of the earth will walk in the light of it.

Let us cherish the bridal aspect of the church. Does it not appeal to you? Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. When that blessed One went to the altar and laid down His life He saw every member of His body from the day of Pentecost - those men in Jerusalem whose hands were red with His own blood, but whom He would turn to Himself and make them devoted followers, members of His body, part of His bride. He saw all those alive on the earth today. Those assembled here, those elsewhere on the earth, and if He tarries, others will be called in. He counted them all up as He laid down His life. He loved the church - in its entirety and fulness, in its beauty as a whole, and He gave Himself for it. We can each say "The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me" and millions of others can say the same, and He clasped them all in His arms of love and enshrined them all in His blessed heart, when He gave Himself for the church. By and by, He will present the church to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, a church in glory, for His own satisfaction and admiration - "This is My reward. I gave myself for it. I gave all I had to purchase this pearl of great price. It is mine and all the world, the heaven and the earth shall see that the church is mine."

May these things impress themselves upon our hearts and give us to value these precious truths far more than we have done in the past.

Scriptures read:- John vii.1-14; xviii.33-37; xix.8-12;
xvii.16.

This short verse I have just read seems to put in a few words the position of the followers of Christ in this day in which we live. If we belong to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ through the word of His apostles, it is true of us that we are not of the world even as our Lord was not of the world, so that our relationship to the world is clearly and definitely fixed. The Holy Spirit has given us the landmarks of the world and said it would be for any of us to remove the ancient landmarks. The landmark between the followers of Christ and what is called in scripture, particularly in John's gospel, the world is just this - it is Christ Himself. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world".

There can be no mistake, neither can there be any difficulty in seeing that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of the Father came down into this world, and passed through it, a heavenly Pilgrim and a Stranger. Truly it was His own world through which He was passing, the world of His construction and preservation, but He was not of it. The world knew Him not and the world opposed Him.

He passed through it, not meddling with its affairs in any fashion. He had come to help, to be the Saviour of the world, but there was that rigid clear-cut separate position which our Lord Jesus took from first to last, during His pilgrimage here. The world was there - and the Lord was here. There was no mixture, no crossing the boundary. There was the Lord Jesus in His perfect submission to the will of God, setting forth the glory of heaven in His words and ways, day by day. He was, as scripture shows, the Light of the World, but the world itself was wrapped in thick darkness which comprehended not the light.

The Lord went away and unburdened His heart to His Father in heaven, lifting up His eyes to the place from whence He had come, and speaking of His own whom He loved and was leaving in the world, He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world".

So then, our Lord Jesus Christ, as He is revealed in these chapters, is our measure, our guide, our pattern, our exemplar in all matters affecting the world, whatever its subtlety or power may be.

The thing for the youngest believer to bear definitely in mind is this that if I am walking with my Lord, if I am with Him, if I can plant my footsteps where He planted His, I am not of the world even as He was not of the world. It is a separate place truly that the Lord has given us, apart from the world, but the comfort and cheer, the joy and strength of it is just this, that where Christ was in relation to the world in the days of His flesh, He still is and being ourselves separate from the world, we are with Him and if with Him it is sufficient, it is enough. We are satiated, replenished in soul and have all that is needful.

We find this principle of separation to God runs throughout the whole Scripture. It began really in Eden itself because when Adam awoke from that deep sleep and saw before Him, in all her ravishing beauty and perfection, his bride, she was for him. Creation was perfect and beautiful, and all the creatures of God's hand were beautiful too and submissive to Adam, but amongst them all there was not a help meet for Adam. God gave Adam that which was exclusively for Himself and so the great principle of family life was established in Eden. Where no father or mother was, the principle was laid down "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh". Something was given to Adam which was particularly for himself and for no one else.

Our Lord has that prerogative too. In the time of His rejection, while He is still regarded as the crucified Nazarene and despised by the world, God gave Him, when He arose from that deep sleep of death, that which was for Himself - His bride, His own, so beautiful and fair is she and will she be in His eyes for evermore.

But the great thing about it, the peculiar and special feature is this, that the church is for Christ, and is His own. It is taken out for His name, just as the pearl of great price was fished out of the deep waters for the merchantman, his exclusive possession, so Christ has taken to Himself those that form His church and made them His own. The fact that we belong in that peculiar way to Christ at once automatically excludes the world. His own are in the world and if they were of the world, the world would love its own, but because the disciples of Christ are Christ's, therefore the world hates them as it hated Him.

So the position is defined, and we see at once that just as our Master did not interfere with the management of human affairs while He was ministering in this world, so those that belong to Him are also in that relationship. It is not for them to interfere with the matters of the world. They have a goal before them - to be with Christ. When Rebekah was called out from Mesopotamia to go to Isaac, to be his bride, and as she crossed the desert under the guidance of the servant of Abraham, she had no concern with the affairs of the desert. No doubt she passed towns and villages and caravans, but they were mere incidents by the way. She, on her camel, was thinking of the one whose face she had not seen, and whose bride she was to be. She was to be the bride of him upon whom the promise of God rested that all the world should be blessed through him. What a destiny was hers! This filled her heart and thoughts throughout what would have been a tedious and wearisome journey, had she had no such hope and ambition before her.

So it is with the bride of Christ, the church of Christ. We have a goal before us, a prospect, a destiny. We have an assured relationship with Christ, for Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. And what was His object? That He might present it to Himself a church in glory, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. So Christ's hope, shall I so put it, His love looks down upon us with the intense desire that the moment may come when all His own shall be consolidated into one body, one bride, presented to Himself in all its perfection and beauty, and this hope, do you see, at once dispels all ambition and desire to

be occupied with temporal and fleeting things which do not affect our connection with Christ in glory. Knowing what is our calling and hope, the world takes its rightful place as being but petty bubble, in fact a bubble, irradescendent for the moment but soon it will break, all its glory and splendour passing away in a moment. But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

We might go on to trace through scripture that the things of Christ and what is of God has always been of an exclusive nature. I deliberately use that word because some are rather ashamed of it, but it is a word which is founded on the truth of scripture. We belong to Christ exclusively. We belong to Him in a way in which the one who does not believe in Him does not belong. He has paid the price for the whole world and those who deny Him deny the Lord Who bought them,- that is true; but the redeemed ones, those He has bought out of the world for Himself, they belong to Him exclusively and therefore they are, by their calling and relationship to Christ, disentangled from the world, disassociated with it for ever. Let us understand our position.

Without dwelling further upon that, I would ask you to look at two scriptures in John where we see the Lord showing to us the attitude He took towards the world in two of its aspects. The world has many appearances but there are two principal ones: one is the religious aspect of the world and the other the civil side, the national governmental side of the world. In chapter vii. we see the Lord Jesus Christ and His behaviour towards the religious world of that day, always bearing in mind please that the world is that which is in enmity with God and knows not Christ. In the later chapter, we have the Lord Jesus before the governmental powers of the world, arraigned at the tribunal of Caesar, where He was condemned to be crucified.

Both in chapters vii. and xviii, we find that the Lord is presented alone. In other parts of the Gospels, you find the Lord Jesus associated with His disciples, but the Spirit of God isolates the person of Christ that we might look upon Him.

In chapter vii. we have His attitude to the Jews Feast of Tabernacles. He was in Galilee and the feast of tabernacles was at hand. This feast was of special interest and significance and importances in the round of Jehovah's feasts in the ecclesiastical year. It concluded and summed up all those feasts and what they spoke of. It was the consummation of them all. You have the Passover, and Pentecost, and the feast of atonement and so on, but in the feast of Tabernacles there was a time of rejoicing. The wheel of the year, as it were, had revolved, and the harvest and the vintage was passed, the fruits were gathered in and there was a time of joy. They were hidden, when they were in the land of Canaan to dwell in tents, composed of boughs of trees and so on, which formed their dwelling for the seven days of the feast, in order to remind them that they had come through the desert, living in tents. The desert was not verdant and green and beautiful. They had hardships in the wilderness, but God brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, and so the booths in which they dwelt temporarily spoke of the good things God had done for them. And they rejoiced, and many sacrifices were offered to God. This feast was also distinguished by the eighth day, the great day of the feast. When the seven days were over, still there was the eighth day, more blessing as it were, to come.

Well, the Jews feast of tabernacles had come. His brethren did not believe on Him then, although they were known to be His followers after His resurrection. They had lived with Him and heard His words, and marked His behaviour but they did not believe on Him. His meekness and lowliness did not impress them. No, they were men of the world, and the world says Everyone for himself. The one who can tread upon his fellows will get to the front. The world is without mercy. It is all for the one who can shoulder other people out of the way and get to the front. His brethren were of the world, and they said "Go up to Jerusalem. Go up there and do some mighty works. Display Thyself. No man who wants to be known hides himself in despised Galilee. Go to the great capital, especially now while all the people from the land are assembled in Jerusalem, and people are coming there from all parts. Make clear who Thou art. Show Thyself. Manifest Thyself to the world. Do not do these wonderful works secretly, do them openly". It was the counsel of the world to our Lord, and how did He meet it?

He refuses to go up to Jerusalem at the outset. He had been up at the Passover, and probably He had been up at other feasts, as we get in other chapters. At any rate, here was the feast of Tabernacles and our Lord deliberately refrained from going up to keep what was merely an empty feast, having no sense of Jehovah's mercy, having no sense of what Jehovah had promised to Abraham, of His mighty deeds, and the law He had given. They were living for the moment. They had their ritual, they had their temple, their priesthood and their sacrifices, and they were content to rejoice. There was no Shekinah in the holy place, but they came up in their crowds. They had a mock ceremony of rejoicing in Jerusalem. Arranged by the spirit of the world, it seemed fair outwardly. The Pharisees were there, full of zeal for the law, ready to do anything to advance the interests of the Mosaic law, but the Lord saw the whole thing was dead. It was a vain show, and empty ceremonial. How could there be a time of rejoicing when He the Saviour, the Christ, the Messiah, was despised, when they would not receive Him?

The Lord turned away from the religious world, and did not go up to the feast. His brethren went up but He did not go. He refrained from that which, although outwardly conforming to the law, was dead in God's sight. The body without the spirit is dead, and the spirit of life was not there in Jerusalem. The Lord turned away from it. Please bear that in mind because the Lord is our Pattern. What He did, we are called to do. The attitude He took, we are called to take.

The Lord deliberately refused to go up on the first day of the feast, but He went up in the midst of the feast. He said "I go not up .. unto this feast" - the word "yet" should be left out. "I go not up unto this feast" - that is He did not observe the feast because the time had not come for the feast of tabernacles. It was not yet the millenium and therefore it was not to be kept yet. But when it was the midst of the feast, He went up secretly, not openly, not displaying Himself and pushing Himself forward. He went up into the temple and taught. He there witnessed the truth of God in the temple. You have an account of what He said further down the chapter. I do not dwell on that, I simply call your attention to the fact that our Lord Jesus went up to Jerusalem in the midst of this empty ceremony,

and there He bore witness to the truth. The people came to offer sacrifice, to take part in the ceremony, and the Lord was there to speak the words of life and truth. Those who listened to Him, did not attend the feast of tabernacles in vain. They got more than they expected.

So the attitude which is shewn here is that which we can follow and which we must follow. We must follow the steps of our Master and abstain from that religion which is full of the spirit of the world, that religion which does not know Christ and does not give Him His rightful place, the first place and the place of honour. From that we must jealously and zealously abstain.

But to that aspect and condition of the world, there is our responsibility to witness for the truth. If we know the truth for ourselves, we must speak it forth to others. Our Lord said "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". Truth is necessary in approaching the Father. Those that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth. It is the Lord alone who can teach the truth, and if He has taught us the truth, it is ours to witness in Jerusalem, in the religious assembly, in the place where the world has invaded the precincts of religion ostensibly devoted to God. It is there, in Christendom, that testimony is to be raised to the truth of God.

Oh beloved friends, our Lord has left a great obligation upon us. If we know the truth, then we ought to stand for it and witness for it. If we love it, let us be true to what we know from the scripture. If the Lord has revealed to us from it of Himself, let us hold it fast. Cannot you recall a time when you were blind to the truth and did not understand it? Tell me, who opened your eyes and enlightened your understanding? Why is it you know things now which you did not know then? Did not the Spirit of God make them clear to you. And if He has done this, is it not that you should witness to it and stand for it? It is not necessarily a matter of speaking about it. We all have tongues but we cannot all use them for the benefit of others, but we can all live what we know and exemplify it in our lives, and by our conduct. Thus we can be true to the truth that the Lord has revealed to us as being of Himself.

The Spirit that He left, when He went on high, is the spirit of truth.

On the last day of the feast, after the round of empty ceremonies had gone and when the great number of sacrifices had been offered, the Lord Jesus stood and cried: "'If any man thirst' - you have been keeping the ceremonies, you have been observing the ceremonial part of the law, but if you still thirst, any of you, Jew or Gentile, 'let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given'". The Holy Spirit had not yet come, but was given at Pentecost, so that those coming to Him should be a source of refreshment and help to those around. So the Lord Jesus gives us the simple clue of what is our proper relationship to the world in which we find ourselves.

Now, in the later part of the Gospel we have what is well-known and I only refer to one or two scriptures because they show our Lord's conduct when He was alone with Pilate.

Our Lord was brought before the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, and He was by them, that very religious council of the Jews, condemned to death. He was guilty of blasphemy, they said, and He must die. By the law, the blasphemer had to be stoned, but they did not wish Jesus to be stoned, neither did they wish to take the responsibility upon themselves of putting Him to death. "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," they said, and therefore they delivered the Lord to the Gentile powers to be mocked and scourged and to be crucified.

He was taken to Pilate and into the judgment hall, and there He was, face to face with the power of this world. The power of government had been taken from the nation of Israel and given to the Gentiles. At that particular time, the fourth great monarchy was in display, the Roman Empire, that great and terrible beast, the fourth of the series which Daniel saw in his prophetic vision, and our Lord was before Pilate who was the representative in Judea of that great and mighty power at Rome.

I want you to notice that He was there by Himself. The Jews would not go into the judgment hall being ever scrupulous lest they should be defiled by entering into the house of a Gentile. This would defile them at least until sunset, and they wanted to partake of the Passover and to keep themselves ceremonially pure, and therefore they stood without, while Jesus was before Pilate, - before the power of the world.

Now how did our Lord Jesus Christ behave Himself there? Just think of the position for the moment. He listened to Pilate and to what he had to say, and Pilate was not cruelly disposed towards Him. He was not full of rage and hatred against Him. On the contrary, Pilate seemed to be favourably disposed and was not at all anxious to put Him to death. He wanted to escape the responsibility and to find some excuse to release Him from his custody.

How did our Lord behave? Did He take advantage of the circumstances in His interview, His private interview with Pilate? Did He seek to dispose the judge in His own favour, and to seek the power of Pilate to put down the power of the Jews, who had condemned Him to death? Who would not have done it? The man of the world would have said "Here is an opportunity, I can speak for myself and no one will be any the wiser. I can deal with the judge and make use of his power for my own benefit. Did our Lord act so? In that, shall I say crucial moment of His life, when He was really in the shadow of the cross, did He lift a little finger to help Himself, to curry favour with Pilate and turn his heart towards Him? No. He spoke the words of truth, absolutely, with purity, point and effect, but nothing in favour of Himself.

Pilate had to ask Him, "What hast thou done?" A strange thing that the judge should have to ask the prisoner what he had done, but there it was. Pilate felt himself in the presence of one who was greater than he. No doubt he felt his own importance and the importance of the imperial power at his back, a power that had conquered the world, a power of iron, terrible, he felt all that, but he was in the presence of One greater than it all. The meekness and lowliness of Jesus impressed itself on him so that he lost his nerve and his will.

Do take the lesson to yourselves, because we are so apt to use the opportunities that are sometimes given us in connection with the world for the benefit of ourselves. We say "Here is an opportunity. I can get an advantage. I can use the power and the things of the world to advance myself, to get myself a step forward and to be something here in the world and to have a place for myself". The Lord Jesus Christ - think of it - on the eve of His crucifixion, stood firm and true. If He had had it in His heart, He could have spoken to Pilate and none would have been any the wiser. Oh, the beauty and grace of our Lord. He was the faithful and true witness, and He witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate.

Pilate knew very well that the Jews had delivered Jesus to him out of envy and that the charges they brought against Him could not be substantiated. They said "He is a malefactor. He stirreth up the people, beginning at Galilee even unto this place. He perverteth the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar (which was an absolute falsehood). He made Himself the Son of God" and so on. They brought their charges, but Pilate did not accept them. He saw through them. His acumen as a lawyer and judge saw that these were trumped-up charges, and he would not listen to them, but turned to the prisoner and said "What hast thou done?"

They said, "He says He is the King of the Jews" and that Pilate could not understand. "Art thou the King of the Jews?" he asked, and the Lord answered that. He made it quite clear. "Thou sayest that I am a king" - which was the formula of assent to what was said. "Thou sayest" - that is "It is so, I am a king". He was a king and He looked it, too. But such a king, never such had been seen before. The liniments of royalty were upon Him. There was that in Him, which no man could gainsay. The powers of the world felt themselves to be opposed to what was adamant. There was all power, all might and strength there, wisdom too and judgment and understanding. They knew that. Pilate knew it, the whole world knew it. But when our Lord was challenged, He spoke the truth. He said "To this end was I born", because He was born King of the Jews. The wise men of the east knew He was born King of the Jews, so did Herod and the Pharisees. He was king by birth, as shown in Matthew and Luke. He was King by rightful descent.

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world". - ah, here Pilate was out of his depth. He could understand one being born into this world, but to "come - for this cause came I"! Then He must have been existing before He came into the world. So as it were, eternity was rolled back and the Lord announced to this heathen governor that He was the Eternal son of the Father.

"For this cause came I into this world, that I should bear witness unto the truth". It was the realm of truth and "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice". So He established Himself and the character of His kingdom, because He made it quite clear to Pilate "My kingdom is not of this world". We ought to impress that upon our hearts. They were words uttered by the lips of the Lord Jesus, when He was alone before Pilate, alone before the judgment seat, standing charged by the Jews who were crying that He was worthy of death, although Pilate could find no fault in Him.

"My kingdom is not of this world" - was there ever a kingdom like that one. Where was it? It was invisible. It was a kingdom entered by faith, entered by the new birth, by being born of water and of the spirit. It was something which flesh and blood could not understand. "My kingdom is not of this world". It is something supreme, something spiritual, something beyond the grasp and understanding of the world, and you cannot bring the things of the world, and you cannot bring the things of the world into Christ's kingdom. The kingdoms of this world are under the sway of Satan, who is the prince of the world, but the kingdom of Christ is that in which love reigns supreme, in which Christ guides and guards and commands the lives of those who belong to it. It is a terrible thing to bring the world, its riches, wealth and influence into the kingdom of Christ.

He said "My kingdom is not of this world" - and He gave proof of it - else "would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews". The Lord said that, in spite of Peter's impulsive act when with the sword he cut off the man's ear. But after all, that was not really very much for the deliverance of Jesus, particularly when the Lord Himself healed the wound.

No, the servants of the Lord did not fight. They did not take the tactics of the world to get their deliverance. Their methods were not the methods of the world. By the force of arms, the Roman eagles had spread their way; it was by fighting they had obtained their world-empire, but the servants of the Lord did not fight. If His kingdom was of this world, His servants would have fought, they would have given their life's blood, but it was not the way of Christ, and therefore if we belong to Christ, it must not be our way. We have to follow in the steps of our Lord and take the attitude He took.

The world was threatening to extinguish the witness that our Lord came into the world to raise. They said, "If we can put this deceiver to death, if we can close His mouth, He will never speak again, His testimony will be gone for ever. Let us do that and be at rest, and He will not speak any more". - There they made the mistake.

But the Lord Jesus was faithful, even unto death. Death was before Him and yet He said "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice". Pilate asked "What is truth", and then he went out, out from the presence of the one who is Truth. He went out into the world to find truth there, and he made a mistake. He only found what it was to be guilty of sentencing an innocent Man to be crucified.

Oh beloved friends, the ways of the world are not the ways of the followers of Jesus. I want to insist upon it, that we learn our great lesson of relationship to the world by studying the attitude that our Lord took. When it came to a question of death itself, even the death of the cross, He stood true and faithful to the end. He said afterwards to those He left behind, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life". It may be that it will so come.

If we had time we could look at the great development of the two aspects, the religious and the civil world, as we have it set out in striking vividness and instructiveness in Revelation xiii. There we have the two beasts which John saw, one coming out of the sea, and one out of the earth. There is the religious power and

there is the civil power and they are combined in opposition to God and to His things. It is the world rising up to its climax, there to expend itself in all its terrible energy against those that are true and holy, and then it will be judged by the Lord Himself. But we get the principle of it here and that is what affects us at the present time.

We know just where to stop in relationship to the world by watching what our Lord Jesus did and said. "Speakest thou not unto me?" - but the Lord gave no answer. "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?" The Lord spoke the truth again, quietly and meekly. He knew all things and He could teach Pilate what his position really was. He told Pilate something he could not have known or derived from studying in the imperial, military colleges. "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above". The sword of justice was given for the time being to the Roman Empire and it was responsible to God above. What did it do with that power? It crucified the Lord of glory. "The world by wisdom knew not God", and it knew not the Lord Jesus Christ. They consummated their guilt by crucifying the Lord.

The Lord knew that the power Pilate had was given him from above, and He said "Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin". The religious world is more guilty than the civil world. We reverse that judgment of the Lord because in our minds we usually think that the world of pleasure, the world of earthly government, the world of wickedness, is worse than the religious world. Not so the Lord. The Jews, with centuries of divine favour behind them, with all their history, they were the more guilty in God's sight. Instead of receiving their Messiah, they handed Him up to be crucified. So we should remember that the religious world which denies the Lord His true place and puts Him outside, which refuses His jurisdiction and refuses to obey His word, is more guilty than the world in its ignorance that does not know God and is blinded by the god of this world.

So we must take our estimate of these things from what the Lord said and seek by His grace to stand for Him in these times, because we are nearer the consummation of things today than ever. It is a truism, but it is so. The world is more difficult and subtle and powerful now than ever it was. It must be so. It goes on increasing in its power and intensity and therefore there is the greater need that we should stand clear of it, to keep our garments unspotted from the world. Our blessed Lord did. He walked so carefully, so meticulously in the pathway of obedience that He was never soiled. His thoughts within Him were in no sense polluted by what was about Him. He was pure as the sunbeam from heaven, He was the light of the world, and as He came into the world, so He went out in all purity and holiness, and we are called just to follow Him. May God give us grace.

Reading:- John xii.23-33: John xv.18-24.
1 John ii. 15-17; iv. 1-6.

I have read a good many scriptures just now in your hearing, not with a view to speaking of them all in detail - that would be impossible in the time - but to draw your attention to what the word of God says in them particularly about THE WORLD.

The world is a great practical difficulty to all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ because they find many solemn utterances in the word of God about it and there is a tendency to become confused as to the meaning of the many scriptures that refer to the world. Instead of pursuing the teaching of scripture about it, many set it aside as being utterly beyond them, and of no particular importance, something they can do very well without, particularly because they find a difficulty in deciding what the world really is, as mentioned in scripture. But the difficulty lies entirely in those who speak in that manner, and it is a difficulty because they approach the scriptures in the wrong way.

It is difficult to define in so many words what is meant in scripture by "the world", but it is an easy matter for the babe in Christ to decide for himself if he approaches it as the scripture does. In the scripture, the world is always placed in relationship to God and His Son, particularly to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God.

We know we find the subject of the world specially obtaining in the Gospel of John, and the Epistles of John. There it is that we have the wonderful revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the adorable Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that in a practical fashion, it comes to this, that if I am walking with our Lord, if I am imbibing His thoughts and teachings, the world settles itself - it is not of Him. It is not about Him. I settle it by looking at it in a negative way. I have the Lord Jesus Christ and I have what God gives me through His abundant grace, I am made a vessel of the Holy Spirit, and all this is antagonistic to the world in every way. Therefore, what I have not from God, is of the world.

We find this is so if we read the Gospel of John for instance, in that manner. You know the Gospel of John opens with a reference to the world. It speaks first of all of the Lord Jesus as the Word of God that was made manifest in flesh, the Maker of all things that were made. He was here in the world as the life, and the life was the light of men. He came into the world and His presence showed what the world was, in every way a contrast to Himself. He had made the world, but not as it was when He was found here, and the Gospel shows us that He was in the world and the world knew Him not.

So then, it was a moral condition that was spoken of in that term "world", that which is of man, of man's organisation, man's great system built up by himself, by his skill and his learning in order that he may be able to carry on his own affairs without God and without Christ. And because the world had done that, their eyes were so blinded that they did not recognise the Lord when He came. He was here, and the world knew Him not.

In Genesis i we read of the state of chaos which was here on the earth, when the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. It had fallen into that state of disorder and confusions, and then the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters. In John i we have a moral waste, a moral confusion. There we have darkness brooding upon the face of the earth and the astonishing thing was that when the light shone down upon this darkness, the darkness resisted its approach. Never was such a thing known before. When the sun arises in the heavens the darkness flees, but when the Lord Jesus came into this world the darkness deepened and became even more dense. The darkness comprehended Him not. It was a contradiction of natural things, so dark was man's heart.

Well now, it was to the world/ⁱⁿ that condition, that the Son of God presented Himself, and showed Himself in all the marvels of His mercy and kindness and that is set out the Gospel of John as we know. The Spirit of God takes up a single incident and describes it and attaches to it the conversation of our Lord and the way in which He pours out the grace of God into this weary, thirsty earth. Individuals come before us. How they are surrounded, as it were, by the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. What was the result of it all? Chapter after chapter brings us to this that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. If the world did not know its Creator, did not know the Son who was in the Father's bosom when He came into this world, so as He went on instead of getting to know Him more, they hated Him for His words for His deeds and they decided to crucify Him, and to get rid of Him.

The Son of God set forth His testimony and it could not have been rendered more perfectly but more than. Without going into detail, in chapters xi. and xii. we find the Father from heaven renders testimony to His Son, there in Bethany. Death had come into the family and they were stricken with sorrow. There it was that Lazarus was called forth at the bidding of our Lord. But in that chapter we see this - that the Father was directing the movements of the Son in that incident.

He tarried where He was, when He received the pressing message from the sisters, that Lazarus was sick. He knew what was before Him, before Lazarus and before Martha and Mary. He knew that that sickness was for the glory of God. Then with that dignity that characterised his movements as the Son of God, He proceeded, when the moment was come, to Bethany, to the house of mourning. He came knowing full well what He would do, but still His sympathy was in exercise towards the sisters sorrowing over their brother. They did not understand, they were dull to believe that this delay was a divine plan; that the Father had an object in it all, that His Son should be glorified at the grave of Lazarus.

They learned it by and by, we learn it now as we study the chapter. It did not diminish the feelings of exquisite sympathy of our Lord. His tears came spontaneously, (may I not say reverently of Him). He did not weep because He must weep, that is as if it was part of the divine plan, but He did it because His heart of love was moved at the inward sufferings of those who had been bereaved. Even the Jews could not understand it all. Why was it that Jesus, if He loved Lazarus, had not prevented him going down into the grave. He need not have died, so they reasoned, as

reasons, they reasoned in a worldly way. But there was the highest motive, for the Father was directing, the Son was working, and it was all for the glory of God.

There at the graveside, the Son was giving His testimony to what the Father was doing for Him, to show that He was His Son. "Father I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me". He took it from His Father. He had come to the moment when it was the Father's will for Him to go there, He spoke the word and Lazarus came forth, and so that great witness by the Father was rendered in Bethany. It was the Son of the Father's love that was there in the world and yet the world knew Him not, and Mary and Martha knew Him so very dimly after all.

Now we come to chapter xii. There we find the Father speaking again, speaking from heaven audibly to those that were near in response to what the Lord Himself had said in prayer to His Father. The Father signified that He heard what the Son had said and He would glorify His name and would glorify it again. It was the Father's testimony to the Son, as truly a witness as when He spoke, by the side of Jordan and on the Mount of Transfiguration. But it was at this juncture, that the Son gave that utterance which ought to be upon our hearts continually to guide us in the matter of the world.

"Now is the judgment of this world". Why does it come in there? "This voice" - that is the voice of the Father - "came not because of Me but for your sakes", and then the Lord says "Now is the judgment of this world". He did not come into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved, and yet here He says "Now is the judgment of this world". Why do we have it here? Because the real character of the world has been manifested: it has been fully tested and tried. The Son of God Himself here in this world, speaking words that men could hear, doing works they could see and could not question, showing Himself to be the Creator and Arranger of the forces of nature, and the world is blind to it all, and not merely blind and passive, but actively opposed and at enmity, hating Him and thirsting for His blood. That was the spirit of the world, and the Lord knew it. He had known it from the first, but now it had come to the point - "now is the judgment of this world".

It was just before they came to take Him because chapter xii brings us up to the close of the Lord's ministry, His public ministry. All we have in the first three Gospels as to the Lord's works in the temple etc. all that has been accomplished and at the end of it all the Lord has to say "Now is the judgment of this world".

He had laboured, He had come, that the world might be saved, but the world would not be saved, would not have Him Who was the Saviour of the world. God had loved the world - so loved the world, that He had given His only begotten Son, but the world would not have His love and would not have His Son. The Father sent the Son and the world had both seen and hated both the Father and the Son. They refused the Son and they refused too the Holy Spirit that He would send. And so their doom was written, like the writing upon the wall....

Judgment was at hand, yet we stand nearly two thousand years since that time and the judgment has not fallen. Why? That word was written for you and for me. The world has its condition plainly written upon its face. It has its judgment pronounced that we might know its character and know its hopeless condition. It cannot be reformed, it cannot be made better, and it is no place for us.

"Now is the judgment of this world" the Lord said on that day, and it is written I repeat that we might take it to heart, not as a question of geography, but as a matter of moral and spiritual condition. Around us there is the world, and that world has been judged, not judged by One sitting upon a throne, but by the grace of God manifest in the gracious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ passing through this world, and treated by the world with contempt. And the world's character, condition and purpose is unchanged today. We must make no mistake about that. It is the mistake which we know is put forth in our schools and colleges, in the text books of today, where the word "revolution" dances through the pages before our eyes.

But the Lord said "Now is the judgment of this world" and that word has never been revoked. The Son of Man will come to judge the world and He will deal with it righteously, not merely the world in its totality, but He will deal with individuals in the world and will administer His justice in their case.

But He says further "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out". There was a rival person in the world and the Lord was manifest to destroy his works. He came into the world so to do, and the Lord at the outset of His public service here, met Satan and submitted Himself to his temptations and overcame him. So Satan fled and left Him for the time. He entered the strong man's house and spoiled him of his goods.

Never was there such a display of the power of Satan. But Satan and the unclean spirits fled at the word of the Lord, cringing before Him in fear. They knew Who He was, the Holy One of God.

"Now is the prince of this world cast out". It is an historical statement, but he has not yet been cast out of the world. He is here, but the crisis had come. The Son of God having come to meet the power of Satan and to deliver the world from his power, it was now His to undertake the work of expelling from this world, Satan.

It is only a question of His patient waiting through His grace for the salvation of those that will believe that the expulsion of Satan is delayed. John sees in vision Satan cast first of all out of heaven itself. He is cast out by Michael and his angels and is cast down to the earth, having great wrath because he knows his time is short. Then John sees him, when the Lord comes, captured by an angel, bound with a chain, and cast into the bottomless pit, there to remain for one thousand years, the prince of this world imprisoned in the pit while the Son of Man reigns in glory here in the world, rid of the presence of that arch-deceiver. Then too, after the millenium, he sees him cast into the lake of fire, prepared for him and his angels.

But the Lord with His eyes, those eyes of eternity that were His, He sees all this as now present - the world judged and the prince of this world cast out. Think of the lowly Son of Man saying such a thing as that in the day of His rejection. How it gives us to feel what power there is, what grace and what glory shine in the Person of our adorable Lord. He knows it all, yet He says it so simply, so plainly that we can all understand. He says "My dear ones, I tell you the world you fear, is judged". The great prince that guides and controls the affairs of the world is cast out. His power is destroyed. Through death, Christ has destroyed and nullified the power of him who had the power of death, and has overthrown him. The prince of this world is judged.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death He should die". Three times in this Gospel there is a reference to "the lifting up" of our Lord. As the Son of Man He was lifted up, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, for man's faith. And again the Lord speaks of His being lifted up and says that then those who disbelieve Him will know "that I am He", and Who it was that had sent Him, - not immediately on His crucifixion, but that would be the ultimate result of the lifting up.

I just mention in passing, that this "lifting up" comes twice in Isaiah. It comes in chapter vi. where Isaiah sees the Lord "high and lifted up" and His glory fills the temple and homage and worship are paid to Him. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah spoke of His glory. He saw it in that day and in that very same chapter where it speaks of the Lord lifted up in glory, the great darkness that came upon the people judicially because of their unbelief, is also spoken of. It is quoted in this chapter (John xii.38). It comes also in chapter lii, the last two or three verses, which are previous to chapter liii. Jehovah's servant is spoken of - "He shall be exalted and extolled", and it means "exalted and lifted up". What is the result? The remnant confess that it was they who had lifted Him up on the tree. God had lifted Him up in glory but they had put Him on the tree. They mourn and confess their sins, and blessing comes to them.

But here the Lord speaks of Himself as being "lifted up" that all might be drawn to Him. Not merely the Greeks, not merely the Jews, but all nations would come to Him, and whosoever believed would be drawn to Him. By and by, all the nations of the earth shall flock to Him, and it is He who tells us "Now is the judgment of this world". The world displays its character in its treatment of Him, and that brings me to my second point.

In the end of chapter xv. we have the attitude of the world to those that belong to Christ. The first part of the Gospel deals with the attitude of the world towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and His disciples were to a great extent immune from the attacks of the world while He was here. But now He was going away. He loved His own which were in the world, and He was going to depart out of the world and so He informs them of what will be their experience when He goes away.

When He goes away and the little company He calls His own are left without their Good Shepherd, what is going to happen? What happens is this, that the hatred in the heart of the world against God and His Christ and the Holy Spirit, finds its outlet towards those that bear the name of Christ. The world hates them because they belong to Christ, because they are His. It is not because of any objectionable features in them but only because they are the Lord's. Because of this, the world not merely despises them, but hates them. The Lord says "If they have hated Me - they will hate you".

You recollect that in John xv. the Lord gives the allegory of the Vine. He spoke of Himself as "the true vine". The character of the vine was that it bore fruit. That was why the husbandman kept it. The Lord was the true vine here in this world and He bore fruit for God. But He says to the disciples "Ye are the branches", and the branches were to be fruitful even as He was, and the fruit would show that they belonged to Him, that they were part of the vine. The fruit they bore would be appreciated and valued by the Husbandmen. Why? Because it partook of the character of the Vine itself, and therefore it was pleasing to God.

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ was a continual unbroken source of celestial enjoyment to the Father. Unbroken I say definitely, including the hours of darkness on the Cross. There the Father found what was in His heart fully expressed and reciprocated in the heart of His Son. Now the disciples were to be admitted into close communion with the Son. Just as the branches were part of the vine, so the disciples were part of their Master and they were to bear fruit for Him, much fruit. They were to abide in His love and that love would shine. His joy would be in them and that joy would be full, and that was to be part of the attractive appearance of the fruit. All the perfection and beauty of it was seen and known by the husbandmen. He even purged the branches, to get more fruit. It is so pleasing to God the Father - but the world hates the disciples of Christ.

They were to love one another and to know that they belonged to Christ, and the Lord said "the world will hate you because it hated me". He said "I do always the things that please the Father and do His will, and the world is up against me continually. They hate me for doing such a thing and if you love me and follow me and bear fruit, as being branches in the vine, the world will hate and persecute you". This is a practical fact, and if it is so, and the world does not hate and persecute us, then why is it? Is it not because we are not bearing fruit, not much like Christ, and because the love of Christ is not manifest in us?

The very first thing the Lord tells His disciples would happen after His departure is that the forces of the world would array themselves for their extermination. You find it historically in the Acts. Persecution was the great thing that characterised the disciples after the Lord Jesus had gone up on high.

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own". The world cares for its own. They have their associations, their brotherhoods and so on and they help one another to get on

in the world. But if you stand aloof, if you show you are not a censorious person, one who hates everybody, but just a living, loving person, like the "One Who Lived" here in this world years ago, the world will hate you and have nothing to do with you, and will do you mischief if they can. If they cannot imprison you, or burn you at the stake, they will do something to show you are not friends of theirs and that they do not want you. Is it not so?

We find the Lord puts it before them and says "Do not be alarmed, they did it to me and they will do it to you". The servant is not greater than the master. If He had to pass through it, is it any hardship that you should have to pass through it too? We in this country have, through the grace of God, been immune from the persecution of the world for two or three centuries, speaking generally. But it has not died out. It is the very first thing that happened in those days, and if it came then, may it not come again? May it not be that in our day we may have to face the persecution, the definite persecution of the world, that the powers that be may be against us, because we belong to Christ? Well, the Lord knows, but may it be that the world hates us because they see in us a likeness to our departed Lord. His beauty and grace that shone so wondrously in this dark world, is reproduced though somewhat dimly in this twentieth century in what is called Christian England.

Now to turn to the Epistle of John chapter ii. we have the converse of John xv. There we had the world's attitude to the followers of Christ, but here it speaks of the believers' attitude to the world and particularly "the young men".

Now you will notice what the apostle says about the "young men". They are those that have overcome the wicked one. He says that twice about them - verses 13 and 14.- What is it exactly to overcome the world and the wicked one? They overcome because the word of God abides in them and they are strong spiritually. There was a power that resisted the persecuting power of the world. They were prepared to withstand the evil energies of a hostile world and they were the victors. Has Satan any more tactics in order to overthrow the faith of those that belong to Christ? He is a "roaring lion", but he is also the deceitful serpent, and if he cannot terrify, he will seek to delude, and mislead and deceive, and to put things so that they shall be attractive and desirable to be had. So it was that the serpent beguiled Eve. He made the fruit appear so pleasant and accompanied ^{it} with such soft speeches that her heart was deceived and she took of the fruit. She yielded to the blandishments of the serpent, that is what we have here.

Those that are strong, those that would go to the stake for Christ's sake, who would stand up against the terrifying powers of the world, they are amenable to the soft luring things that the world can bring. Therefore the apostle utters this solemn warning "Love not the world".

A man says, "Oh, but God so loved the world, May I not love the world?" God loved the world and made that great sacrifice in order that the world might have eternal life through believing, and not perish. He had an object in it.

But the young man who loves the world is one who goes into it and its ways. He is like Lot. He goes to the well-watered plains of Sodom because he wants to gain by it. He loves it that he may get advantage out of the things of the world.

What was the way in which the Lord stood aloof from the world? He would not be a party to its ways. He would not succumb to any advantage that the world might afford Him. People could not understand it. His brethren, who in those early days did not believe in Him, could not understand why He taught in Galilee and did mighty works there. Why did He not go into Jerusalem particularly at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles? Great numbers of people were there then and why did He not go there that people might see what a great person He was? That is the way in which the world argues. They say - If you have got any powers in you, will show them. Let the world see what you can do. Push yourself forward man. Do not get into the background. Let people see how capable you are!

But the Lord waited. It was not His purpose to advertise Himself. It was the way of the world. He did not love the world. He did not want to go to Jerusalem and attain the applause of men. It was the will of the Father that governed Him in every moment and thought, and so it should be with us;

We hear the exhortation over and over gain, until perhaps it loses its power "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"; - not the world in a broad way, neither the individual things are in the world, our particular desire, because we all are pleased with different things, and Satan knows that. He reads our character like a book and he knows exactly what is the weak point, what is the thing that we desire. He puts that before us and says "See how easy it is to obtain it. Just be going a little way into the world". The Apostle says "Do not do that. Have nothing to do with it".

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him". I think this is the only place in scripture where we read of the "love of the Father". We have the Father's love for us and our love for the Father, and for Christ. But the love of the Father - not merely loving Him as the One Who makes the rain to descend upon the just and the unjust, and so on, not merely as the Heavenly One as spoken of in the Gospels, but the Father as revealed by Christ in His love, the love which was in the Father's heart and which the Son revealed - you cannot have that along with the love of the world. Every believer that has tried it, knows it. But he need not have tried it in order to have found it out. It is written here that he might know it. The love of the Father is not in the one that loves the things of the world.

Then he enumerates a list of them - "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life", the vain glory man has in the things of the world. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses, but that is what he glories in - the pride of life. But the love of the Father is not associated with it. It is all evanescent. It is passing, like a panorama passing before us and then fading away, but the that doeth the will of God abideth for ever".

Our relation to the world is very simple if we will only look at it so. It is Satan that argues about the world, as to how far we can go into it without endangering our souls, as to how far we can go into the worldly associations and occupations. There is no doubt at all that the world has made its encroachment upon the lives of brethren during the last few years, say the last quarter of a century. Without applying it to any particular persons, anyone who had a knowledge of the ways believers lived say thirty or forty years ago, compared with how they live now-a-days, knows perfectly well that the world has come in. It has come into the way in which we live and speak, it has come into our meetings, our worship, our houses, our business life. There it is and it acts like a great eating canker upon the spiritual life of believers. It is a very solemn thing that the world should have found an entrance into the lives of those who belong to Christ.

And what is the result? There has been no fruit for God, no power in the meetings. There has been no power to help those that have drifted away. Some we have seen and known. Some have those related to them by the ties of nature. They have gone right away and there is no power to lift even a little finger to keep them where they ought to be, or to bring them back. Why is it? Is it not because of the power of the world? Satan knows it. He has said "There are those people who at one time were a power in the world, whose testimony went to the ends of the earth, but I will have them. Not by persecution yet, it may be by and by, but first of all I will try what deceit and flattery will do". And he has done it. What is the result

There is no need for me to say it out before you, the spiritual weakness that is around. You know it, not merely in those you are associated with. You know it best in your own heart and life. Where is the fidelity, where is the true spirit of piety, where is the power that will appeal to those that know not our Lord Jesus Christ, the power of the life and the power of the word of God? The Holy Ghost is hindered, because of the defiling influences of the world have come upon those that belong to Christ. Men preach and preach in vain, they try to help believers, but in vain. Why? It is the worldliness behind it, the loving of the world, and the things of the world.

I want to say a little word on chapter iv. Here is another thing and it is of real practical importance. We have been speaking about the world in relation to practical conduct, the spiritual life of the children of God, but what we have in chapter iv. is a question of teaching. The apostle says "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God". He shows how those that belong to Christ may be secured from the influence of false teaching, and the teaching of anti-christ which is in the world.

He says that many false prophets have gone out into the world, that is those that pretend to be the voice of God, and to speak the words of God but they were false liars and deceivers, and they went into the world. It is generally thought, and it is true to some extent, that this refers to evil teachers who leave the assemblies and companies of believers, and go into the world.

But surely it means something else. Going out into the world is not taking a voyage, not moving from one place to another. Going out into the world, means that I adopt worldly principles and ways and that is what the false prophet does. He allows the world to come into his mind and mental powers and he studies the scriptures from that point of view, and so goes wrong. The world can come into my mental equipment just as it can come into my heart and lead my affections astray. So the mind can be diverted from the truth.

The apostle says that they are to try the spirits, prove them. Do not accept everything you hear. Perhaps you say "How can I do that?" How can I know whether such and such a person is a false prophet or not? I can determine it in this simple way. The false prophet always speaks with the voice of the world. If I am loving God and living as He would have me live as His child, walking in the company of the Good Shepherd, and having the Word of God dwelling in my heart, I shall know that what he is saying is not the truth. Perhaps I cannot prove it, and am not able to confute the false prophet, but I am to disbelieve him. It may be all very well for the world, but not for me because I have nothing to do with it. So the babes in Christ are made secure from being drawn away by the deceitful teachings of those that are emissaries of Satan.

Satan seeks to destroy the spiritual happiness and joy of believers. You see, if I hold a false doctrine I cannot worship God, rightly. I may use words based on scripture, I may use a form of prayer and sing hymns and all that sort of thing, but if my mind has been poisoned by some evil doctrine, that keeps me from entering into that high privilege of real worship to God and of serving Him and of being powerful in prayer too. We know the difference between mere patter and prayer, prayer that takes hold upon God, prayer that is the voice of a friend speaking to God, speaking, in all reverence, on terms of intimacy with the Father and the Son. When worldly things come into our hearts, that power is destroyed.

I want to press this, that it is easy to keep apart from it all. He speaks here about the difference between the Spirit, and the wrong spirit. The Spirit of God we know always testifies of Christ and makes much of Him and glorifies Him. So that, when I hear a prophet speaking of Christ, extolling Him and speaking of His glory, lifting Him up before me as the Object of worship, and as the One to follow, I know that is of the Spirit of God. But when I hear a person speaking about Jesus, the lowly Man and saying something which is discreditable to my Lord, saying something which I feel in my inmost soul could not be true of Him saying that His death was the death of a martyr and all that sort of thing which is thrust at us now-a-days, I know this is of the enemy and not of the Spirit of God.

"Every spirit that confesseth .. Jesus Christ .. come in the flesh" - you will notice I have left out two words. As it stands in the text, it means an acknowledgement that Jesus Christ came into this world in flesh about two thousand years ago. Well, that is believed by everybody who accepts history. But that is not what is spoken of here. "Confessing Jesus Christ come in the flesh" - that is God was manifest in the flesh, acknowledging Him and His full Godhead. When He was here,

sleeping in the boat, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, everywhere and at all times, He was the Son of God here below. When I confess this, it is of God. God has enabled me to do it, and it is a grand thing, beloved friends, to be on the side of God in glorifying His Son.

Then we have "Ye are of God little children, and have overcome them" - not by force of arguments, but by, shall I say, force of living, of living in the Spirit and in the power of the Word of God, living apart from the world. "Because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world". They are of the world, and speak of the world, and that is why we know they are not of God, "and the world heareth them".

Now he refers to one test - that is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If I hear, or read, anything that attaches something derogatory to the Lord Jesus, I reject it. But there is something further. "We, (that is the apostles) are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us". How can we hear the apostles? God has written it here in the scriptures. So that we have two safe-guards: - the Person of Christ in our hearts, and the Word of God in our hands. What is not of the Word of God is the spirit of error.

What we have in these verses is just the way in which we can discern between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Let me close by expressing a desire that we should understand that the world is making a great effort in these days to destroy an adequate testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ here in this world. The judgment of this world will soon come about, but before it takes place, the world will increase in its power, and men of all classes will be carried away by its power.

How can I prevent myself from being carried away by the power of the world, either by its force or its subtlety? There is one simple thing. I walk with my Lord. I am so much in His company that I know the way in which He speaks. I know His words and the character of what He has revealed. Why, you know the voice of a dear one. You know the voice of your wife in a million. What is it that makes the tie? There is love. Is it not so with Christ? The sheep knew the voice of the Good Shepherd. They do not want to define the difference between the voices of strangers. There may be one hundred different strangers, but there is only one Good Shepherd, and that is the One I want. It is that which keeps me away from the world, and if we keep away from the world, we shall be kept safe amidst the terrible upheaval that is all around us today.

I suppose it is a sound thing to say that in order for a person to resist the poisonous germs in the atmosphere all around, that one must be healthy. Physical fitness is a resistant in itself against the subtle forces of disease in the natural world. So in the spiritual world. A person who is spiritually healthy, who is much with His Master and true to His Master, who stands apart from the world, and its corrupting influences, that is the one that remains uncorrupted in the world, that keeps his garments unspotted from the world. May we know that the friendship of this world is enmity against God and that he who goes into the world can no longer be counted a friend of Christ. Oh that we might be kept true and faithful to Him, until He comes.

Reading:- Malachi. iii.6-18.

There is something in this last Book of the Old Testament which at first sounds rather doleful and not attractive to the reader, but we may be sure that however dark the passage of scripture, there will be found in it some bright indications of God's love and mercy and of His good intentions towards those that serve Him and fear His name.

The truth of the matter is this, that what is doleful in scripture is occasioned by the unfaithfulness and even wickedness of those that profess regard for the name of God. It is because God is light as truly and completely and fully as He is love that in the scripture He reveals on the one hand the inefficiency and unfaithfulness of those that fear the Lord while on the other He displays that unfailing goodness and grace which are in Him and which it is His determined will to impart to those who believe in Him, and in Jesus Christ, Whom He hath sent.

Now this prophet Malachi speaks at the end of what was God's dispensation in the Old Testament, wherein He dealt especially with one nation on the earth - the children of Israel. Their history is given in the Old Testament and it is a history of failure which began at the very beginning of their history and which continued and increased as time went on. It is recorded in scripture because it is good for us to learn it. The fact is that what was true of that nation is always true with regard to those who have any share at all in God's dealings of goodness and grace. Men begin well but they soon deteriorate. They soon fall away. The brightness dims, the vivacity dulls. They are no longer what they were at the beginning. They decline, they fade and fall. There is only One who ever trod this earth Who was faithful, true and unvariable from beginning to end. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One alone in Whom there was no imperfection. There was no prominence in any one feature of His character - He was perfect in every way. But all that man has touched has been besmirched with the evil that is within.

You may say "Why present that to young people?" Because it is what they need to know more than anything else. They need to know that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing. It is written here in the scriptures, but many a young believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has found out that truth to his cost in bitter experience because he has been blind to the truth of God and has not taken it home to himself nor believed that in him there is not some good at any rate. But the scripture tells us the truth about ourselves, that there is no hope, or help, in ourselves, that we may come the closer to our Lord and find our all in Him, our sufficiency in the One Who can sustain in the face of evil, as well as in the face of contrary afflictions, and persecutions of all kinds.

Well, you have this failure, this apostacy from the truth, here in this prophecy, set out very clearly. The people whom Malachi addressed were a small portion of those whom God brought in a marvellous way back from the captivity of Babylon. There were something less than 50,000 returned and they formed a

nucleus again in God's land, Palestine, and there in process of time they set up a temple to the worship of God. They left their idols in Babylon and never brought them back again.

What a picture that was. They had learned that God had afflicted them because of their evil. They had learned that God, by a high hand, brought them out from their bondage in Babylon and established them in their own land, surely they will be happy, and will delight in the law of the Lord, and will obey His word with all their hearts. Surely they will take up the law of Moses and think upon it day by day and write it upon the walls of their houses and teach it to their children and walk in the precepts of God! Alas, it was not so. Outwardly, they seemed to be free from idolatry, but inwardly they were deceitful and wrong.

They prided themselves just upon an outward conformity to the things of God. They said "The law of Moses commands that we should bring our sacrifices to Jehovah", and the people brought their sacrifices but they brought what they chose. They brought what they could best spare. If they had a blind sheep, if they had a lame bullock, it would do quite well for an offering to Jehovah. They brought it, and the priests took it and offered it to Jehovah, as if God did not know what He had commanded through Moses, as if God did not look upon the nature of their sacrifices and discern that they were pleasing themselves and not Him in what they brought. They brought the sacrifices all right, and they came the right day, and brought it to the priests, and it was offered on the altar, but God's will was flouted. Outwardly they appeared to be obedient, but God who looks at the heart discerned that they were disobedient, and neglected the plain teaching of the word.

So you will find this chapter opens with that charge amongst other things against the people, and not only the people but the priests who connived with the people to offer these offerings unto Jehovah. They brought to God what they would not bring to the governor of the city. They offered to God that which they had not the conscience to offer to a man of flesh and blood like themselves.

That was here, at the end of the Old Testament. Are you thinking what evil people these Jews were? How they neglected what was due to God! Be careful, my friend, you may be judging your own heart, your own life, your own ways. What have you brought to God? There are some of us here who have had our eyes opened and we have been brought from the corruption of Christendom and taught to worship God in the liberty of the Spirit and to bring our sacrifices of praise to Him. What do you bring, my friends? What is the nature of your praise and worship? Is there anything blind, or maim, or diseased about it? Are you singing and praying to the ears of those who come to your meeting? Because you do not take part audibly in the worship of God, is your heart far away amongst other things? Are you offering to God something that is mixed up with the world, with your business, with the occupations of your home? We worship God, and if we worship God it must be in spirit and in truth.

God has a controversy with these people about it. I say a controversy, because they have their answer. If you read it through for yourselves you will see that over and over again

through the mouth of the prophet, what was in their hearts is stated in words, so that the people whom Malachi was addressing, and you whom he is addressing tonight, might realise how far man can go in his conception of the knowledge of God. We cannot deceive God. We may deceive our fellows, but we cannot deceive Him and it is dangerous, and deadly and sinful so to do. That was the charge which Malachi brought against these people, and against the priests. The priests not only failed in the matter of the sacrifices, but they failed also in teaching what was not the truth of God.

Now, at the beginning of the chapter I read, we have a solemn warning given by Jehovah to those people who were really the ancestors of the Pharisees of our Lord's day. They did not die out, in spite of Malachi's espostulations. They lived and they were there in their pride and self-sufficiency when the Lord came in the depths of His self-abasement and humiliation and they did not recognise Him because He was something which they had never thought of. Surely there could be no glory in humbling oneself. Their idea was to lift oneself up and think as much as possible of oneself and if possible make other people think the same. That is the way to go through life. The Lord came amongst them as one who was the Son of God from heaven, the Omniscient One with omnipotent power, but yet He humbled Himself to the lowest. They had never met such an one, neither had they conceived in their selfish hearts that there could be one such as He. Pride and self-sufficiency are terrible things to nurture in the hearts of those who profess the name of the Lord.

Now He warns them of the judgment that is to come. He says: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me". You see, at the end of the last verse of the preceding chapter the people had been saying, "Where is the God of judgment?" What does it matter how a person lives? What does it matter how I go to a meeting? I go to a meeting, I sit down and get through it and go home again, what does it matter how I pass the time? What does it matter how I pass that hour and a half? Who is any the better or the worse for it? Tell me that! "Where is the God of judgment?" What does God say or do about it? Have you ever thought like that? Has it ever passed through your mind?

That was what was in the minds of these people. They said, "Malachi, it is all very well for you to come and tell us these things, but where is God? Does He interfere, does He speak His mind, does He strike down the wicked? Where is the God of judgment?" So the prophet says "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple". God was coming, and coming in judgment to do away with the evil, and "the Lord whom ye seek" - They had said "Where is the God of judgment" implying that God in heaven did not care, but Malachi says "He is coming" and coming in His temple.

Now we find in the New Testament, in those portions which deal with the decline of Christendom, that the Spirit of God brings before the saints, to check them in the progress of evil, he brings before them the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, His coming in glory, His coming in power and in judgment, His visible appearance to the world. You will find it in

2 Timothy, and 2 Peter, and in Jude. "The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints" is spoken where Jude treats of the appalling apostacy from the faith once delivered to the saints. The Lord is coming.

You may say, "But, we are looking for the Lord Jesus to come and receive us unto Himself, and I like to think of that. That is perfectly right. Think of it more than you have in the past because His coming is very near and He will come and call us to Himself. But be assured of this, that if the Lord comes in that way, and receives His own to Himself, there is not an idle word that men have spoken, that shall escape judgment by the Lord Jesus Christ. He will deal with it in His own way.

It is not a question, of course, of the eternal salvation of a believer. I am not speaking of that at all. What I am speaking of is the life we live, the deeds we do, and the words we speak. There is not one of them that will disappear. They are not like foam and froth, which come and go in a moment. Our words are solid, so to speak. They have a persistence, they remain and come up at the judgment seat of Christ and will be dealt with there. Who shall abide the day of His coming? It is all very well to say now "The Lord does not care". He does care. He is waiting, but He will come and every evil word and work shall be exhibited in its real character before His face at that day.

"He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope; and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver". I must say about these words that they have been spoiled in their real effect by fancies that have been woven into them by well-intentioned people. You must know, you have read I expect, commentaries on this verse, applying the words to the dealings of our Lord with His saints at the present time, and that if a person falls into a great affliction or great trial, well he is comforted by this thought, that the Lord is the Refiner and that He is there, sitting, and watching him suffering in the fire that He has brought to purify him.

Well now, that is not in this scripture, and I do not think it is anywhere in scripture. The Lord does not deal with His own as a Refiner, He does not put them in the fire. This is in the old dispensation and it has to do with a nation. When He speaks of refining and purging out what is wrong, it is the evil persons that are brought out. The Lord does not purge out any evil that is in our ways by affliction, (I mean penal affliction) neither does He sit to do it. Sitting is the attitude of the judge - the whole context is that of judgment. The Lord Chief Justice sits to try, the Lord Chancellor sits on the Wool sack - that is his official position; so when the Lord comes seated on the throne of glory, it is for judgment. But He does not come and sit by the bedside of the suffering saint and watch him there until He has given him enough. No, that thought is all wrong. He does not do it at all, and besides, as a matter of fact, any metallurgist will tell you that no refiner sits down and watches the furnace. He could not do it. (But I must not dwell on that any further now. I think it needs a little word about it perhaps another day).

The Lord is speaking about His coming in judgment, and then He says a word of comfort. "I am the Lord, I change not" - the unchanging One, the One Whose very existence is unvarying from eternity to eternity. He is, and He exists, and He is always the same. He is unchanging in His very nature. If I may say so, it makes Him God, and it is essential in His nature, as God. "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". Why you worms of Jacob, look back at your own history. How many times you have been very nearly extirpated from the earth, and something has saved you. God has saved you, because "I am Jehovah. I gave My promise to Abraham. I promised that in His seed all the earth shall be blessed. It has not been done yet, but it is to be done, and therefore ye sons of Jacob will not be consumed. Tribulations may come upon you. The Assyrian may come and take away ten tribes, and the Babylonians may take away another two, but I will bring up a small remnant out of those tribes. They go wrong and are exposed to My just judgment, but you must remember that I loved you Jacob from the beginning. You will not be consumed, off the earth and your name is not cut off" - and we know the sons of Jacob remain today, and they will remain until they are established by the power of God in their own land, under the beneficent reign of the Messiah they crucified. That must be, because Jehovah says, "I change not".

Now in the verses that follow, we find a division in this way. They divide into threes. Verses 7,8,9 are verses which relate mainly to the sinful acts, or works, or deeds of these people. Then verses 10,11, and 12, deal with God's promise to them on condition that they are behaving themselves as they ought, repenting and returning to Him. Then He promises to pour out a blessing upon them, so that there shall not be room to contain it. Then in the following verses, 13, 14 and 15, He says "Your words have been sinful. What you have said has been all wrong".

There are those whose works, whose actual deeds, are outwardly good and passable and even better than some of their neighbours', but their words are not nice. There are some who say that words do not matter, but God makes a great deal of what these people said and He charged them with their sayings, with their words. But as against that, in the last three verses, we have His beautiful promise towards those who fear the Lord, and think upon His name and speak often one to another. He says, "You are the people I love, the people I delight in. You shall be Mine, I will make you Mine in a special manner. You shall belong to Me and know what it is to be in the embrace of an eternal love and favour".

So we have two charges of sinful works and sinful words and two blessings, one a promise of blessing that would be poured out upon them contingent upon their obedience and would be such a blessing that they would not be able to contain it, and the second promise is of favour exceptional. To be considered choice and valuable to Jehovah was a reward indeed and that is what was promised not to those who did a great deal, or served a great deal, but to those who feared the Lord and thought upon His name.

Well now, going back to verses 7-9, we cannot go into all the details, but the particular charge brought is this, that they had been robbing God. They had been with-holding from God what was due to Him. It was not now a question of the sacrifices,

which were voluntary and optional, so to speak, but it was a question something due to God and to His name.

Tithes began before the law, because Abraham had no law but he gave tithes. It was that which was due from a man to God of his substance, that he might honour God with his substance. Under the law, a definite proportion was assigned. There was the tenth of the year, and also of the second year, and also of the third year to be given to Jehovah, and there was the tenth that was to be given to the Levites, and the Levites were to give a tenth part of what they received for the priests. It was a matter of educating the people into this, that what they had was Jehovah's and He claimed from them a proportion, to indicate that they felt their responsibility to Him.

You remember the man whose crops were very abundant. He had so much that he did not know what to do with it, but it never occurred to him to give anything to God. He never thought a word about the Levites, or the Temple. No, he said to himself, "I have all these crops and bursting barns, I must build more and store more for myself, laying up more goods for my soul, so that I can take my ease". No thought of God at all!

Will a man rob God?", but they said "Wherein have we robbed thee?" Now I think we may be sure about this, that these people were too wise in their generation to keep back all the tithes. They tithed this, and that, and the other, but some things they did not tithe. The Pharisees appeared to be over-scrupulous, and tithed their mint, and anise and cummin, so that they should not miss a single thing. Now the charge here is that in robbing God they left something out. They only gave Him part of the tithe. They may have brought three-quarters, I do not know, but they left something behind and they were deceiving God. Perhaps you say: "That is the Old Testament, and it does not apply to us. You are forgetting that you are speaking about the old dispensation. We are in the church, we belong to the heavenly church of Christ!" So we do, and our responsibility is therefore all the greater.

Do you remember, when the church first started, there were two persons who kept back part of the tithe. They went and sold their land and came and laid part of the price at the feet of the apostles. The man and his wife agreed together about it. They said, "We won't give up everything. We will keep a little for ourselves and nobody will know. James, Peter and John won't know and God won't mind. We will give part of the price. We won't bring all!" So Ananias went up and laid down his part. He did not say a word; he laid down that part as if it were the whole. He lied against the Holy Spirit dwelling in the church, and he died. His wife came in and she was party to the same deceit, and she also fell a victim to the stroke of God's judgment. There, in the forefront of the church's history, is the solemn warning that we must not rob God of what is His due.

If you are a Christian, you ought to be more faithful, more devoted than to give Him a part. You ought to be more faithful than the Israelite. If you have heavenly blessings, you ought to be more faithful than the man with earthly blessings. Those who have earthly blessings cannot take them

to heaven. Flocks and herds cannot go to heaven. When we go to heaven, shall we lose one of our blessings? We shall know and enjoy them as we never enjoyed them here, but it does not make any difference to this fundamental fact that you and I owe everything we possess to God and we must not keep back what is due to Him. I am not pleading for myself, I am putting God's claims before you. I say, "Will you rob God?"

Now we get God's comfort and counsel. The judge was coming and there is the fact that we have kept back part of the tithes, what is to be done? Start at once. Here is a case where you can turn over a new leaf. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ..." If you read the last chapter of Nehemiah you have an historical commentary upon what we have here. The priest in the temple were dependant upon the gifts of the people for their sustenance and there was the treasury in the temple, the storehouse where these tithes were kept for distribution as need was to those who ministered to the Lord in the place of worship.

So God said: "You bring all the tithes into the storehouse 'that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith'". We quote this scripture at our Gospel meetings, and on other occasions, and we say: "Let us pray to God and prove Him by our faith. Let us believe Him more and He will pour out more blessing upon us and give us showers of blessing". But I cannot see anything about prayer in this verse. You put prayer in - it is not here. "Pray by all means. But why are there no conversions in your meetings. Is it because you are keeping back some of the tithes, not rendering to God what is His due. It is very easy to go half an hour before the Gospel meeting, and pray. We ought to do that, of course, but that is not everything. Why is this leanness, this barrenness, those empty seats? Is it because we do not pray? Is it not because we do not do enough, we do not render to God what is His right, and what is due from us. We are living to ourselves, for our own comfort and status in life, we are not thinking of what is due to God's name.

But here is His comfort and counsel. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it". It is a marvellous statement, God is personally interested and He Himself would pour out blessing. You may be sure it would not be a dribble of blessing just trickling down drop by drop. He would pour and when Omnipotence pours, you will get a blessing indeed. You will remember in the days of Elijah and Ahab, that dark time of apostacy in Israel, God shut the "windows of heaven", so our Lord said when He began to preach the gospel. He spoke of the days when God shut up the windows of heaven and there was no rain or blessing.

But now, here was the promise that He would open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing. What is the blessing? Who can say? A Blessing is an act of God's favour towards us, what He gives us to mark His appreciation and approbation of what is done, a good thing from the hands of God. It may be the blessing of others, but do not forget that a real blessing always begins

in the heart of the one who is seeking it. If you are seeking it for another, all blessing that God gives must have its effect, its feeling, its experience in your own soul first. We are not automotons. God does not send blessing through us as water flows through a lead pipe, but there is real communion with God. When God speaks of a blessing here, it takes in all kinds of ways in which God signifies His pleasure towards us.

Now the next charge was "Your words have been stout against me". I think we rather circumscribe what "speaking against God" means. We may confine it, in our minds, to taking His name in vain, or saying something evil about the person of Christ, or teaching something contrary to the scripture. All that is included, of course, but "speaking against God" is saying what is not true about God. Have you ever thought of it in that way? There are some people who talk very glibly about God. Be careful you do not say anything against Him. Let it be words of truth and soberness, because it is a terrible thing to be speaking stout words against God.

What did they say? "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God": and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts". These were the people that had not brought the tithes. Here they were boasting and saying "We have served God all these years, and kept His precepts, walking mournfully and keeping the feasts, as well as the fasts before Him and what is the result?" There is the spirit of the Pharisee who prayed "Lord I thank thee I am not as other men are" - he was speaking against God assuming that God did not know him in his true character, in the way he looked at himself. They said "We have been serving God all this time, and what is the benefit of it, what is the good of it all?"

Let us examine ourselves. Some of us have been on the road for a great number of years (I am not going to tell you how long I have been on the road). What is the good of all those years of serving God and spending my time for Him? What am I better for it today? If you ask me to write it down in ways that appeal to the world and the man of the world, he would not think it any value at all. I might say "God has not given me, after all my service and faithfulness, what He might have done. He has been hard and niggardly. He is a hard master gathering where he has not sowed and so on". If I said that, I should be exactly where these people were. Have you ever been like that? Have you considered - "I have been in such and such an association for so many years, and I think I must give it all up. Things seem to be going wrong. It is no use going on. We go week by week, Lord's Day by Lord's Day and things are getting worse. People are getting fewer and there is less interest, and so on". Do not speak against God in that way. That was just what these people were doing, but they did not realise it, and when a person does not give God His right place, he is wrong in all his judgment.

How did these people judge? They said, "Now we call the proud happy (or blessed)". The Lord said "Blessed are the meek". The people in Malachi's day said, "Blessed are those that are proud, those who take their full place in the world. Those are the ones that get on. Those who spread themselves

like the bay tree and show themselves off in the world. They are the ones whom God honours!" Do you ever think like that? If you do, it is because you have your eye off God and you are speaking in your heart against Him.

The Lord spoke of the proud Pharisees that they said much and did little. They were very capable in binding very heavy burdens upon the shoulders of others, but they themselves took care that they never lifted a finger to help. They were good at saddling others, but they themselves never helped. They were too much occupied with themselves. All that God has a controversy with. He would not have it, and He withholds His favour for it. "They that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered". How awful these words are when judged in the light of scripture.

But now comes the bright part. They were not all like that. Amongst this remnant of a remnant, there was still another remnant - a remnant of a remnant of a remnant, and that remnant was those that feared the Lord, and spoke one to another. I think there is an amazing amount of comfort in these words because we are living in days when institutions and organisations are falling to pieces. Anything that takes the name of God or has a religious character at all, it is the effort of the enemy to smash it and destroy it.

We find here that the counsel of the prophet is in this way. There is one thing which remains, which everyone can do, any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can do, whether he is in a concentration camp, or anywhere else, he can fear the Lord, can fear God. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and it is the end too. It is having God before our hearts. It is not that we tremble and shudder as we think of Him, but we fear Him and reverence Him and give Him prominence, everything we are and we have belongs to Him. That is fearing God.

The Lord Jesus Christ sought out those that feared God - the excellent of the earth. He found them amongst the poor. He went into their houses and received their welcome, and their care and their service. It is so today. God looks down, not to see those who are making a great name in the world for themselves in the eyes of others, but He looks for those who cultivate a fear and regard for His Name and who consult His Word as the foundation of all wisdom and the source of all light and help. They say "Satan may rage and outward things disappear, but God remains. He is my Father. I will have communion with Him, and with His Son". That is what we want to cultivate, both young and old. Let it be your constant aim to fear God.

Then they "thought upon His Name". It is the same thing really. The name of God is what He is, and He is what is His name. To think upon His name is to think of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That gives beauty and value to assembling as we do on the first day of the week. We come together and what is the lodestone, the invisible power that draws and attracts and brings together contrary people. It is the name that has brought them. There is very little to see, but deep down in their hearts they reverence the name of the Lord Jesus

and remember His word "Where two or three are gathered together ...". They come, not because Jones, or Brown is there but because the name of the Lord is there. And where the name is, He is. He cannot be apart from His name. So we come, we think upon His name and our thoughts are too deep for words. We think upon His name. We get together and speak to other people, but when we think, the Lord sees and hears. That is what is valuable, that is the sacrifice agreeable to Him, and it is within your reach to give Him that. So if we are privileged to meet tomorrow morning, let it be that we each come to think upon His name, to consider His loveliness, His glory, His grace, to remember Him in His death. It is what the Lord values.

Then there is another thing. They "spoke often one to another". Not only fellowship with the Father and with the Son in the family of God, but fellowship one with another. They were all Jews truly, but they did not all fear Jehovah. They had all come back from Babylon, I suppose, but they did not all think upon the name of Jehovah, but there were those who did, those who had not married strange wives etc. and they spoke one to another. They had a common interest - that was the things belonging to the name of Jehovah. That supplied the topic of their conversation one with another, and Jehovah's reward for this is "They shall be Mine", because it would be this remnant that would form the nucleus of the millennial kingdom, as far as Malachi goes.

I think it has an application now-a-days to those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, those who are true to Him amidst the confusion of Christendom, every faithful soul, everyone that belongs to Him and has a real regard to His name (even though he does not know the blessedness of being gathered singly and only to His name) all those who ponder upon His name, they are the ones who will be His, when He comes.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not go out of this world until He had gathered a little company whom He called "His own", those that belonged to Him exclusively, and who were eventually "the church". They belonged to Him. That is the characteristic of the church - it belongs to Him. He loved it and gave Himself for it. He nourishes it, and washes it and is going to present it to Himself, to display it as His own by and bye. So the principle of what we get here, applicable to the Jew by and bye, is applicable to the church now, that they belong to the Lord.

"In that day when I make up my jewels". "Jewels" would be better as it is in the margin - "treasure". (I remember as a child thinking that the Lord Jesus took every believer and put him as a jewel in His crown, and that all the believers in the world made up the number of jewels in the crown of the Lord. I suppose it was founded upon these words). As a matter of fact, it is not "jewels", but "treasure", a special treasure, a peculiar treasure. It really goes back in reference to Exodus xix. where the promise was to Israel that if they were obedient they should be as a peculiar treasure amongst the nations. And so she will be in the millennial glory.

There is a great deal more in this chapter that is instructive and helpful and needful for us, but let us not go away without feeling that God has called us to consider whether we are rendering to Him all that is His rightful due from us. That is a question which each one must answer for himself, and if we do so, if we give Him His due, He won't be a debtor to us, we shall have a blessing.

When a man went and paid his tithes, it made a hole in his pocket; he had less wealth than before. "Never mind", Malachi said "You will have far more than you give. God will give you a blessing more than you can hold, it will overflow. Good measure He will give to you". That was blessing now, but if you go on fearing the Lord and thinking upon His name, you will have a blessing now, certainly, but that is not the point. There is one coming, and the blessing that is coming is this, that when our Lord Whom we love so much and Whom we desire to serve, when He enters into His rights and reigns in glory, He will have His church with Him, and will say to all the world "This is My church. This is My bride. This is the one that I have chosen to share My glory. She was faithful to Me in the day of tribulation. She loved me when in the wilderness, and here she is, in the place of glory". This is true. It ought to comfort our hearts. It may be only two or three when we come together tomorrow, but think of the day that is coming, when we shall be with the Lord in glory.

Reading: Matthew xxiv. 45-51.

This is the first of three parables which our Lord spoke as the Great Prophet, and the three of them are connected by the theme of the Lord's coming. There is the parable of the lord and his household servants which I have just read, and that is followed by the parable of the Bridegroom and the ten virgins, and that again is followed by the parable of the lord and his trading servants, and in each case the point of the parable is that the Lord's coming affects the people in the parable, more than anything else. It is the one thing that should be before them in their service, and the Lord deals with them in accordance with their faithfulness.

It is an aspect of the Lord's coming which is very necessary for us because of our responsibility. We know that we look for the Lord to come and receive us unto Himself that we may occupy that place in the Father's house which He has gone to prepare for us, and that is a cherished hope in our hearts, filling us with joy and peace, as we contemplate it. The thought of being suddenly transferred from a world where sin reigns unto death, to the presence of our beloved Lord, and the glories of the Father's house, are intended to fill our hearts with worship and praise to Him, Who has set such a hope before us. But then the word of God is, if I may so express it, two-sided, a sword with two edges, and it not only comforts our hearts but it also sets before us our responsibility. We have a responsibility with regard to the Lord's coming and the Lord has deemed it of such importance that He impressed it three times in that discourse which He gave on the Mount of Olives.

It was important that those He was leaving behind as His witnesses, as those who would be responsible to Him for their behaviour, that they should understand that they were left here in this world to be in it for the Lord Who had gone away, to be there for Him, up to the moment of His coming. The moment of His coming would terminate the period of their service and their reward, or their penalty, would follow. We do well not to confuse the two views of the coming of the Lord, not to set one before us apart from the other. We need both. We need the encouragement of the Lord as our blessed Hope, and we need the spur that the Lord is coming to investigate what we have been doing, and the way we have been doing it, and the assiduity with which we have carried out these services that He has put upon us.

These parables we have here come between what the Lord had previously spoken to His disciples in relation to His coming, as the Son of man to the Jews, and at the other end of the chapter, there is the coming of the Son of man again to sit on the throne of His glory and to judge the living nations of the earth. Between these two, we have these three parables that are applicable to Christendom at the present time. We do not have the Lord coming as the Son of man in any of these three parables. You will say, "It is in the 13th verse, but if you look in the Revised Version and will find that the words 'wherein the Son of man cometh', are omitted because the Lord is not coming to His church as the Son of man. That is His relationship to the earth, whether to the Jews or the Gentiles.

It is in another aspect altogether that the Lord stands towards ourselves as the church.

Now we ought to be aware of this that one of the great efforts of the enemy of Christ in these days is to separate the hearts of those that profess the name of the Lord, from the Lord Himself and His coming. He does that in a variety of ways and one that is very rife at the present time is this - to use the various prophetic portions of scripture to interpose a barrier in our hearts against the momentary expectation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan cannot bear to think that you and I should be on the toptoe of expectation for our Lord. He wants us to be immersed in the world, taken up with the things of time and sense and to lose sight of the hope that Christ has given us.

Beware of everything, in whatever guise it may come to you, that would put anything for a moment between your souls and the immediate coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is coming to receive us to Himself and it will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye - here one moment, there the next. That is something to cherish in our souls as a great treasure that the Lord has given us. Satan would seek to rob us in some way or the other of this precious truth that we find here.

Well now in this first parable which I have read, He speaks of Himself and of His house. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant". The characteristic of the servants that are spoken of here is that the circle of their service is amongst those that are of the household of faith, those that belong to the lord. Each one in that household is a servant responsible to the lord who is no longer there, and the lord puts that first as being of the utmost importance.

In the Old Testament there had been a house of God, and Moses was faithful in that house in his service to God. God has given His Son a house, and was not He faithful when He was here, and is He not faithful now? All those that belong to Him are His chief concern. He intercedes for them day by day. He scrutinises their conduct and observes their weaknesses and supplies His strength. He is engaged continually in the service of those who are called to His house. But He does so invisibly, and He has left visible attendants in the household, those that are to manage His affairs.

"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing". He has set those in the church whose duty it is to care for the well-being, the spiritual well-being of those that belong to Christ. That is their service. The Lord has given them a love for their brethren. He has given them the ability to care for the spiritual welfare of their brethren because they love Christ, and He has given them also the ability to impart food, nutriment, spiritual strength to their brethren, and there are these who are faithful and wise in that. They understand that they have a responsibility to their brethren. They feel they would be the last to say "Am I my brother's keeper?" They are their brother's keeper, and so they seek to be faithful in that which is committed to them.

"A faithful and wise servant". You may say "I do not claim to be either wise or faithful". No, well that is a good feature on your part. But it is the Lord who will decide, by and by, who is faithful and wise. But the man who feels that the spiritual health of his brethren depends in some measure upon him, will seek by the help of God to be faithful to what he can be and do for the help of his brethren. If he undertakes that service, he is to be wise and prudent, that is to say, he is to have the spirit of his Master. The care for the spiritual needs of others is a delicate matter. You need that wisdom which will enable you to dispense just that particular form of help which is most suitable to the case.

Perhaps some of my younger brethren and sisters say "Well that applies to the big brothers. It does not apply to me". But it does apply to you. You may not be able to help the grown-ups in Christ but there are a number of young persons to whom you can lend a helping hand, and be very careful you do not walk a step out of the narrow way and lead them astray after you. It is something that the Lord has laid upon us all, to care for those who are His own. He was the Shepherd - there were the sheep. The Shepherd was going away and He gives the service of caring for the sheep to the under-shepherds. I am not speaking now of those who are called to be special gifts - pastors, teachers etc. There are those who stand head and shoulders above the others in this respect, but I am speaking now of what the Lord looks for from everyone of us. In that day, we shall have to give an account of the affairs of the household. The Lord looks for it, and it is an individual matter.

If you refer to the second and third chapters of Revelation, you find the Lord dealing in a disciplinary way with the seven churches and He speaks to them of their good deeds and their misdeeds. Each time He addresses the individual. It is the angel of the church at Ephesus, the angel of the assembly at Sardis, and when He speaks of His promises He addresses the individual "Him that overcometh". So do not let us mistake the bearing of this parable. It is not merely that Christendom is divided into two parts, the faithful and the unfaithful, but the truth applies to every individual in the church of the living God, His house here upon the earth. Very well, the Lord at His coming looks for faithfulness and how does He assess faithfulness to Himself?

The Lord said "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" - so doing. It is not doing this or that, preaching or expounding the scriptures, or visiting the sick. It does not specify any particular service, but as each one has received from the Lord, the Lord expects when He comes to find you and me so doing - doing the little things He has given us to do and being faithful in them right up to the end.

The coming of the Lord is the terminus of our progress in the way of service. Perhaps I may say here, for those who are not quite clear about it, that the coming of the Lord in the New Testament has two sides. We were speaking about two aspects just now - the coming of the Lord as it affects our hearts and affections, and in connection with our service. The Lord comes and receives us to Himself on high, and then it

is that He investigates our conduct. On His Judgment Seat, He examines what has been done. We stand there and all our lives, our actions, our words, our thoughts are all displayed before us. We see what matches the glory of Christ and we see what has been discordant. We see where we walked the straight path and see where we turned aside, being swayed by temptations, or the pleasures and ambitions of our own hearts. It will all be exposed before us and the Lord will dispense to us that reward that is meet, and with that reward we shall come with Him, when He comes in glory. The word "coming" is of generic meaning, that is to say, it is not merely applied to his coming for His church, but it also means and includes His display of our conduct in His own presence. The great thing that the Lord admires is the faithfulness that keeps on up to the last moment "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing".

Beloved friends, have we allowed our hands to hang down, have our hearts, as it were, been turned to water? Are we languid and indifferent and careless of the affairs of that church which Christ loved and gave Himself for? What we do is very small indeed, but the Lord does not measure the amount, but He looks at the faithfulness of the heart that does not tire, but goes on and on, day in and day out, doing just what He has set before us. There is the blessedness of the Lord's coming and it should have an effect upon our daily lives and conduct, and upon our relationship with our brethren.

But then there is the other side. There is the evil servant. That is a terrible thing and it troubles some people. They cannot understand why evil should be found among such a precious blood-bought company, as those that profess the name of the Lord. But we ought not to be surprised. We have only to think of that company that was exalted above all measure, that little company of twelve persons that were made the bodyguard and companions of our Lord in His progress through this world. These twelve men were singled out from the company of His disciples, and endued with power to serve Him. What higher honour could there be! What more coveted place than to be, and continue, with Christ in His temptations as He went through this world. Yet amongst these twelve, there was one who was a devil, into whose heart Satan entered, and he betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Ought it therefore to be any surprise to you and me that there are those in Christendom, as we call it, who profess the name of Christ, but whose hearts are still hardened, they are still in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity is upon them. They have not the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It comes out here in one particular way. The evil that is in the heart shows itself, and we ought to know by this time that the one thing we have to watch with the utmost care is our hearts. "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life". It is in his heart that the evil servant says "My lord delayeth his coming" - "He did not come last month, he did not come last week, he did not come yesterday, he will not come just yet. He has deferred his purpose, he will not come just yet and I need not carry on my affairs today with the thought that he is coming to look at them. My lord delayeth his coming". But the Lord goes to the root of the

matter. You have a heart. Watch it, let the word of God search it, lest the thought may arise within you "my Lord delayeth His coming".

I do not think the servant put it into words. It flashed through his mind that the lord to whom he owed obedience was not at hand, and then it was that he showed what was really within him. He first began to smite his fellow servants - his mischief begins in the household. It is the evil disciples who have caused all the mischief and misery in the church of Christ from the beginning. There were disciples in the midst of the church who sprang up and taught evil things and evil practises and who led the saints astray. They were there in that day - they are in this. There is a spirit of animosity amongst those who name the name of Christ. It was a terrible thing to smite and beat the fellow servants and we have a picture of it to the full in the New Testament. No more lurid picture of Christendom could be drawn than that found in the xvii and xviii chapters of Revelation. There we have what is called the church of Christ, the false bride, sitting as a woman on the beast. That was she who had professed the name of Christ but who had departed altogether from the faith and allied herself with the governments of this world. But where was the beating and the smiting? She was drunk, and what with? With the blood of her fellow servants, the blood of the martyrs had intoxicated her. That was the evil servant to its full, in the aggregate, the collective form of the evil servant.

But we must beware that we do not come under the description that our Lord gave in this discourse. The evil servant beats and smites his fellow servants. It is a terrible thing. You may beat your fellow servant with a harsh word or by saying a biting thing, and it would be worse to him than a smack in the face. Your tongue has a power for evil and you may beat and smite your fellow servant in that way. Is that the way to help him? That is not what Christ did. Grace was poured into His lips. May He grant that more of His grace may be poured into our lips so that we may speak that which is helpful, and edifying and inspiring, and not something that hurts the soul and terrifies the heart of the meek. It is just because those who follow Christ most closely are meek and will not give back word for word, that they are smitten, and when they are smitten on the one cheek, they turn the other also, and the evil servant takes good care to smite that also.

But he is not content with his evil ways inside the house. He goes outside also. Outside, he eats and drinks with the drunken. There are the foul pleasures of the world into which the evil servant plunges. They are around us today in all their garish display and tend to affect the hearts of the young and of those who have a tendency in that direction. It is the pleasure that intoxicates the soul and shuts out the knowledge of Christ. So it was with this servant. He was evil within the house and evil without.

But the result was that the lord came in a day that the servant looked not for him and in an hour that he was not aware of, and shall cut him asunder". We do not draw the conclusion from this that the coming for the faithful servant and for the evil servant are at the same moment. It is the

same coming, but it does not take place at one moment. His feet will not stand on the Mount of Olives when He comes for His church. He receives them in the air because they have a heavenly calling and He respects that even in the manner of their reception to Himself. But by and by He will come back to this world, accompanied by His saints, but before that time Babylon the Great, the false church, the Roman Catholics in their full development, and not only they, but also the inhabitants of the world who have been led away by her, they all will be judged by the Lord

But I should like just to refer to the two parables that follow, not in details, for time will not permit it. Here we have in the first one what applies to the whole Christian profession. It has nothing at all to do with the Jews. The Lord had dealt with them previously. Here He speaks of that state of affairs that would ensue immediately upon His departure. In the next chapter, we have the well-known and shall I not say beautiful parable of our Lord, where the kingdom of heaven is likened to the ten virgins. They are the Christian profession undoubtedly. Some have thought they are the Jewish remnant, but the Jews are here upon the earth. They wait for Christ to come certainly, and when Christ comes and draws them, then they will receive what the ten virgins started with. The five wise virgins started with oil in their lamps. They have the Holy Spirit to begin with. That characterises the wise virgins who go to meet the Bridegroom. But the Jews will only receive the Holy Ghost when the Lord comes. These are told to go and meet the Bridegroom. The Jews do not go to meet the Bridegroom, they have nowhere to go.

The Christians, those who profess the name of Christ, they go out because their Master is out. They are saved in this world which crucified Christ and hates Him, but directly they love the Lord and profess His name, they step out, they are no longer of the world. It makes all the difference. The Christian, by His profession, goes out to meet the Bridegroom.

It was so at the beginning. The disciples thought the Lord would come in their time, or that John, at any rate, would be here when He came. They were expecting Him, very properly and rightly, too, to come at any time. The reason is, you see, that we are born again of the Holy Spirit and when He has sealed us as Christ's, we have the affections, the life within us that nothing will satisfy but Christ Himself. Is not that so? You want Christ. He has implanted in you affections for Himself that nothing can quench, and therefore the church looks anxiously, and continually for the immediate coming of the Lord.

Here, the Lord does not speak of the church alone. He speaks of that which makes a profession. The ten virgins took their lamps and they went forth, all of them, to meet the bridegroom. Five were wise and five were foolish and "they that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them". The foolish virgins did not count the cost. They did not understand what they were going out to do. They were going to meet the Bridegroom and the essential

thing was to have oil in their lamps and the lamps alight when he came. But they went just as they were. We tell sinners to come to Jesus, the Saviour, just as they are. That is right enough, but when they come just as they are, He makes them what they never were before, new men and women, there is absolute change. In these five foolish virgins there was not any change. The oil, the continual type through the Scriptures, of the Holy Spirit, was not possessed by them, and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his".

They all went out. It was so at the beginning. They all went out in expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus, but time tells. Time shows what is real and what is spurious. They all nodded and they all slept, they became weary of waiting, and they fell into a state in which they were absolutely oblivious of what was about them. They all did that, the wise as well as the foolish. In the history of the church of Christ we find the same thing. Throughout a great period of the church's history, from the very earliest century until the beginning of last century, there was not knowledge in the church of the Lord's coming for His church. Coming to change the world, oh, yes, everybody believed that. They said it every Sunday in the Creed but that is not what is spoken of here. But at the beginning of last century, there was a cry made "Behold the Bridegroom". Men's hearts were turned to Christ, as the Coming One. They read the scriptures and they found that it was so. Throughout the Epistles, from the beginning to the end, and in the Revelation too, the coming of Christ is before us in every way. To every one of the seven churches, except two, the Lord speaks of His coming. It is on that ground He exhorts them to be faithful and true to Himself.

There was the historical fact that just over one hundred years ago there was an awakening in Christendom concerning the immediate return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church. It has been mixed up with all sorts of human theories, but still there is the fact. Men's hearts have been awakened to look up amidst the darkness, to look towards the dawn, and there, in the Eastern sky, they see the bright and Morning Star, and they hear the voice as their eyes look in the right place, and the voice says, "Behold I come quickly". Then up from their hearts goes the cry "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".

So men's hearts were roused to look for the coming of the Lord and to wait for Him and that shows He is very near, nearer tonight than He ever was before. Perhaps we shall all be taken away to be with Him tonight. Do not let us think that is a foolish, ludicrous expectation. It is according to the word of scripture, The Lord is coming.

These virgins went out to meet Him, all of them. The foolish virgins found that their lamps were going out. They had been burning upon themselves, on just what they were in themselves. It was just wick being consumed. It was a combustible thing, and it had no stay, no steadfastness. It needed oil and they had none. They realised that they had not anything to keep them going. There are many people who start right but as they get along the way they get tired and weary and turn to the right hand or the left. They realise that they

have not the same thing that their brethren have. There is some difference between them. They have not God's Holy Spirit within them to be above their weakness and infirmity "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities". He is there as a power to keep us going, and we who are wise here tonight, we know we are here because of the power of God's Spirit within our hearts making intercession for us, just as the One Who is at God's right hand above is interceding there for us.

They said to the others, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out". But they said "Not so". Who can redeem his brother? Who can save another soul? I am sure many of you here tonight have felt your helplessness when you are speaking to a person who is anxious about his soul. He wants life eternal and you try to tell him, you put the scriptures before him and make it so plain that it seems as if anybody ought to see it. Yet he does not see it. No, he cannot buy oil off you or me. There is no one who sells it. It is without money and without price and those who come to our blessed Lord rest in faith upon Him, they are the ones who receive the Holy Spirit to dwell within them until the moment when the Lord comes.

What does it say at the end of the Bible, in the last chapter of Revelation. Does it say "The bride says Come"? No. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come". It is the Spirit within us that cries out for the Lord to come and consummate the work with regard to us.

The Bridegroom came while they went to buy, and those that were ready, with their lamps of testimony shining, they were the ones who went in and, oh sad thought, the door was shut. It had been the day of opportunity, but now that was past, the door was shut, and when God shuts the door, who can open it? The foolish virgins came and besought an entrance but the Lord said, "I know you not". He knows His sheep and calls them by name. They are His, but He does not know these foolish virgins who are masquerading amongst the wise ones as if they were it to be attendants at the Bridal feast.

Well now, the next parable is a long one but may I say a little about it, mainly to point out the distinction between it and the first we spoke of. Here we have not two servants mentioned, but we have three. The lord is going away and he delivers of his goods to his servants. He is omniscient, that is to say he knows exactly what is our capacity and not only our capacity but our destiny. He knows us thoroughly and when He dispensed the gifts to those servants he gave them according to their ability. He gave five talents to one, and two to another and one to a third. He did not make a mistake and give one talent to the first one. He distributed the talents in His wisdom, And then he went away.

Now the business of those servants was to trade with those talents, with their lord's goods. It was something they had received from him and they were to make use of them in the period of his absence, and he left it entirely to them to do. He had fitted them, he had given them the capital to go into business, and they were to go and prosper and trade. They had the lord's money and they were to use that money.

People do not use money in the house, they use it outside the house, and here we have the service of the children of God outside the house. We are here in this world which is dominated by Satan and we are here to present the Gospel of Christ which can save the worst man alive at the present moment, none excepted. There is a power in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ to satisfy the need of each one who comes.

The man with the five talents went diligently to work and doubled what he received, he got ten talents. And so did the one who received two, he acted up to his measure. I think that is the great thought for us all. Do not sit down and ponder - Have I five talents, or two, how many talents have I? - do not waste time. Get on with what you have. Use the talent. It is only good as it is used. Money, in the proper sense of the term, is of no value in itself, relatively, I mean. The silver coin that you have, the shilling, is not worth a shilling. You can buy a shilling's worth of goods with it, certainly, but there is no value in the coin itself. I mention that fact that we should not be at all boastful if we have a few talents. Have you been using them? There is no virtue in the things themselves. The virtue is in the use that is made of them, and we are responsible because the Lord is coming.

Now we find in the New Testament that when the Lord went away He gave gifts. There are the special gifts that He gave in His church, but I am not referring to those now. He gave gifts, to everyone different. This one in that way, and that one in another way, as we find in Corinthians. There is the fact that the Lord has given to all of us, not two alike, but He has bestowed the gift according to the ability we have, as He sees it. He selected Saul of Tarsus for a particular work, and Timothy and Titus were selected for a different work. They had the ability and they had something that was bestowed upon them by the Lord, and He said to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee", and again in the Second Epistle "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee". We have a gift of some kind, something bestowed on us by the Lord, and where are we to use it? Not in the house, we have been speaking about that, but outside, getting something fresh for our Lord.

When the lord came, there was the day of reckoning. The servants came before him and gave an account. The man with five talents said "Lord, here are ten talents, what thou hast given me have become ten". And the lord said, "Well done. Bravo" - "good and faithful servant". "Good" - because he had been doing good, his life had been good and his actions, and his service, - "and faithful servant".

Then he said more - "thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord". The first thing is the Lord's approval, I do not know what you think about it, but I think the best part of it is the Lord's commendation - "well done". Our brethren do not always give us commendation and if they did they probably would not know whether it was right. They might make a mistake about it, but it is the Lord that praises our service and when He says "well done", He means it, and I think it is better than anything.

But He does not stop there. He not only commends, but He rewards. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things". "Over a few things" - thou hast done a little work in that out-of-the-way corner of the vineyard and souls have been brought to Christ - "I will make thee ruler over many things". Those that are the off-scouring of the world, will take their place in the heavenly seat of government, to rule for the Lord. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels". The Lord has many places of honour for us in His kingdom and the place we shall take there depends upon the way we use the talents He has given us.

Then there is the other side of it. There was that terrible man who had the one talent. It did not matter that he only had one talent. He simply had less than those who had the five and the two, but the thing was he did not use it, he had not a heart for his master. If the lord had given him ten talents, he would have buried them just the same, if he could have found a place big enough to hold them. He did not want to serve his lord. He said "Thou art a hard man", and this he said to the lord to his face. What an affront to speak to his lord in that way! He made the excuse "Thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed". That is to say, he did not sow himself but when it came to the reaping, he reaped another man's and not merely what was due to him, - "where thou hast not strawed" that is "straw" after the wheat has been taken out of it.

So he said "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine". It was the heart that could not see any reason for serving the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the sum and substance of this man. Does it apply to you, or to me? Let us face it. Have we such love and regard for our Lord Jesus Christ, have we such devotion to Him, that by His grace, we cannot do too much for Him, in the house or outside. Each one has his place which the Lord has given him, and we are to be faithful in it, and we cannot be faithful in it unless we have a true heart for Christ.

If I fail to make myself plain in other matter tonight, I hope I may impress this upon you. The Lord is looking upon our hearts here tonight and He wants to know (He does know but He would have you to know) whether each one of us is true to Him who is coming. There are not many moments left for service and we must be busy and snatch the moments as they come, buy up the time, make an effort to use every moment as it comes, for the Lord is at hand. When He who searches the heart and rains comes, then we shall hear His word with regard to our lives since we have known the Lord. He has given us eternal life and an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away. What has He not done for you and for me? What are we doing for Him?

Reading: 2 Peter iii. 14-18.

In these verses there are certain exhortations addressed to us, based upon what the apostle has brought forward in this Epistle. Now, Peter speaks of the coming of the Lord in two ways, both of which have a practical bearing upon ourselves. He speaks slightly, by the way, as it were, treating it as a doctrine that every child of God knows that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming as the Bright and Morning Star, and he also speaks more full of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace in the earth. Both these truths are necessary for us to know and to hold, and to allow their practical bearing upon our circumstances, and I think both these truths have a special application to us at this present time.

The first is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church as the hope that is set before the youngest believer. It is so set forth because it is of such a simple nature that even, as it were, without a knowledge of the scriptures as a whole, and certainly without a knowledge of prophecy at all, there may be in the heart a cherished longing for the immediate coming of the Lord. There must, of course, be the matter of the souls responsibility before God settled. There must be the conversion to God from idols of whatever sort, there must be the following of the Lord Jesus, but more than that it is not necessary to know, except just this, that the Lord has stated most emphatically and clearly that as surely as He went away, so surely He is coming again. It is not a matter of understanding the scriptures at all but there is the fact of His coming, and we may be assured of this that His call for us may be even within the next few months. If we do not believe that, we have not yet grasped the practical truth of the Lord's coming for His church.

There is a reason for this, but it is not necessary that we should understand this in order to enjoy the hope. There is a reason. God does not do anything without a reason, and the hope of the Lord's coming for His church is shown specially in the scriptures to be independent entirely of what God is going to do for the world. God means to set this world right. He made it and fashioned it and He has a purpose with regard to it. He set our first parents upon the earth to manage it for Him. They were constituted His vice-gerents here upon the earth and all was put in subjection to them. But they fell into sin. They disobeyed, and sin has held them in bondage ever since.

God beholds all that and His purpose is to set it right and to make the world fair and fashionable - fashionable in the eyes of heaven, the spirit of heaven shall be here upon the earth. That is God's definite object and purpose, and prophecy deals with this. From Genesis to Revelation the great subject is that that kingdom is going to be set up here and He has given it to One Who can carry it out. Many a time has God given the power and rule into the hands of men and every time they have dishonoured Him, they have abused the power given to them, and instead of glorifying the God of heaven Who set them in their place, they have used the power for their own aggrandisement, and to the cruel grinding down of those under their authority. But God has given His kingdom to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and that note runs throughout the Epistles of Peter.

You remember the keys of the kingdom of the heavens were given particularly to Peter, and the Lord associated the giving of that position to Peter with his own confession that He was the Son of the living God. To Peter He gave the keys of the kingdom, and we find Peter not only using these keys at the beginning of the setting up of the church, but you find him, in his epistles, instructing the saints of God about that kingdom. You see we ought to know, when we look upon the world, what is going on. We are in God's family, in His confidence, we have His Book which contains His secrets, His purposes and plans and we know exactly what is the counsel of His will and as we look out upon the world, we see things slowly and inevitably shaping themselves towards the accomplishing of God's purposes with regard to this earth. We look upon the world as being not "of it", by the mercy of the Lord. In our hearts, the Day Star has already risen. The Morning Star shines in our hearts, and righteousness, peace and all those things that will shine in the kingdom, throughout the Millenium, are known to us now. We have the blessedness of them in our hearts, and the thing that keeps us right is the blessed Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this was shown to Peter soon after he received that administration of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Six days after, the Lord took up into the Mount, Peter, James and John and there, He was transfigured before them. Moses and Elias appeared there also but the wonder of wonders was that the Shekinah glory appeared there and it was upon the blessed person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It had not been seen since Ezekiel's day but there it was upon the blessed Man, Christ Jesus. Moses and Elias were conversing with Him as to His death which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. What was the meaning of it all? The three disciples were confounded and they feared as they entered into the cloud. They slept in the place of dazzling glory. They did not understand, until they heard the voice from heaven, the voice of the Father giving honour and glory to His beloved Son "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased - hear Him".

This vision, Peter tells us, was a tableau of the coming kingdom, of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom. It was displayed before the eyes of those three disciples and the words most needed by those disciples and most need for us today are the two words "hear Him".

The disciples were disturbed by the fact that the Son of man was to die, that He would be delivered up to the chief priests and to the Gentiles, that He would die and would rise again the third day. They could not understand it, but they heard the Father's words - "hear Him". Do you want to know the central truth about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with His kingdom - hear Him. It is not so much the listening to His voice, but having Him before us. "Hearing the Lord Jesus" means having Him steadfastly before our minds. The events of daily life bring up before us first one great personage and then another and we look upon these people who seem to be swaying the destinies of the world and we wonder, and discuss them, and we do not understand how things are planning. It is because we do not "hear Him". The great thing for us all is to have our hearts fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the personal solution of all the difficulties that there are in this world.

Sin is rampant among the nations of the earth and it displays itself, and the power of the saints of God to resist the inrush of evil is negligible but our eyes are upon the One Who is in the glory of God, upon Whose blessed brow the Shekinah glory rests, Who is over all God blessed for ever, and He has in His blessed hands the power to deliver the world from evil, to bring to pass the kingdom of the Father, to rid the world of the power of Satan and to establish righteousness and peace here on the earth. Then will the Psalm be fulfilled that righteousness and peace shall kiss each other. It can only be when evil is put away that righteousness and peace can kiss. So long as evil is in this world, righteousness must judge it. How can a righteous God in heaven pass over sin. We know "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished". The penalty must be paid and when it has been paid, then the peace will come, mercy and peace will fill the earth, and it is the Lord Who is going to do it.

I ask you, as I ask myself, can I trust my Lord to deal with these great national problems in His own time? Can He, will He, is He able to set everything right, to bring concord everywhere, or are you looking at some concomitance of events to bring about a settled peace? No, it is all in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ and if we do not learn anything more tonight, it is good to get that well down into our hearts. I speak especially to my young friends. Lay hold of it for your life and for the peace of your heart that the Lord Jesus Christ is first coming to take us to Himself and then He will take all the obstinate and sinful elements of this world and deal with them. (2 Thess. i. 7-9). That is a settled thing. I can leave it there, and trust Him to guide matters from this present moment up to that moment when things will be put right.

So the apostle refers to these things in the first chapter. He says that the word of prophecy was made sure by the personal revelation made upon the holy mount. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, ... but were eyewitnesses of His majesty". You see if we have got absolute confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, then we have peace in our souls. It is all very simple really. It is like a little child, putting its hand into the hand of the father or mother, and all is well. It simply trusts. It does not know, or understand, but "Daddy knows", "Mummy knows" and the little one is at rest. We should be like that and then we have peace in our hearts which cannot be purchased or found anywhere, but which is within instant reach of our faith.

Now the apostle Peter says what is going on in this world up to the time when the kingdom will be revealed. In the second chapter, he speaks of the false teachers that will come in among the saints and lead them away. He does not speak so much about erroneous teaching as Jude does, but he speaks about the false teachings that lead to evil living, to immoral lives, to obnoxious things, which the world covers up and makes allowance for but which is open before God's eyes. Nearly all false teaching leads to evil living - it must be so because Christ is unknown. It was so in Enoch's days and it will be so again.

Now in the third chapter, he speaks about another thing that will take place - verses 3-4. This speaks of professing christians who have their philosophers who know not God, and who look upon this world as a settled thing. They say its laws

are fixed and it will go on working automatically, like a piece of mechanism, such as a clock. It has been arranged to go on and nothing will happen or interfere with it. They say that those who talk of the promise of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ are fools, people to be scoffed at and ridiculed. Such things are not at all uncommon today. This is a materialistic age if ever there was one. There has been the Bronze Age and the Stone Age, and this is the age of mechanism. Mens' handiwork is exalted to be the engines of destruction against his fellows. God is left out of it and the coming of the Lord is considered a preposterous thought, only the dream of a ninny, a person without any sense at all. So they scoff at the coming of the Lord just as they scoff at the fact of God's omniscience of the things that are going on now in the world.

The facts of divine history show that God is not unmindful of what is going on in the earth. Look at the early days, before the Flood. In all that long period from Adam to Noah, evil multiplied on the earth until the imagination of men's hearts was only evil continually and God in heaven could bear it no longer. But He announced His coming. One thousand years after Adam lived in Eden, Enoch lived and walked with God and to Enoch God confided His purpose. He told Enoch that the Lord would come with myriads of His holy ones to execute judgment upon the earth. But seven hundred years went on and the judgment had not come, and there were scoffers in Noah's day who mocked at the idea that God was going to judge the world. It went on for seven hundred years before the flow fell and then it was that the world which stood out of the waters by the word of God at the beginning, was overflowed by that same water and all living souls perished, except those in the Ark. For seven hundred years, the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah. God was slow to anger, not willing that any should perish and after all that time there were only eight persons in the ark - the rest perished. God waited all that time for eight souls. That is how we have to look at it. In these times, we see evil rising, the tide rising higher and higher every day, and we say "Why does not the Lord come and make an end of it all". The long-suffering of God waits. He is not willing that any should perish. God is not willing that the worst, the most abominable tyrant upon the face of the earth should perish. He waits to save. The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Have you ever thought of that? That is what this epistle teaches us. Evil is so active and eminent, that suspicions are apt to arise in our hearts - surely God must have forgotten, surely He cannot have seen these multitudes of refugees, all the misery and suffering that abounds, all the terrible things that are taking place! Yet wickedness flows on and nothing seems to happen. Surely God cannot know. Has such a thought stolen into your hearts? What is the answer to it all? God is long-suffering. He looks at the One Who died on Calvary's Cross and upon the face of His anointed at His right hand and He waits a little longer. The gospel of mercy shall go forth yet again, and there shall be souls here and there, and everywhere snatched from the burning into the great salvation of God.

Let us look at things with God's eyes. Let us not think only of ourselves, or our own comfort and peace and what is suitable to us. What is God doing, that is the point? He is

saving souls. And what is the value of a soul. How can you measure it? Only by Him Who died on the Cross and that is God's own Son, and because that blood speaks better things than that of Abel, the tide of judgment is held back and it does not fall upon this guilty, lost world. All that, and much more, is taught in these scriptures but we can only refer to them generally that we may see upon what a solid, substantial groundwork the apostle makes his exhortation to us.

The day of the Lord is to come, but He holds back that day full of judgment for the wicked, that day which will bring the unholy and the unjust to the place of perdition. He waits in order that souls may be saved.

Indeed, the apostle looks forward still further, and speaks not only of the day of the Lord, but of the day of God. In the day of the Lord, evil will be subdued under the power of that sceptre which wields its strength from the Throne, wickedness will be suppressed, Satan will not be there with his temptations, and there will be peace and prosperity from one end of the earth to the other. But there will still be evil in the heart of man. Only those who hear and believe and are born again will be utterly immune from the temptations of Satan when he is let loose again at the end of the thousand years. There will be multitudes who will follow him then and be deceived by him and upon them doom will come. Satan will be sent to his final doom, plunged into the Lake of Fire, prepared for him, and then the day of God will begin. Then righteousness will come down not to reign on the earth and subdue evil, but it will come down to dwell on the earth, not for one thousand years only, but throughout the eternal day. The apostle bids us to look forward to that time.

You see, beloved friends, what it means. We cannot endure to think of the evil around us. We cannot see exactly what is going to happen, but we come to this Word and here we learn that God is going to deal with the whole matter, individually as it concerns the individual, nationally, it concerns the whole populations of the world, and He will so purify it by the fire of His judgment that there will be a world in which righteousness will dwell for ever and ever.

Now, if you know these things and believe these things, the apostle says "Show it in your lives". I am coming to that for this reason. A war crisis, such as this, is liable to excite people's minds with what they call the wonders of prophecy. They make all sorts of diagrams, of pictures, charts and lists and they read the newspapers daily to see how their schemes are working. That is merely an intellectual exercise that can be done in any college of students, or by anybody who has a little mental power. But it is not Christianity. It is not what we are taught in the scripture at all. All these things have no effect upon the heart. They touch the head, and while they may be a certain amount of mental relief, they do not touch the heart at all, because the blessed Person of Christ, as set forth by the Spirit in the scripture, does not come before the heart and conscience. The real study of prophecy as set out in scripture touches my heart and being and enables me to walk better than I did before.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things". You say, "But I am looking for the coming of the Lord Je us". Of course you are, scripture tells you so. Our commonwealth, our citizenship, is in heaven. That is perfectly true, but Peter is not speaking about that only. He is speaking of the things he has been talking about, of His coming to put the world right, to put down evil and establish righteousness, justice and equity, throughout the earth, and to let men see the glory of God here on the earth.

If we are looking for these things - and I hope we shall all include this in our thoughts and have it before our minds when we kneel before God and tell Him what is hap ening in this world - then we can speak with an intelligence founded upon the scriptures that we know that the Judge of all the earth will do right. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He sees all that is going on. He notes all the sighs and groans. They all go up before Him, and we can leave it in His hands. We know He will do what is right, and this enables us to speak rightly before God. Sometimes, we are so absorbed with the pressure of things that we can only think about ourselves, but God meant us to look at things from His point of view.

"Be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace" - that wants thinking about. It is not something to be done casually, but something I have to think about and set myself to do. You know you have to feed your body regularly, and have your regular meals. The person who has a crust and a drink when he thinks of it does not get along very well, and it serves him right. It is a great necessity to physical life that it should be attended to regularly and systematically, and how much more necessary it is to our spiritual lives. So the apostle says, Be diligent and think about it. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming, not only as the Bright and Morning Star, to take me away before the day of judgment comes, but He is going to set matters right, to establish the truth of His own word and the glory of His own name here on the earth. Well, if He is coming for this purpose, I must take care that I may be found of Him in peace.

Do you remember that solemn incident in the life of our Lord and His apostles. On that night when He went into the Garden of Gethesemane. He took Peter and James and John with Him and He withdrew Himself about a stone's cast, and said "Tarry ye here and watch. Watch and pray". Watch with Me". He went away in sore trouble, and He fell upon the ground. He was overcome with emotion and He prayed with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save Him from death. But when He went to His disciples, He found them sleeping, and said "Could ye not watch with me one hour?"

You remember how the Lord spoke by way of a parable. The Lord goes away and leaves his servants to take care of his house. They do not know what hour he will return. Some are heedful to his word but the evil servant says "My lord delayeth his coming" and he begins to eat and drink with the drunken and to beat his fellow servants. And the lord comes and finds him in disorder. In peace? No. No peace in his heart. Neglect, wrath, selfishness is in his heart, and there is no peace. Peace is the fruit of righteousness, and of a devoted, faithful life.

Peace means that I have settled up everything with my Lord. When you go to your rest at night, do you ever go with some matter unsettled between your soul and the Lord, some sin unconfessed, some selfishness unacknowledged? The Lord may come and you will not be found of Him in peace. If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive, but if you do not confess them, you cannot be found of Him in peace. No, we need to be practical about these things. When we go to bed at night, do we leave things settled up? The Lord is coming. He may come tonight, and how if He found my house in disorder, my affairs not settled up, my debts not paid, matters that are my duty not accomplished? It is a real thing, the Lord's coming, and He may come at any moment, so the apostle says "be diligent, that you may be found of Him in peace", "without spot, and blameless". "Without spot", as to your outward actions, and "blameless" in your heart. The Lord looks at the heart and He wants the heart right, and if I have set aside just a little corner in my heart for the world and its ways, I cannot be blameless before Him. Can I give the Lord Jesus anything less than all? What did He give for me? Did He give a fraction? He gave all, did He not, and therefore He claims all from us. May be it is but little, but let us give all. Let us be diligent as to these things that He will find us without spot, and blameless.

But you say "I thought the Lord was coming to take us to Himself, to the Father's house." Of course He is. "The Lord is not going to take up these little matters with you when He comes. He will take you to the Father's house and give you your place in glory in the place He has prepared for you. But these matters will have to be settled. There cannot be any spots, any blame, up there and so there will be the Judgment seat and these things that you neglected will be manifested there. Why not settle them now? Here is the Word of God to show you what is of Him and what is not, and if we settle it now the thing is expunged, done away for ever.

You see Peter is speaking of the kingdom truth and when we take our place in the heavenly kingdom it will be according to our spotlessness and blamelessness, our faithfulness and devotion and our service. We shall be there all right but the Lord is going to give us the place that we deserve. Think about it.

But then there is another thing "And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation". We have referred to that before. Think of the long-suffering of our Lord. It means His bearing with sin. We feel shocked when we read of certain happenings. We can hardly bear to read them. Lumps come in our throats, and we feel how horrible it all is. But our sight and sense are so blunt and inefficient. What are all these things in the eyes of God? He bears with it, He is patient, slow to anger, not quick and impulsive as Peter was in the Garden, when he drew out his sword and cut off the high priest's servant's ear. There was no long-suffering about Peter. But the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation and we ought to bear that in mind, because it is such a lovely trait of the nature of God.

Let us look for a moment at verse 17. There it is not a question of waiting but of knowing. We know Christ is coming to receive His own and to judge the world in righteousness, and we know it because we have the certificate of it here in scripture. We know that the whole scheme of scripture is connected with the prophecy, concerning the expulsion of evil from this world. If you have read the scriptures, you know them. I want you to bear this in mind because there are two ways of "knowing". We know a fact because we read it in the scriptures, and it is true because it is there.

Well now, the apostle has an exhortation "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness". Now this is a very wide warning, but I will only refer to one incident to illustrate, so far as one can, the meaning of it. Steadfastness in this epistle means being established according to the teaching of scripture. The World has its own ideas. It reads its own text-books and listens to its philosophers. We listen to the scriptures and rest upon them. We are steadfast, unmovable, we rest our feet upon a solid, unshakable foundation. But we are liable to fall from that steadfastness and the thing that is likely to make us fall is the error of evil people because we may be led away by the words of the wicked.

Let us take this steadfastness in connection with the patient waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us have been waiting His coming for fifty, sixty years, or more. Has that made any difference? Has it made any difference that all that period is passed and the Lord has not come? Well if one has listened to the error of the wicked, it will be so. Satan has his agents, particularly at this present time, to set all sorts of objects before the heart instead of the immediate coming of our Lord. They say "The Lord Jesus cannot come yet. He cannot take His church until this or that has happened". If this was so, then it does not matter quite so much. If He is not coming tonight, it is not so serious. I need not take it so much to heart. If He is coming some time in the future, it may be hundreds of years ahead, and it does not affect me quite so much. If I listen to things like that - I fall from my steadfastness. The man who has his eye on the Bright and Morning Star will not sleep, or take advantage of the darkness of the night. He sees the star gleaming in the darkened skies and his eyes are upon that. It is a sure token of the day that is beyond. My Lord and Saviour is coming for me and I want to be found watching when He comes.

So I wait for Him. Then someone else comes and brings certain scriptures and says "You are making a mistake. You should not look at it like that. The Lord is only coming to take some of His people, the good, and pious and devoted ones and will leave the others to learn the lesson a little longer". And all sorts of wicked things these people say. They bring their various errors to cause us to fall from our steadfastness.

Let me put it to you in this way. Supposing you had been away to the other side of the globe, to Australia, or New Zealand, for some months or years. Then you send a message that you are on your way back and are coming home. You come and there is not a soul to meet you, nobody there to welcome you. You are

just like a perfect stranger, landing in a strange country. Your loved ones, and those you had acquainted of your coming, they simply took no notice. Here the Lord has spoken of His coming again. What will it be to Him if He comes tonight, and finds that your heart and mine is not ready to welcome Him, and respond to His call? It does not bear thinking of. Let us take care that we are not drawn away from our own steadfastness in this matter.

Let us "grow in grace", and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". But you say "We all know the Lord Jesus Christ". Of course we do, but we want to grow in that knowledge and we cannot grow in the knowledge of Him unless we are in His company. If you read about prophecy, you want to read it with the Lord Jesus Christ by your side, and on the page as you read. Then it becomes clear. You see, He shines before you and you grow in His knowledge.

Beloved friends, there is not a man or woman here tonight that knows anything at all that is worth speaking of concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot take in the wonders of His Person, the glories of His Name. That is something that will take us all eternity to grasp. But we can be growing in the knowledge of our Lord now, and that should be our object.

"To Him be glory both now and for ever". Why did he say that. Because he had just written that word "Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". He is the Saviour because He is coming to fulfil, to complete the work of my salvation. He is my Lord because I belong to Him and He has given me a place in His kingdom, and He is coming to establish this kingdom on the earth - the Lord and Saviour - to Him be glory both now and for ever.

Reading:- Romans 8, 18-39

In these verses we have given us the great conclusions that follow from the teaching the Apostles has given concerning the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and its effects upon those that believe, giving them a standing before God, justifying them, making them righteous in acceptance before Him and enabling them also to walk no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He shews the effect of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ upon a man who was under the domination of sin.

Now that the great question has been settled, so that an individual believer can look with confidence to God and rejoice in the righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel; that being so, the question might arise, what further need is there? The apostle had shewn that there are great needs, (spiritual needs that arise in the heart and conscience of the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ with regard to his state of soul and position) and they have been discussed and settled. The Apostle procured through the Lord Jesus Christ and so the soul who struggles in chapter 7 finds rest and peace through looking at the Lord Jesus, so that everything within is settled. What more is there?

According to the teaching of the Old Testament, those who were righteous before God might well, and should, look forward to a time of tranquility in this world, to being comforted and provided for in all things, and to a pathway of peace and joy as they walked through this world. Now the experience of the Christian is the reverse of this. You find that although he is accounted righteous before God, according to the teaching of scripture, yet he is continually brought face to face with trials and sorrows, with opposing forces; he finds the world is against him and when he seeks to do right he has, in that respect, to suffer for it, and if he seeks to follow Christ and extol Him, he suffers still more. What compensations are there for that?

It is a difficulty when a believer finds that he still has an enemy within the gates and he must watch as it may break out. That is one difficulty, but having found a way out of that it is perhaps a greater difficulty to multitudes of believers that although they seek by the grace of God to do that which is right and well-pleasing to Him, they have to suffer for doing it. They can see as plainly as possible that if they had taken the path of unrighteousness they would have escaped reproach and suffering. How is it? If the righteousness of God is revealed, is it according to His righteousness that the righteous man should suffer, here in this world?

It is a real problem, and there are Christians who are defeated as they consider, and they think that there is something wrong in their ways. Satan tempts them to give up and go back to the world and accept it and get along the best they can. They cannot understand that along with discipleship with the Lord Jesus Christ, suffering comes in. That is the real subject of the passage I have read and you will find it is connected with

that of verse 17. It speaks of us as children, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together". Now to meet that real difficulty of honest hearts, God has shewn by His Spirit in this scripture what full compensations there are at the present time for those that have to suffer for righteousness' sake, for those who have to suffer because they bear the name of the Lord Jesus. He speaks of it in this way. He speaks of it really in three ways, if we may divide the verses at the end of verses 18 and 30.

In the first part, he speaks of the comparative insignificance of whatever sufferings we may have to endure, when they are compared with the eternal weight of glory that lies beyond. He says, in effect, "You believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have no idea whatever of the glory that awaits you. You suffer now for a little while, but it is nothing to what is coming. Cheer up, look ahead and see what is coming. What you are enduring now will soon be over. The glory will be upon you and the groans within yourselves and the groans around will be hushed for ever".

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us". He points out that those who believe in the Lord Jesus are really, if I may so put it, the pivot upon which the blessing of the whole world depends. When the believer finds his hope of glory, in which he now rejoices, is fulfilled, he will find the whole world is also rejoicing. If we are not moved by the sorrows and sufferings of others, we are not Christians for we do not suffer with Christ. He who could not bear to look upon the hungry multitudes, He has given us feelings and we groan. But it is good to have the care and consideration of our God, who chose us when we were sinners, and so he speaks of that here.

He says "You are waiting now, but you shall be glorified together with Christ". Think the whole creation is waiting, anxiously looking out for Him. It is suffering and groaning, but still lifting up the head anxiously, awaiting some deliverance that is coming in the future. The whole universe is waiting for Christ, though they do not know what they are waiting for. The dumb beasts writhe in their pain, and they do not know what they are waiting for, but we know they wait for the "manifestation of the sons of God", - to be brought out in their proper status, being seen in the world as sons of God.

We know a member of the royal family may walk the streets of London, or elsewhere, as an ordinary citizen, not in his status as a royal son, but let him go out in his official robes of glory, let him be amongst men as a prince and be manifested as such, and no one can mistake who he is. God has His sons. They are here as real persons and He means to bring them out in His glory. When His own Son comes into this world, there will be others with Him. Who? Bright angels will be there in their heavenly glory, all the celestial dignitaries will accompany the Son of Man; but there will be others there in the display of beauty - washed ones, those delivered from their sins and conformed to the image of Christ Jesus. The one who

was caught red-handed in his persecution, he will be there shining in his glory, yes the glory given to him. He will be manifested in that glory then. We shall all be there who have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who believe in Him. The Christian waits for that day. It cannot come until the sons of God are manifested in the place God has decreed.

The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope". When Adam who was made head of the creation fell by transgression, all those who were under his superintendance fell too. The head carried down all that were under that head, and so they were made in subjection to vanity.

Vanity means that the real purpose that might well be expected is not fulfilled. Solomon, the wisest king, had opportunity to taste the real value of the best of earthly glories and greatnesses and what does he write in the Book of Ecclesiastes? "Vanity of vanities .. all is vanity. Vanity and vexation of spirit". He need not go far in this day to find for ourselves what pleasures in the far country come to. They last for a season, but come down to the husks that the swine eat.

The whole creation is subjected to that, not willingly, Adam deliberately chose to disobey God, but not so the animals that had come to Adam to receive their names. They came under the curse because of the fall of their head, but God gave a token of what He would do by the seed of the woman and so hope sprang up at the very gates of Eden. The flaming sword was there, but there was a word of hope. Creation was not abandoned utterly. The beauty of Eden was gone but by and by the wilderness, which man had brought about by his sin, shall blossom as a rose and all things in this world will be fair, more beautiful than we have ever seen it.

Thus the Apostle says the creation "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body". Let us be quite clear as to this groaning. There is a groaning in Romans 7 but that is a man groaning over his inability to conquer the evil lusts that spring up in his heart. He tries to fight them single-handed and miserably fails. He knows it ought not to be and groans because of his weakness, until he finds a Deliverer patiently waiting to give the deliverance which the Lord Jesus gives to those who look to Him.

But this is a groan because we are in a world of sin and we cannot get away from it. Even the Lord Jesus, walking to the grave of Lazarus, groaned and wept. He saw the havoc that death had wrought. Death had come into that pious household at Bethany and there its stern unrelenting hand had struck down Lazarus. Their dearly-loved brother had been buried and had been in the grave four days and the Lord Jesus had not come.

Mary and Martha, pious women, their hearts groaned because of their sorrow. Oh, yes! there is plenty of groaning in the world and we cannot escape it. The groaning will come.

But we are waiting for the adoption - the redemption of our bodies. Our spirits and souls are free - they soar like birds in the air and get into the peace of heaven, but the body keeps us down here. With the body, we have to walk to the graveside and see the last of our loved ones. We groan with sorrow, waiting meanwhile for the redemption of those bodies which chain us to earth. When they are changed into the image of Christ and we have bodies of glory like His, then we shall rise to be with Him, where sin and sorrow and death never come. We have this hope that even while the mourners are at the tomb, the voice of the Lord may be heard, in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye". It is not a dream, or fancy, some queer notion. It is the word of the Lord Jesus Christ given to cheer us and encourage our hearts, given side by side with the groaning. "Groaning one, look up and listen for My voice. It will be heard and then you and those from whom you are parted will unite in My presence".

There we have this compensation. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for". Man's hopes are often disappointed. They are dashed to the ground, but the hope of Scripture is not an uncertain one. It is merely that it is not seen, something that rests solely upon the word of God - that is hope. It is God's revelation of a future certainty. We hold on to that as a hope and the believer is called to do that. "We being saved by hope". Hope enters into the very texture of our lives. Just as there must be love and faith so there must be hope in order that a Christian shall keep his balance in this world.

God has shed His light of the future upon this valley of the shadow of death through which we are passing, and we have that as a glorious compensation. When downtrodden and weary the way seems interminable, we look towards the east and there is a bright future. That morning is coming, night is passing away. That hope will soon be fulfilled, and so it is we have the bright rays of hope to cheer us throughout the long dark night, when we have to listen to the groans and of creation and in ourselves also.

Then we have a second relief in the midst of this groaning creation. That is the intercession of the Holy Spirit within us. It is a blessing which can only be appreciated by faith, because we cannot imagine such a thing as is set in the verse here. We are told that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities "for we know not what to pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered". What does this signify? In this world where we are, a world of weakness and trial, and trouble, where we are oppressed every day, where we are often so pressed that we do not know what to do, and we know less when we think of our position in the light of the scriptures we have just read, are we to say, "I am in this world where there is so much sorrow and I am bound to it, so I must accept it as a matter of course. It is a part of the experience I must have".

There are some persons one has heard of who have a sort of morbid feeling that as Christians they are called to rejoice in their afflictions. Does it not say "glory in tribulation" and so they rejoice all the more! That is not at all the meaning of scripture. We are told to rejoice in the midst of the tribulation, not in the tribulation itself, and to rejoice in the midst of it because while the tribulation is the cause of our sorrow, we have side by side with it a cause for joy and rejoicing and that is the hope of the glory of God.

It is a prayer, and what are we to pray for? Are we to pray that this difficulty through which we are passing shall be taken away? A person is lying on a bed of sickness and pain, what are they to pray for? Shall we pray for the absolute relief of that person from pain? What shall we do? Shall we just leave it and say that it is a necessary part of the progress of the pious, it must go on? What are we to do? You know very well if you face a problem of this sort you are perplexed and as a faithful child of God you feel you must leave it with Him. You must tell Him the case and leave it. But we have another side of it here, that when in the mysteries and perplexities we know not what to pray for, there is One dwelling within us Who helps those weaknesses and short-comings and Who intercedes for us and puts it exactly as God would have it out. With my stammering lips I might say some wrong petition but the Holy Spirit behind corrects it and puts it for me. Oh, what a help!

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities". Is not that a compensation that we have Someone Who is able to help and He never fails? We are not told to pray to the Spirit to do it. We are never told to pray to the Spirit, but He does it for us and makes intercession for us and the petition ascends correctly worded and expressed, and the answer comes. So if we are hindered by weakness and infirmity, yet we have a Divine Person dwelling within us, as the previous verses show and He is there to help us.

"He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God". You see the Spirit of God identifies Himself with us when He makes intercessions with groanings, the very thing that the Apostle has spoken about in connections with ourselves. The Spirit is pleased to identify Himself with our weakness (because we are part of the groaning creation) and expresses the correct petitions for us.

Then we come to the third compensation, that is in regard to the purpose of God. We have referred to the hope that we have, when glory shall succeed the present state of imperfection, and sinful domination here in this world. Glory will come, so we look to the future. But now the Apostle not only looks forward but backward and shows that we have a part in that great scheme of God, conceived in the past eternity, to be fulfilled in the ages to come, and we are part of that. He says "We know all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose". "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn of many brethren". We are those whom God foreknew in the beginning. That must be so because God knows all things, and it speaks definitely of

that here. Individuals were before Him. It is not that He chose a mass of people, a great multitude, without specifying who composed that company, because God's foreknowledge is of the individual.

It is because we are part of that vast scheme of God that the Apostle gives us that verse we have known so well from our childhood and which has formed a downy pillow for so many a weary heart to rest upon. "We know that all things work together for good". Do you know it? That is just the point. Do you? That apostle puts it in that way "we know", not that we hope but we are absolutely certain that it is all right. Some persons look upon this verse in a general fashion, something in this way. There are many perplexing events in this world, the troubles and governments, and unemployment and all that kind of thing, and there are privations in many a pious household in consequence. Well, it will work out all right somehow or the other! That is not at all the meaning. It is a definite purpose. God has His eye upon every individual.

There are two ways, I understand, in which the traffic is regulated in these days. There are those automatic signals which work so mysteriously to most people and signify when there is a clear way ahead and those who wish to cross the road watch the signals. There is also another way and that is when the kind, benevolent policeman, who sees a nurse with a child wanting to cross the road, holds up the traffic for that babe. He has his eye upon the infant, and controls the traffic for that particular infant. That is how God controls the events of this world. He has His eye upon us.

He looked down the vast ages and saw you and me, saw all of us here in this Hell tonight and He controls everything for us. It may be strange to us, but the events of this wicked world are in God's hands (hands that never make a mistake) and they are working out for our good. You know that the Old Testament is full of that simple word "good". They were told to look forward to the time when God's goodness will be manifested in this world.

But you see the two-fold cheer in this verse is God now in His divine superintendance brings about good to us individually in the darkest hour, in the most dismal circumstances. He works it together for our good and we know it. Do not say you do not know it. It is part of your Christian privilege to know it. Sometimes you forget it, but you do know it, it is written here. And God's great purpose is that we shall all be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Those He is calling to Himself, He will carry safely through until they are glorified. Not one of those who are called to Him shall perish. The Captain of our salvation is bringing His many sons to glory and of those that are given Him, He will lose none.

Now we must pass on to the point in verses 31-33. Here we have a divine catechism. There are questions here for the men of faith who have read the previous verses and believe them. The Apostle says, "What shall we then say to these things?" That things Those written in the previous verses. Mark the

significance of that because what we so frequently do is this. When trouble comes into our houses, we look at the trouble and want to know what business it has in our house and we want to get rid of it as soon as possible, and what we have to say is as to the trouble. Our eyes are upon that. The Apostle turns to something else.

"These things". Never mind the trouble - "these things". God is going to bless the whole creation and is blessing you now and if He is working all things together for your good now, what are you going to say to these things? What would you say? I think we ought to praise and bless God. You find in the Psalms, at the end of the 4th Book, they sing of the works of the Lord, of the marvellous things accomplished in the wilderness, and in Canaan itself for them. Why? In order that they might break out in the Hallelujahs of the 5th Book. God has written these things that we should not be cast down and that our groans should be exchanged for the songs of joy and gladness and praise.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" and what does it mean? "For us". It means as it is being expressed in "these things", that He is for us. If God chose you millions and millions of years ago, is not He for you? Did He not make you His own? If a rich man comes to Shoreditch and goes into a ragged home and takes out a child and says "I will look after that boy and give him a start in life and undertake for his welfare," then we can be sure that kind man is for that boy. He is taking his case in hand. Now, if "God be for us, who can be against us?" You cannot carry out the analogy of the rich man there, because if God be for us, nobody can get behind Him, or go one better than Him. "Who can be against us?" There is no answer.

"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?" This is a very striking verse. It ought to be the theme of all our meditation. Who had such freedom of choice as God? But He "spared not His own Son". The expression, the exact expression, occurs twice only in the 22nd Genesis - the subject of Abraham giving his son. God looked down and acknowledged that Abraham had proved his faith in that he spared not his own son. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest". There it is telling us of the love in Abraham's heart towards Isaac. He went, and God said "Now I know... seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me". There was the proof of Abraham's love and God has His proof - He spared not His own Son. The Son, why He made the worlds, made all things, and so all things, as it were, are for us. The Apostle says in another place "all things are yours" because they belong to Christ. If they are for us in that way, can we wonder that they just work together in a marvellous, inscrutable way, for our eventual good?

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect". The first to oppose us will be our enemies. The children of Israel in the Promised Land were told not to fear their enemies because God was for them. There are enemies about us but we need not fear them. The world is a great enemy, Satan is a great enemy, but we need not fear because God is for us. There is the accusation "who shall lay anything". There are accusers, the

brethren are accused. The great Accuser is capable of taking up the mistakes that we have made, as children of God, and laying them to our charge, before God. He brings it home to ourselves sometimes, does he not?

Are there those here tonight who have had the experience of feeling too ashamed in the presence of God to say their prayers. They have gone to bed prayerless, because they were ashamed to say them! Who is it that is using the fact that you have sinned to spoil your communion with God? Satan. He says, "You pretend to be a Christian and profess the name of Christ, and now you have fallen into sin. You have fallen from grace, because you have sinned against the truth. You are worse than a man who never knew God. You know you are, and what he says in that man's heart he is capable of saying to God, as he spoke to God about Job. But the Apostle says, "Who shall lay anything?" Who can accuse them before Him? God knows, young believer, He knows your sin and He has provided a way for you and that is that you shall confess your sin to Him and if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness", so that you might come to Him. The very fact you have sinned, is all the more reason you should come. It is not something laid to your charge as a reason that you should no longer belong to Him.

"It is God that justifieth, Who is he that condemneth?" It is better to read the two sentences together. When God justifies, who condemns? There is no court of appeal when God clears the account. If a man is charged before a magistrate, he may appeal to a higher court, but when God justifies a person and counts him righteous, and receives him because he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, who can set aside that judgement? There is none that can condemn when God justifies. That you find illustrated in Zechariah, as you know.

"It is Christ that died" - it is all bound up in Christ. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ". Who shall oppose? Who shall accuse, or condemn or separate us? Who shall come in and set up a barrier between our souls and the love of Christ? So it is all about Christ, what He is and what He has done. He has died and is risen again for our justification. He is at the right hand of God. What for? To make intercession for us. Do we understand our privileges? Here we have God's Holy Spirit within us making intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered, and there at God's right hand we have Christ Jesus our Lord making intercession for us here in this very world. That is true of everyone of us here tonight. God's Holy Spirit to take up our case and present it before the throne of God and the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again, is there to intercede for us, to add His petitions to the Father. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father".

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" It applies at the present moment. Let us take the case of Peter as an example, we always come to Peter when we speak of practical things. There was Peter who was just about to step on the slippery slope and to deny his Master with oaths and curses. The Lord knew what was coming and He told Peter of it. He said "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee". Now the Christ Who interceded for

Peter on that night, when He was before Pilate, will He not intercede for you and me, whatever we may do? How often we have been preserved through the intercession of Christ! We are here today because Christ does not fail to intercede for us. You will remember that when Moses interceded on the mount, they held up his hands. It seemed to be so long and he could not carry on without help. But our Intercessor is all-powerful, One Who has been in the grave but is now on the right hand of God for us. He is never weary, always full of vigour in the energy of love.

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us". "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life" - death is our servant, it does not separate from Christ - "to depart and be with Christ which is far better". Death is the servant of all those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the Apostle takes in the man's life in all its characteristics and nothing in life can separate us from the love of God. "Nor angels, nor principalities" - those unseen powers, very real and very active, they cannot touch the life of believers. Oh, Christians, beware of meddling with the unseen spirits. They cannot harm you, but if you go on with such things, you will be harmful, not them.

"Nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature". He exhausts all creation, he searches in vain for an adversary to stand - nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This chapter begins with the note of "no condemnation" and the end is "no separation". No separation in this world. We are quite sure about the one that is coming. Once the Lord Jesus has us with Himself in that place He has gone to prepare for us, we know we shall be for ever with the Lord, but here in the world there is no reason why a believer should not be certain that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I would like to leave this question with you. Do you believe that if you confess the Lord Jesus Christ there is absolutely nothing in God's creation that can separate you from His love which is shed abroad in your hearts? Its fulness and power is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew xxiii. 37-39; xxiv. 1-14.

John xiii. 36-38; xiv. 1-6.

These verses we have read, refer of course to the coming of our Lord, and the subject is one of interest to the children of God and never more so than in a time of tribulation and of perplexity, because it is the feeling of every faithful heart to our Lord Jesus Christ that none but He Who loves us as He does, and Who has already done such mighty things for us, that He is the only One upon which the destinies of the world can rest without fail. Our very instinct tells us that. The simplest and youngest believer at once responds to the thought that the Lord is the only One who can rectify the wrongs that so manifestly exist in this world through which we are passing.

The great enemy of our souls knows this and he also knows that it is to his interest that we should not keep that view of the matter continually before our eyes. He has very little power over those whose hearts and eyes are absorbed with the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and exalt Him to the very highest place in their estimation. He does what he can to fog the image of the Lord, in the heart of His disciples. He desires, in connection with every doctrine of scripture, to take away the sense of the personal interest of our Lord Jesus Christ in ourselves, and the accomplishment of God's purposes for this world. And so in connection with the coming of the Lord, there is no subject perhaps, especially during the last one hundred years or so, about which so much that is misleading has been written. Honest men have sought to do what it was never intended they should do; they have been led astray from the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to theories and schemes of prophetic interpretation, out of which the living, loving Person of Christ has slowly been excluded, until it becomes a prophetic treatise, a dull, dead book, like a book of mathematics, a horrible thing which no-one would read unless he was bound to, when it was the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ that the hearts of His own should turn to Him, (as a magnet to the pole), in connection with His coming again. He is coming, and He is coming for me and that is the sum and substance of the hope of the believer in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I have read some verses from the Gospel of Matthew, because they treat in a general way of the coming of the Lord Jesus from a different point of view from the Christian one. That is to say, our Lord speaks about His coming, but He is not speaking of those who are Christian believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and members of His body. The Holy Spirit had not yet come down from heaven, and that settles the whole matter. They were lovers of the Lord Jesus, but Jewish disciples and they were concerned about what was going to happen on the earth, and the Lord speaks to them from that point of view. I think the scriptures I have read from Matthew show this in a general way.

I have no intention whatever of referring to what follows from the 14th verse onwards. There the subject is taken up in more details for those to whom the Lord will come in the day of His appearing, but what we have here shows that the

Lord was speaking as the King of the Jews to those that believed He was the King and that He had come into the world to set up the kingdom of heaven.

The Gospel of Matthew is full of that note concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The manner of His birth is such that it is shewn to be in accordance with what had been prophesied in the Old Testament times. The very first chapter tells us His titles, the titles of state that He has as the One Who was born King of the Jews - Emmanuel, God there with men - the Son of Abraham - the Son of David - Jesus, Jehovah-Saviour, the One Who had come to save His people from their sins, - all pointing to the one thing, that the Lord Jesus Christ had come to a given people here upon the earth. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel". He had come to bring in that redemption to the nation of which the prophets were full and He was there in their midst. John the Baptist had heralded His coming, according to the last prophet of the Old Testament, and the Lord declared on the Mount of Olives at the beginning of His ministry of what character His kingdom would be.

There, I think, those who gathered round the Lord and had expectations in their hearts, received the first shock of the truth. I say deliberately, "shock", for when the truth of God comes to us first, it gives us a shock, and we know it is the word of God because it touches us as nothing else does. And what our Lord said, as He sat on the Mount, was "Blessed are the poor in spirit" - "the poor in spirit". It was not the lofty ones in Israel, not the Pharisees or scribes, not the high priest or elders, not the pious (or those who ranked themselves as such), but those who were poor in spirit. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth". He was come as the King, but as the King who was meek and lowly in heart, who went to His capital riding upon an ass, upon a colt, the foal of an ass. There was no pomp, or grandeur, no glittering retinue to follow Him, none of the magnificence that the human heart loves. No, He had come to save His people from their sins, and when people know they have sinned, then they come down to the dust and take the place of meekness and lowliness of heart. Our Lord took that place - He had no sin - "In Him was no sin" - but He took the place of meekness and lowliness, and those who had learned the truth from Him, took the place He took.

"Blessed are the meek ... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". And the Lord preached that. He shews it was true and by mighty signs and wonders, not one here and one there, but in profusion, up and down the land. His word was law. Every disease fell back at His bidding, the very dead sprang to life and the lepers were cleansed: the sea shrank into silence at His command - yet, He was meek and lowly in heart. There was infinite power, but infinite love, and that beautiful virtue that hides its head and takes the low place, - meekness and lowliness of heart.

You see, that was the kingdom that men did not want, not even God's people. They did not want a kingdom like that. What was the good of it? They wanted something to make a show, something to give them a place, to give them a

throne to sit upon, and a sceptre to rule over others. That was the sort of thing that was in their minds, but that does not go with meekness and lowliness. They did not know their King, their Saviour, and the end was, they crucified Him.

The Lord Who came at the beginning of His ministry, to speak these words of blessing, when He came to Jerusalem for the last time had to speak of His judgment, in the temple courts. "Woe, woe, woe", He had to say to the scribes and Pharisees, those who had a place of authority given to them, a place to teach others. It was they who abused the place God had given them, and failed in their responsibility to Him. Upon them He was unsparing in His pronouncements of "Woe".

I read that lamentation our Lord made over Jerusalem. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee". He Himself had gone up to Jerusalem knowing that it was prophesied that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. He had gone up to be mocked, to be ill-treated, and to be put to death. And so He speaks the word. He stood in the temple courts, but He went out of them, and going out He pronounces the word of desolation upon them.

"Your house is left unto you desolate". Could one imagine a greater state of desolation than the absence of Christ, the absence of the Lord in the house of the Lord? Is it not desolate, more desolate than the wilderness sands. It was desolate, and there He left them. He turned His back upon them. It was a sign that the kingdom could not be set up then, that it must remain in abeyance, that the purpose of God, so to speak, must stand still for the moment. He had to give His life a ransom for many there upon the Cross, and they had to fill up the measure of their iniquity by denying the Lord Jesus Christ and putting Him upon the cross, by the hand of Gentiles.

Now, this aroused curiosity in the hearts of the disciples. They were fond of their Temple. It was not the Temple Solomon built neither was it the Temple Zerubbabel had built, but it was a Temple, and forty six years had been spent upon it, and they had some regard for its magnificence as a building, especially in the courts, and they called the attention of the Lord to it, as if to say, "Is it really, Lord, after all so very desolate? Is not that temple worth anything at all? Is it merely fit for the habitation of owls and dragons and to be the joy of wild asses? Is that all it can be?" They called attention to it, and the Lord confirmed His word. There would be not only His absence but there should not be one stone left upon another. By and by, it would all be destroyed.

Then the disciples came to the Lord privately, when He was on the Mount of Olives, and they put definite questions to Him. They said "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" I like these evidences of the reality of the truth of scripture. These are just the sort of questions we should have put to the Lord on such an occasion. We want to know

when. Is it a fact that a great many of you here tonight have got your minds upon when the coming of the Lord will take place rather than upon the fact that it is the Lord Himself Who is coming? The date of His coming does not matter so much so long as He comes. The human mind is full of curiosity, good in many ways but it may lead us astray.

At any rate, they asked the questions of the Lord, and it was a safe thing to do. When you ask your brethren, they um and ah about and leave you somewhere else, instead of answering the question, but when you ask the Lord if He does not answer your question directly, He says something that will help you to understand the subject. That is because He is such a wise Teacher. He says very little about the time when these things will be and what will be the sign of His coming and of the end of the world. There is only just a reference in the last verse I read (verse 14). It would be interesting to go into these verses in detail, but that is not my purpose tonight. What I want you to mark is this, that the Lord is speaking about what is going to take place on the earth, and He speaks of it in a general way. He speaks in a way that not only helped the Jewish disciples and will do, when we have gone to our Home and they are left to bear the brunt of affairs - their time will come - but the words of our Lord are so beautiful and full of meaning that they help, not only the persons to whom they are directly addressed, but all those who really love the word of God, and we can derive help from the words we find here.

The Lord speaks generally in these verses, and the first thing He warns them against is that they should not be deceived. "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many". Now would that deceive you? If a person came and said "I am Christ", would you be deceived? Would you be likely to be led astray? I hope not. But the Jews might be. They might easily be turned aside, and the Lord warned them against it, because they were looking for someone here upon the earth and if one came and said "I am the Christ", it was possible they might be led astray. But it would not apply, directly, surely, to any Christian. If a person gave himself out to be the second Person of the Trinity, the anointed of Jehovah, we should shudder at such a thought, as arrant blasphemy. But there will be those who will be deceived in that way, and the warning is that we ourselves may easily be deceived, by being led on a false scent, our eyes being turned away from the real Christ to a false one, from the hope of Christ's coming to thinking of persons here upon the earth and wondering what places they have in the prophetic scheme, and we spend hours and hours trying to fix them up according to the scriptures. Well, it is the way in which Satan leads the believer away from the beloved Lord. He says "I do not want these people to be looking for Christ to come, at any moment. Let them be occupied with things down here, and seek to pick out someone who is going to war for their eventual salvation and to set up a kingdom here on the earth". In this way, believers are led away from the simplicity of the hope in Christ Jesus. Therefore the warning is for us today, as well as for them then and for those that will be in the days to come.

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet". Now let me ask you, do you think there has ever been a century, from the time when these words were spoken, when there has been no war, or rumours of wars. First, second, third, fourth, you may go down all the centuries. Any school boy will tell you that history is taken up with the battles that have been fought and lost in various parts of the world. There have always been wars and rumours of wars. What our Lord referred to was the time when the Jews would be in the Holy Land in the day that is coming and there would be wars, and rumours of wars, but they were not to be disturbed, the end was not yet. There is more to follow before the end, and that is why He does not want them to be disturbed. There are wars now, and we deplore them, but the fact that there are wars, does not in any way affect the hope of the Lord's coming for His church. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom". There will be warfare against one another, and so there will be confusion and strife upon the earth. And then the consequences of these terrible wars. There will be famine, because there is always economic warfare connected with the actual clash of arms; and pestilence, and earthquakes, not merely the shaking of the earth upon which we walk, but the shaking of the boundaries and foundations of national life, so that what has stood for centuries, is shaken to its very foundations. These are the earthquakes that will take place. And these are the beginning of sorrows for the Jewish people.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake". This is getting home to the persons themselves. What the Lord had spoken about previously was something they would hear - the rumours, and they give His people a terrible amount of anxiety. The quick delivery of news may be pleasing to think about, but it means anxiety and care because things are brought more quickly to our knowledge, and this does not bring comfort, but fear and anxiety. But what the Lord speaks of now is something that will affect them personally. They would be delivered up to the powers that be, they would be persecuted, they would be put to death for the name of the Lord. He says "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake". I am not sure that the Jews have been hated of all nations yet. There is generally one, or more, nations on the face of the earth who have been friendly and well-disposed towards the Jew, but the time is coming, when every nation under heaven will be against that nation that God has made His peculiar treasure, and that He means to be the centre of this earth's government.

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many". I think we ought to take a word of warning here. The Lord is speaking directly of the time when the man of lawlessness and sin will be personally present on the earth, but now there is a spirit of lawlessness in the world, and not merely in the world, but in the church. In our gatherings, in our assemblies, there are brothers and sisters who fight for their own, and show disrespect for what is plainly the teaching of scripture. They are a law to themselves, or they try to be, and there is lawlessness. The effect of lawlessness, whether in a gathering or a nation, is that the love to Christ gets

feeble. Men lose the fibre of their soul's spiritual strength, and power, to stand and witness for God. When love goes, what have we, beloved friends? If we lose the love to our Lord, how can we be loyal, how can we be true to His word? Therefore, let us beware of leaving our first love and letting it in any way diminish. The only true antidote is to keep well in the presence of the Lord, and to walk in His company, hearing His words, and seeking to follow His steps.

"And he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved". Now that shows these words refer to the Jew. It is never said of the Christian at all. The poor Jewish believer in that day has to be through the various tribulations, and if the days were not shortened, "there should no flesh be saved" - it is fleshly, body, soul and spirit. But there will be those who will go through unscathed, as the three Hebrew youths went through the fire of Nebuchadnezzar and not a hair of their heads was singed. They came out absolutely unscathed, and so it will be in that day. They endure to the end and they shall be saved in that great salvation of the millennial kingdom.

Now there is, shall I say, a date. Not exactly a date, but an indication of the coming of the end. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come". These Jewish disciples are to go out to the nations who hate them and hate the name of Him they love. They are to preach the gospel of the kingdom to all nations, and that must take place before the end comes. It is not exactly the end of the age, but the end, the closing up of that dispensation in which the Lord Himself is not personally present to reign and handle the reins of government. So that is a point to bear in mind. It is not the gospel of the grace of God, but the gospel of the kingdom. John the Baptist preached it, our Lord Jesus Christ preached it, and He sent out the twelve apostles to preach it, only He told them not to go into the way of the Gentiles. Before He went on high, He told them to go into all the world, and they were to make disciples of all nations. That is a commission that has not been fulfilled yet, but it will be fulfilled in a day that is to come.

Now, I read this scripture by way of contrast to what we have in John. The scripture in John comes more sweetly to ones spirit than the former. I am not saying anything against the study of prophecy. Not at all, if we keep it in its proper bearing. What I say is this. Here in John we have a different atmosphere altogether. In Matthew the Lord is sitting on the Mount of Olives, out in the open. There is the temple, and the disciples come to Him as the One they believe to be the King, the Anointed by the Holy Spirit, the One Who is going to reign over His people and to save them from their sins. They ask Him questions, as to what is going to take place, and what shall be the sign of the end, and so on. It is a public discourse you get in Matthew, but here in John it is something entirely different.

Here the Lord is speaking to them about the Father's house, and that He is going to bring them there. He has come to the end of His earthly connections with Jerusalem, with Judea and Galilee, and with God's people on earth. He has been refused. The high priest, the priests, the scribes and elders, are all athirst for the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they covenanted with Judas, one of the twelve, to betray Him. The thing is all planned. They found a traitor within the camp, and they played upon his cupidity that he should deliver up his Master for thirty pieces of silver. All this had been done, you see, before our Lord begins to speak about this matter.

At the Passover supper, the Lord knew and felt that His hour had come that He should depart out of the world unto the Father. He had come from God, and He was going back, and so He performs His final act. We must not compare the acts of our Lord one with another, but what could be more beautiful than when our Lord took the basin, and the water and the towel, and washed the feet of the twelve - twelve disciples. He knew what He was doing as He applied that water. He said "Ye are not all clean". He knew who should betray Him when He washed his feet, yet He did it in all meekness and graciousness, so loving and tender was He. It was not a menial doing the duty he was bound to do, but the service of love. And, I repeat, he did it to a man whose evil heart even then was pondering what was the best moment to leave the room and go to do his work. And the Lord bade His disciples that they should do the same one to another.

He gave the sop to Judas, and Judas arose, for Satan had entered into him. It was not a demon, but Satan himself took possession of that apostate man and he went out to do the foulest deed this earth has ever seen, to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. He went out and it says "it was night" - the blackest night - the night of the betrayal of our blessed Lord.

Then our Lord said "Now is the Son of man glorified". He had come to the point when the world, as it were, fell away from Him, they would not have Him, His rejection was complete, and now He says, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him". The Lord looked at His cross, at His death, at the work that was complete, He looked at himself as raised by the glory of the Father and seated in heaven, and as the Son of man, glorified in that kingdom that shall come at the end of the world, the consummation of the ages, the harvest. But now, that very moment, is the Son of man glorified, and God was going to glorify Him in Himself, not on earth even, but in Himself, in heaven. That is where He was going, and that is the key to what follows.

Our Lord begins to speak of His going away. He had said the same to the Jews previously, but they in their ignorance did not understand, and the disciples were dull, too. The Lord told the Jews that where He went they could not go. That was because of their sins - "Where I am, thither ye cannot come". He says the same to His disciples "Whither I go, ye cannot come: so now I say to you". The ark must

go before and make the way for the followers to enter the heavenly place.

Now Peter could not abide this restriction. He was troubled because the Lord said to him "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards". He was like some of us here. We find it tiresome to wait. The Lord said "Thou shalt follow me afterwards", but Peter said "Lord, I want to do it now". Do you fit in in any way with this in connection with the Lord's coming? Do you want it now? Some people wish to have a good time here first and then to go. They want to make the best of both worlds, but this is not the way of scripture. Peter was zealous and true in heart. The love of his heart prompted him because he felt that impending disaster was upon our Lord. Something was going to happen. Why did Judas go out? It was not merely to buy something for them. At the anointing by Mary, Jesus had said "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this". What did he mean about His burial? It was all mysterious to Peter and he wanted to be with his Lord and not to leave Him, to be by His side, to follow Him and see him safely through. He did not understand what the Lord meant.

He was going to the Father. He as the Man Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh, the One who tabernacled in this world, the Son of God from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven, was going back to the Father, body, soul and spirit. He was going to the Father and to the Father's house. This was something about which there had never been a word in all the Old Testament prophecy. It was a purely new revelation that the Lord makes here. Job expected in his flesh to see God, but to be with God in the house on high is something that the most advanced saint of Old Testament times had never dreamed of. Now the Lord was making it known. Was not it something absolutely different, something on a heavenly plane, the revelation of the hope for the heart of the believer.

Verse 38. The Lord knew what was in Peter's heart. We say, I am sure, as we are here, "We would never deny the Lord as Peter did". He was sincere, he was not a hypocrite but he did not know His heart. I doubt whether any of us do, but the one thing we can take comfort from is that the Lord knows; as Peter said afterwards, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee".

Now, the Lord turns to His disciples and He makes this marvellous revelation. Let us not be deterred because of its simplicity. Remember it is something new and fresh, something made known to eleven disciples, every one of whom had a heart that be true for the Lord. Outside there was the multitude, all athirst for the death of Christ, but here were men who had continued with Him in His tribulation. They had been proved to be true as steel to Him. I will tell you something which will keep your hearts while you are in the world. It will be the choicest treasure to your souls, it will be a comfort in the darkest day, and will fill your hearts with fresh joy and hope in the darkest moment - "I will come again".

He says "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God also in me". It was a matter of faith. It is not a

question of figures, or pictures as in prophecy, but it was question of faith in the Lord's own words that He is coming and coming soon.

Verse 2. He was going away to prepare that place for them. That made them feel like travellers on a journey, passing from one place to another. It was a changing scene, but the Lord said "Do not be troubled. In my Father's house there is not one, but there are many abiding places, and I go to prepare a place for you".

This Gospel opens with the Lord speaking of the Jews having made His Father's house a den of thieves, and it closes here in revealing the true Father's house in heaven, where there are many mansions, and He said "I go to prepare a place for you". It was not so much that the Lord was going to build, as it were, some architectural mansion for us, as our material minds imagine, but He was going there in order that we might be there. How else could men, who were properly denizens of earth, be found in heaven? Angels were there, they were created to be there, but God created man to be on the earth, and now was he going to be in heaven? Well, the Lord Jesus Christ came, and by His death and what He accomplished on the cross, He opened the way. He, the incarnate Son of God, took His seat at the right hand of God, and we see that Man Who offered the one sacrifice for sins now seated at the right hand of God and the very fact that He is there, shows that there is a place for us there too. He by His going has prepared the place.

"I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also". Now I would like to draw your attention to two phrases in this verse. The Lord is speaking as the Son of God, not as the prophet of Israel, and He says "I will come again" - or "I am coming unto you". It is a present thing, something that is being done. It is not merely that by and by He will come, but the thought is this, that the Lord is speaking in the eternal present. There is no "yesterday, today and for ever" with Him, but He is there. A thousand years are as nothing with Him. He is coming, He is on the way, there is the attitude of coming. His heart is coming, His person is coming, the Lord Himself is coming, And more than that, He says, Where I am, there ye may be also". He was speaking that night in the upper room, but He says Where I am. It is His eternal existence as God which He sets forth. He is the everlasting "I am". He speaks of Himself frequently in this Gospel in this way, but do we lay hold of it? "Where I am, ye shall be". Because of our finite character, we must go from here to there, caught up in the clouds to be for ever with the Lord, on high, but He can speak in this wonderful way and it is in this way that He unfolds the revelation of His coming.

"Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know". Thomas did not understand this and he said "We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way". I think this is an indication that it is not a matter of prophecy here at all. In the fulfillment of prophecy, the Lord Jesus Christ takes several places, so to speak. He is on the Mount of Olives, and on the throne of His glory. The prophetic scriptures

imply that when our Lord comes in glory, He will be here, and there and elsewhere and the subjugation of the world to His kingdom will not take place in a moment; it will be successional. But here it is different. Here the Lord is Himself the way, the truth and the life.

Thomas was speaking just as a man would speak. He was looking at it from a human point of view. He was thinking of the Lord Jesus going to the Mount of Olives, and going up from Bethany, and a cloud receiving Him out of their sight. He was looking at it in a material way. But it is not that at all. The Lord was coming to take to Himself those that belong to Him, those that the Father had given to Him, and it was His will that where He was, they should be, that they might behold the glory which the Father had given Him. It is all connected with heaven, where the Father is and where there is a place prepared for us.

You may say, "Did not the Lord speak about the father's house in Luke xv?" Certainly He did. He spoke about the prodigal being received into the father's house, He was received as a prodigal, and he was fitted for the place in the father's house, but this is something different. The Lord does not speak about fitting us for the place, but fitting the place for us, and He fits it by going there and being there as the risen and glorified Man in heaven. Because He is there, those that belong to Him shall be there also. And that happy consummation is going to take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is not a question of progress of time. What I want to press upon you is that what we have here is of the choicest value to our souls because it is the blessed Son of God speaking to those who love Him and have been true to Him in the hour of His betrayal and rejection. We profess the name of the Lord Jesus because we believe that the One Who was crucified was God's Son, we believe there is none like Him, He came out from God and has gone back to God. It is the most marvellous fact in all the world's history that the incarnate Son of God should be here upon the earth, and He is speaking here and says "I am the way".

In John x. He speaks of Himself as the "door of the sheep", the door for the sheep to enter a place of safety, but here He says, "I am the way". The way starts at the beginning and goes right on to the end, there is no break in it, it is continuous, and the Lord is that. It means that the Lord comes, He appropriates us as His own and there is the end of it. It is so simple. If we had to find our own way to heaven, we might be nonplussed. If we had to go on a State service to one of the major states of the world, we should be a little diffident as to what would be the right thing to do and to wear, and the details we ought properly to carry out in order to fulfill our mission. It would be a difficulty to us. But, how about going to heaven? How about going to the place that Jesus, the blessed Son of God, has prepared for us, and being where He is? There cannot be anything greater than that, the Lord said "I am the way". "If you believe in Me, follow Me". A child can do that. The Lord Himself is coming to take you to Himself, that where He is you may be also.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". That sums up what the way is. It is coming to the Father, not the prodigal coming home in repentance, but the believer in Christ coming to his heavenly home. In the twinkling of an eye, we shall be with Him and like Him, for we shall see Him face to face, and we shall enter into the Father's house. We shall not be strangers there and we shall be no disfigurement to the Father's house, the Lord will take care of that, for we shall be like Him. He is full of glory and He will make us full of glory too. What blessed words these are, and how we ought to cherish them. What I plead for is that these words should be accepted by us shall I say in the simplicity in which they were spoken. There were eleven harrassed, terrific disciples, feeling that they were on the brink of a catastrophe. The Lord was going to leave them and He gave them the most golden promise He could give them. So far from their being separated from Him, He was just going away and He would come back for them. They were to go to the Father, and to the Father's house, and He would be the way there, and He would be the truth, and He would be the life, which would keep the hope burning in the soul. May God help us to take the hope of the Lord's coming in its simplicity and in its power into our souls for our daily help.
