

**LECTURES**  
**UPON**  
**SOME OF THE PARABLES,**  
**AND**  
**HISTORICAL PASSAGES**  
**OF**  
**THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

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*District of Pennsylvania, to wit :*

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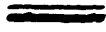
*“ Lectures upon some of the Parables and Historical Passages of the New Testament. By James P. Wilson, D. D. Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.”*

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# PREFACE.



BY lecturing, large portions of the sacred scriptures are brought into view, the connexion is rendered more intelligible, and greater inducements are offered to the people to read, and become acquainted with the oracles of truth, than by sermonizing on detached sentences. A doctrine or a duty shown to be fairly founded upon a parable, detailed reproof, course of argument, or obvious example of the Saviour, will usually, and ought always to have a more decisive influence upon the minds of the hearers, than when it rests upon the arguments of a preacher, though supported by many detached quotations from Holy Writ.

Such reasons have induced the writer of this little book, generally, to deliver a lecture on every sabbath afternoon; for the most part suited to the subject of the morning sermon. He never committed to memory, nor read a sermon, or lecture in publick since he began the ministry. These are therefore but outlines, or skeletons, not the lectures themselves; which were at much greater length. This statement is designed as an apology both for the shortness, and other defects of these preparations; which were composed merely for private use, and given to the printer without transcription; except the lectures on the resurrection of Christ, and the last one, which were written since the printing of the book commenced; and by no means as a censure upon those, who read or rehearse in publick, their sermons or lectures. Every brother should pursue the course, which he deems to be most for the edification of himself, and his people.

J. P. W.

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# LECTURE I.

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JOHN, CHAPTER I, VERSE 1 TO 14.

**IN** the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

**THIS** Gospel was written after the churches were in possession of the three former, and seems to have been not so much intended to corroborate facts already recorded, as to testify many things which Jesus had done and taught in the

land of Judea, and at the public festivals at Jerusalem, highly illustrative of his divine character and mission, but which though known to many, had not been as yet reduced to writing. Accordingly in this gospel it is said, "these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

The object of this gospel was not to reveal the divine nature and glorious character of the Saviour in the first instance, but to confirm these important truths, to those who had heard them, by the additional testimony of one who had been an eye witness.

It was not necessary therefore, that he should refrain from speaking of the divine nature, and exalted character of Christ, things every where taught as a part of gospel truth, until he should have narrated a variety of historical facts, upon which such positions might be grounded. He inverts this order, and pursues the natural course of events, he sets forth the divinity of the Son of God, and then comes down to the humanity of Jesus in the same person. As this gospel is a history of Christ, the writer begins with him. That the Lord Jesus Christ is here intended by the original term rendered "Word," is plain from that which follows: for it is not only said that he was with God, was God, was Life, and Light, and that all things were made by him; but that he was made flesh, and dwelt among us; was testified of by John the Baptist, and taught and performed the truths and wonders set forth in this history of his life. This apostle in the apocalypse, speaks of the

“ King of kings, and Lord of lords,” whose vesture was dipped in blood, and who trode the vinepress of the wrath of the Almighty, under the name of “ the Word of God.”

Wherefore he was called by a term which signifies, “ reason,” or “ word” has been variously conjectured. It is certain that some of the most famous of the Greek philosophers used this original term to express Deity; they seem to have adopted it in opposition to those who held, that all things happened by chance or accident, and thus to have asserted that all things sprang from design, contrivance, or reason. Some of the ancient Jews appear also to have adopted the same manner of speaking of God. As these things have been presumed to have been known to some of the first christians, it has been supposed that John applied this term to Jesus Christ, to fix on it a lawful sense, and to prevent them from error. In the eighth chapter of the Proverbs, we find a striking resemblance, the term there used is wisdom. “ The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.” “ There I was by him, as one brought up with him.” What is written in that chapter, may be understood more easily of the attribute of wisdom personified; but such a supposition here is excluded by the following context.

It has been conjectured with more probability, that Jesus is called the *Word*; because as men reveal their thoughts to each other by means of words, so the Almighty has ever made his manifestations of himself to men through the Media-

tor, by whom he has created, and redeemed, and by whom he governs them. “No one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever he shall reveal him.” Upon this supposition, the denominating Christ “The Word,” shows him vastly superior to all others; for neither Moses, nor any prophet, nor apostle was ever called by this name, nor could Jesus have been emphatically declared to be “*the Word*” on this account, unless his manifestations of the divine counsels had been greater or more important than those of all others.

“In the beginning was the Word.” These terms being without restriction, must signify in the beginning of creation, in the same manner as they must be understood in the first verse of the Old Testament; “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth.” And so they are often taken in the scriptures, “Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth.” “He who made man at the beginning.” “From the beginning it was not so.” “The devil sinneth from the beginning.” These and other scriptural passages are similar, and of like import.

“*Was*,” implies (in the original) that “the Word,” that is, that Christ was actually existing in the beginning, that he did not receive a being at the creation with the creatures; but already *was*, and accordingly it is afterwards declared, that “all things were made by him.” If the expression had been “In the beginning the Word was” *made*, the sense would have been different; but the words do not admit this rendering. If we take the whole member together, “In the beginning was the Word,” the sense will be,

when time began, it found the "Word" already existing, that is, he was from eternity, and uncreated, for he created all things. This scripture agrees with Christ's own words; "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," and with those of his servant, who declares that his people were "*chosen in him before the foundation of the world.*"

This passage has occasioned great perplexity among the enemies of Christ's divinity, as is very apparent, by their contradictions of each other in their explanations of it, not in ancient times only, but to this day.\*

That the word "beginning" is sometimes used to signify the commencement of the gospel dispensation, we do not deny; but in such instances, the sense is determined by the accompa-

\* There has been lately edited in England, by a company of gentlemen, and republished at Boston, "The New Testament in an improved version," a Socinian work. The society who published this version, following Newcome, acknowledge the "Word" at this place to refer to Jesus Christ, as the following context, and other scriptures indeed demand. But the "Beginning" is there asserted to relate to the beginning of the gospel, though there was neither utility, importance, nor sense in saying, Jesus existed when he began to preach.

About the same time there has appeared in this city, "Dissertations on the Unity of God." This work is at total discordance with the former, on both the points mentioned. This author, who is also a Socinian, refers "the beginning" here mentioned, to the beginning of the creation, which is correct; whilst with an uncommon share of hardihood, he denies "the Word" to mean a person, though "he was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

nying language ; in this case the expression is general and unrestrained, and therefore ought to be taken in its most natural sense. When we read these words in the beginning of the Old Testament, every one understands them in their general sense, and so should we conceive of them here. Creation is there expressly mentioned, and in like manner is it in this context, "by him all things were made."

If we understand it of the beginning of the gospel, as early even, as of the *proclamation of glad tidings* ; Christ was then already born, and yet what is here said is previous to the Word's being made flesh. To suppose that the gospel began with *Christ's preaching*, and to say that Christ then *was*, would make the proposition alike insensible, and unimportant ; for what sense could there be in saying, Christ existed when he began to preach. But it is more usually referred to the *commencement of John the Baptist's preaching*, and so the force of the expression, "In the beginning was the Word," is, as they suppose that Jesus existed when John began to preach ; but there is not a word, hint, or circumstance thus restricting the general words "in the beginning ;" besides it is very singular that this gospel should begin with John's preaching, and neither mention his name nor his preaching, until at length John is introduced as a stranger to the history ; "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." Where was such necessity of declaring Christ's existence at the commencement of John's preaching, before the narration of the facts should make it appear ? It could not be merely to show



a preference of Christ to John, for Moses and the prophets came before him, and John the Baptist was, in fact, born before Christ, and began to preach before him. The scriptures ascribe it rather as honourable to Christ, that his messengers did go before him to prepare the way.

The resemblance between the introduction of this gospel, and this writer's first epistle, has been plausibly urged for the confining the sense of the words "in the beginning." But there the expression is "*from* the beginning;" if the same terms had been here, they could have been no proof of the eternity of Christ. Besides, whilst the language here is general, in the epistle it is most expressly limited; "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes....looked upon....and handled of the word of life....declare we unto you." The express limitation of the words in the epistle is an argument, that when not limited as in the introduction of the gospel, they should be otherwise understood; and it is absurd to produce a passage, where general terms are expressly confined by restrictive ones, as a proof that the same general terms should be restricted, when nothing appears for their limitation. The sense of "in the beginning was the Word," plainly is, that Jesus already existed when creation began; therefore maugre every attempt to elude the force of the general phrase, and what follows; that he was with God, and was God, and created all things, and was the Life and Light of men, perfectly agree with, and support such natural interpretation.

“And the Word was with God.” There is, and can be but one God, there cannot therefore be one God with another God. It is probable that the personal distinction, “Father,” was here omitted, either because the divine Word has not as yet, in this gospel been called the Son, or that the third Person, the Holy Spirit, might not be excluded. But the sense is clear to the unprejudiced reader; for since He who is denominated the “Word,” is immediately also called God, and since the term “with” implies so much distinction as is necessary to association; the natural and obvious import of the passage is, that the “Word” who already existed in the beginning of creation, and so was from eternity, and consequently Divine, was with the Father, and Holy Spirit, before the world began. This Word who always existed, and who was made flesh, and who in the subsequent part of this gospel appears to be Jesus Christ, is here plainly shown to be a distinct person, both because differently designated; and because he was *with* the Father before the creation.

The more rational among the opposers of the divinity of Christ, who avoid the absurdity of supposing, that by the term “Word,” is intended merely an attribute of the divine nature, or who yield to the force of the expression, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” and see that the residue of this gospel narrative relates to Christ; have, in order that they might avoid this proof of the eternal existence of the second Person, imagined the meaning to be, that Jesus was separated from the world for a

time, to be instructed in the nature of his ministry; and that either he was caught up into Heaven, or separated for that purpose in the wilderness. But if this were the force of the terms, "the Word was with God," they would imply that Jesus, who was from eternity, was thus separated until the beginning or commencement of creation; but when, where, and how long this was, is with them all matter of mere conjecture, and pitiable subterfuge; their difficulties increase, how could a mere man create the world? "all things were made by him," and how could a mere man who is already flesh, be made flesh?

If the true meaning has been given of the former member, "in the beginning was the Word," then the sense of the other "and the Word was with God," is undeniably, that this glorious personage who was already existing at, and before the commencement of creation, and consequently, himself uncreated, was before the creation in all eternity past, with God, that is, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

"*And the Word was God.*"\* The same Person who existed in the beginning, and so from eternity, and who was always with the Father and the Holy Spirit, was also himself God, or a divine person. The first proposition speaks him from eternity, the second as distinct from, though always present with the other persons, and this declares his essence to be the same, that he is God. And because the whole that is said here, is

\* That the subject is distinguished from the predicate by the article, vide Campbell's Gosp. in loc.

obviously spoken of him as existing before the creation ; it follows that the Word was God, before there were creatures to be governed, and consequently that he is so naturally, and not by office.

When there is a diversity in the expressions, and these immediately succeed each other, it ought to be allowed that different things are intended ; when it said that the “ Word was with God,” and then that “ the Word was God,” the propositions are not identical ; but those who, contrary to the residue of this chapter, will imagine that by the “ Word” is meant only the attribute of reason or wisdom, are obliged to understand the same sense from both the expressions, or run into the extravagancy of imagining that an attribute itself, in the abstract is God himself, and such really have no God. Those who at least possessing the semblance of candour admit, what it would be shameful to deny, that by the “ Word,” Jesus Christ is meant, find themselves involved in the necessity of disposing of this proposition, “ the Word was God,” and attempt to cover their retreat, by alleging that Jesus Christ was called God, because of that honour, and authority conferred on him.

If we admit this sense of the term God, yet it is a relative term, and could be proper only when there are those over whom authority may be exercised ; but in this case the force of the passage is, that the “ *Word* was God” in the beginning, that is, before creation, from eternity. And this would be repugnant, whether we should understand it that the *Word*, who is, upon this supposition, inferiour to God, should be his God

and superior, for there was no other in existence, or we should allow that an authority could be derived from eternity.

But if we drop the idea of eternity, and suppose the Word was created before creation, and before he himself created all things which have been created, which are frightful contradictions; yet, if in this pre-existent state, he was called God in an inferior sense, with respect to whom was he so called? he was set over none, and could not be the representative of the great Supreme to any.

But he was not designed to be called God in an inferior sense, for he is also termed "the true God, the mighty God, the great God, God blessed for ever," and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, that is, the Father. He receives all the names, titles, and attributes, and does all the works of God. If he had not been a divine person, he could not have performed the work of a Mediator. If he be not truly God, we can never vindicate his moral character, for such was his claim, for he has promised to be wherever two or three are assembled in his name; nor can we otherwise reconcile the approbation which the Father from time to time gave of him, with divine wisdom, truth and holiness.

Jesus said "before Abraham was I am:" his pre-existence was thus affirmed in a manner perhaps above all others noticeable by those who chiefly boasted of their being the children of this venerable man. Jesus, the most humble of men, asks of God the Father, in the solemn work of

prayer, to restore him to the glory which he had with him before the world was. Yet on earth he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and to this day viewed merely in his humanity, there is no form nor comeliness in him that he should be desired by the world. That Deity should become humanity is impossible; but that Deity should veil his glory from carnal minds for wise and gracious purposes, is not only possible, but the fact. The life which the apostle is here giving, being from eternity, cannot be fully exhibited; this history must begin with time which commenced but yesterday. But that our ideas of the word may be enlarged, and our homage increased, his eternity, his distinct personality, and his divinity are shown in the first verse.

“*The same was in the beginning with God,*” is usually said to be a repetition of that which has gone before; but it should be rather said that these words express that which had been only implied before; if he was in the beginning, and was with God, then he was in the beginning with God.

As the declaring in the first verse that “the Word was with God,” after having asserted he was already existing in the beginning, might have led some to have inferred that he was distinct from and inferiour to Deity, and rendered it proper that it should immediately be said, “*and the Word was God;*” so in like manner to point out to us the great importance of knowing, and remembering that the Word is in a certain sense distinct from the other persons in Deity, it is explicitly declared that the same Word was in the beginning, that is in eternity with God. The

rendering clear this distinction of persons, will appear, if we remember, that it is the history of Christ that is here to be given, in his divine pre-existent state, and afterwards in his human life.

These words are full of important things, they prove, by recurring unto, and reiterating that which has been shown before, that in Deity there is that distinction by whatever name we call it; they show that Christ is God, by declaring again his eternity, and add still another argument, that he is coeternal with the Father; and hereby an insurmountable barrier is opposed to the false opinion that Christ was created.

Hitherto the apostle has only asserted the important doctrines of the eternity and divinity of the Word, a name by which he designates the Redeemer anterior to his birth; he now proceeds under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to lay before his readers some evidence of these truths. The first which he alleges is his having created all things; "all things were made by him," the Word. If he created all things which have been created, he is himself uncreated, and so from eternity. If he is from eternity, he is God. To create is a work proper to God only, for "of him, and through him, and to him are all things."

Whether we understand him to have been together with the Father, and Holy Spirit the efficient cause, or interpret it to have been spoken of him as Mediator, and the instrumental cause; still the proof of his divinity is the same, because

he was uncreated who created all things, and if eternal, he is God.

*“And without him was not any thing made that was made.”* Universal terms are sometimes used, when exceptions are necessarily supposed; but when the expressions are changed by the substitution of a particular negative, every possible exception is excluded. Thus, if the apostle of the Gentiles, speaking of the sins of men, had only said “there are none good,” the language would have been deemed very different from that which he has left on record, “there is none good, no, not one.” The force is, there is not one of all the creatures which was made without him.

This writer in the book of Revelation, says to the same purpose “thou hast created all things;” in the epistle to the Colossians, it is “all things that are in Heaven and earth, visible and invisible.” Creation is the work of Jehovah, because it is the effect of attributes not communicable to a mere creature.

The expression “that was made,” can have no manner of effect; unless it be to except God himself from the things which were made, every one of which is embraced in the mode of speech here adopted; and as the “Word,” the person immediately creating, must from the nature of the case have been necessarily excepted out of the things which he himself made; the terms “that was made,” are plainly used to except from the creation here described the other persons of the Godhead, and so are a farther, and if we judge correctly, an irresistible proof of the distinction, and divinity of the persons. In like manner the



words "*without him,*" expressing his concurrence in the creation of every thing, implies that he is not the only person in the Godhead, nor alone in the work of creation.

"*In him was life.*" He who was the creator of all things, possessed wisdom to plan, and power to accomplish his purposes; every portion of wisdom, or exercise of power in creation, originates from him as its cause; he must have had in himself also that source of life from whence all the lives of animal and spiritual creatures, have issued as their fountain. That eternal life which he has promised to his people, must also flow from him.

As the "Word" is the source or fountain of all life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal; the sacred historian advances to another representation of the Word; adopts another name for him, and calls him the Life.\*

"*The Life was the Light of men.*" By this, we are not to understand that life is light; but that the glorious, eternal, and divine person, whom he designates by the "Word;" because, as we suppose, by him Deity has revealed his purposes in the works of creation, providence, and redemption, and whom he has now denominated the Life,

\* It has been said that it should be rendered, "by him was life," because, as life is still in him, it would have been otherwise used in the present tense, "in him is life." But the apostle is speaking of Christ as the "Word," the "Life," and the "Light;" from his works, *anterior to his coming in, and being made flesh,* and advancing step by step, he distinctly shows his existence in eternity, and his works in time under former dispensations, before he speaks of his coming in the flesh, or his human life. This could not have been done by using the present tense.

because the spring and source of all life, was in the same manner, the cause and fountain of all intellectual and spiritual light, as well as the giver of the power of discerning it.

*“And the light shineth in darkness.”* This is true of every age, and every people. The nations who have not enjoyed written revelation, have possessed the objective light of the Divine Word, “for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” The divine existence and attributes have been discerned in theory, even by those who worshipped him, not as God. They were still in mental darkness, *“and the darkness comprehended it not.”* The light of the truth shone, also in traditions upon the nations, and in a written law, and in types, shadows, and promises, which were manifestations the Word made of himself; but the dark minds of men did not understand it. The “Word,” or “Life,” who may also, from his various displays of himself, be called the “Light,” shone upon the dark world by his works of creation and providence, and by his special extraordinary manifestations; but clouds of prejudice and ignorance obstructed, and prevented the benighted minds of men from receiving the Light.

Critics have complained of this illiterate apostle, because he has here changed the tense, when, according to them, “it ought to have been the same,” either “shined,” or “comprehendeth.” But perhaps the facts best agree with the words of the apostle, as he has left them. The light

shone brighter in the gospel days, when the Sun of righteousness had arisen, than it had done in any former age ; he therefore did well to use the present "shineth," to exclude the contrary conclusion : Also, because it was more usually received then than formerly ; he might have chosen to confine the expression of the rejection of it to the former ages, or rather because his discourse generally related to a former period, he did well to return to the tense he had used before.

The sacred biographer having spoken of the glorious subject of his history, as the "Word" in eternity, the "Life" in creation, and as the "Light" in all ages, and under all dispensations, even to the gospel times, he now comes to speak of his actual coming in the flesh, and therefore speaks of the Messenger whom he was to send before his face.

*"There was a man sent from God whose name was John."*

*"The same came for a witness, to bear witness of that Light, that all men through him," that is John, "might believe."*

All the prophets were witnesses of Christ ; but their testimony only drew the character, and so all the types and promises, as well as the prophecies, only increased the probability that Jesus was the Christ. It was proper that a man should be "sent from God," to be as the finger of God in the presence of Christ himself, to fasten all the prophecies upon him ; pointing at him, and declaring unto all men, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world ;"

the sacrifice appointed of God to remove the guilt of all who will believe.

The propriety of John's testimony, arose from the existence of that darkness before mentioned. The Light shone before John came, but was not apprehended. All men believed John was a prophet, and yet would not receive his testimony, though he declared that the same who sent him to preach, gave him a sign, and showed him Christ.

*“ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”* John was a “burning and shining light;” but he was not *“ that Light”* who had revealed himself in and from the creation, he was like the morning star who arises before the dawning of the day, and thus went as a herald before the Sun of righteousness. There was not a greater than John of the former saints; but he was inferior in his advantages to ordinary gospel believers, and therefore much inferior to Christ the true Light.

*“ That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”* The Light whom John came to testify of, was the true Light. John's testimony extended only to his contemporaries, and others who have succeeded him; but he who was testified of by John, is the “Word” who was in the beginning, was with God, was God, has created all things, is the source of life, and the fountain of light, intellectual and spiritual, which has shone upon the darkened minds of men in all ages, whereof every man has enough to bring him into condemnation for the rejection of it. The apostle proceeds to show how this light has shone upon every man, and this

he does by successively presenting the light of creation, and providence, the teachings of his servants, and lastly, by his actually coming in the flesh.

*“ He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”* He was necessarily in the world, for he created it, and he has been ever in it, since\* upholding all things, and governing them with providential care; but the world being in mental darkness, knew not this Light. This is spoken of the major part of men, for some did know and acknowledge the light appearing in the visible creation, and this exception is afterwards particularly made in the *velfth* verse. Mankind in general, the world of ungodly persons, though equally made by him as all others, knew not their Maker. *“ The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib;”* but rational creatures do not know; they will not consider.

*“ He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* The Word, the Creator of the world, was not only in it illuminating it by all the displays of creative, and providential wisdom and power; but he came to *his own* peculiar nation and people, in many special manifestations, particularly on Sinai, and through them displayed his glorious power, wisdom, and holiness to the na-

\* Yet he was not confined to it, for whilst here in the flesh, he declared he was present in Heaven, which could only be understood of the manifestative presence of his divine nature there. *“ No man hath ascended up into Heaven, but he who came down from Heaven, even the Son of man who is in Heaven.”*

tions; he came by his ambassadors, his servants, the prophets, to *his own* people the Jews; but in the general they received him not.

“*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*” But though the major part of his visible church and covenant people did not receive the Word, and become enlightened in the knowledge of saving truth by him: yet some did believe. Faith is here given as the explanation of the expression, “received him;” consequently his coming must have been intended of his revealing himself as the object of faith.

The expression “as many as received him;” here put for faith, and such other scriptures have been strangely understood by some, as importing that faith is such a claim, appropriation, or taking possession of Christ the greatest, best gift, as amounts to much more than the receiving God’s testimony of his Son. The choice of the heart, the embracing of Christ by the affections, and affying on him, are generally connected with, and justly deemed the fruits of faith; but they are not faith, nor is every man a believer who can thus claim Christ as his own. The preceding verses show that it was light or evidence, which the greater number did not, but which some did receive; and the verse next following, shows that they, who in former ages did truly receive such testimony, were born of the Spirit.

Though they were his own to whom he thus revealed himself, either because he had created, and preserved them, or because he had also se-

parated them to himself from among the nations ; yet in every instance in which they believed on him, he gave them the higher privilege, and honour of being accounted his sons ; in a still more important sense, even heirs of an everlasting inheritance.

“ *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*” Those who thus have become the sons of God, are such, not by descent from Abraham, though they should chance to be the natural seed, nor by their mere carnal inclinations, for these are always evil, nor by moral suasion, as the efficient cause, but of the mercy and grace of God, who has chosen them, called them by regeneration, pardoned their sins, and made them heirs of glory.

“ *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*” Not the Godhead, but the “ *Word*” who is put for the second Person, was made flesh. And when it is said, “ the Word was made flesh,” it must not be understood that he took the mere appearance, but a real body ; “ handle me and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.” He took also a human soul ; “ now is my soul troubled.” He “ gave up the ghost.” He was not *changed into flesh*. he was still the Word, “ Jesus the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” Nor was he made flesh *by a union of essence*, the incommunicable attributes of God cannot be given to a creature ; nor can the imperfections of a creature belong to God. Not by a physical union, as

of soul and body, for death did not dissolve it. Nor were two persons united; but two natures, the divine and human belonged to the same person, a thing not more difficult to be effected, than the union of soul and body in the same person, and equally inexplicable.

The account here given, accords with our reason, for the works of nature, which we may discover by irresistible argument to have not always existed, argue wisdom and power antecedent to themselves, and speak a Creator already existing in the beginning. That the Creator could not have been of matter as we are, is also clear from reason, and plain from this scripture. The unity of God is here shown, who is spoken of as one, and our reason also affirms that there cannot be two who are supreme, first and best; a plurality is here spoken of also, but not a plurality of Gods. That three cannot be one, and one three, in the same manner reason speaks, nor is this asserted by the apostle; but the contrary, for the "Word" only was made flesh. As three, they are not one; as one, he is not three; how three, and how one, we cannot perfectly know; nor is our ignorance of it wonderful, we know neither our own natures, nor the manner of the union of soul and body, nor a thousand other things, the existence of which we cannot doubt.

We receive this scripture, because we can show its genuineness, authenticity and divine authority, and not because our reason could lead us to the discovery of those truths. We can discern wisdom in every sentence and word of it, and an exquisite adjustment and adaptation of the whole.



The most prominent feature of the preceding verses is, that he who was afterwards made flesh, or was born, was Jesus Christ, was anteriorly God, our Creator, the author of life, and the bestower of the light, or manifestations of God in various ways, to all former generations. This discovery demands our gratitude, and will explain the power of his miracles, the wisdom of his parables, and instructions, and the goodness and mercy of his life and death.

## LECTURE II.



JOHN, CHAPTER IX, VERSE 6 TO 34

WHEN he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him. Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him. How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, he is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning

him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? and they cast him out.

JESUS could have healed this man by a word, as well as by anointing his eyes with clay, and sending him to the pool of Siloam; but the miracle thus was more gradual, and so capable of plainer proof; he must be led to the pool, and

the errand therefore be known ; the place was publick, and so singular a prescription would not fail to attract notice ; or it might have been to exercise the man's faith ; not a saving faith, for he esteemed his benefactor a prophet only ; but there was a faith of miracles which was required usually of the party.

He obeyed, and was healed ; and this example should lead us to obey, and we shall see spiritually. When the man had been restored, his appearance must have been much altered, and it is not wonderful that those who had known him, but were unacquainted with his restoration, should hesitate ; some more certain, would pronounce " it is he ;" others who had been less acquainted, admitted only a similarity. But he relieved their doubts, and would not conceal the miracle ; let us imitate him, confess the goodness of God, and give him the glory of our *sight*.

They inquire, "*how were thine eyes opened?*" "*A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes. and said, go to the pool of Siloam and wash. and I went and washed, and I received sight.*" As yet he had not seen Jesus ; for it is afterwards said, "*Jesus found him ;*" he had been told it was Jesus, and described the manner.

It had been on the sabbath day ; but it was a work of mercy, and consequently fit to be exercised on that day, as a service of God.

The persons with whom he conversed, brought him to the Pharisees' council that he might be examined ; but with what further design, it is hard to tell. The friends of Christ would scarce-

ly have ventured to have done this in opposition to the Pharisees ; it must have been the work of his enemies. If they were enemies, they did it, either to accuse Christ of breaking the sabbath, or that the council might silence this miracle, or counteract its effects.

The Pharisees ask, “ how he had received his sight ? ” He rehearses the facts again. They are divided ; some think that as the cure was performed on the sabbath, Jesus was an unholy man ; and so the miracle, not by divine agency. Others deny that sinners could perform such works, or reflect that the miracle was the doing of good, and that a sinner, by diabolical powers, would not do such miracles.

They do not take measures to punish him for a breach of the sabbath, for such an accusation would have been an acknowledgment of the miracle ; but use the circumstance to impeach the miracle, because God would not countenance the violation of his laws.

They ask the man’s opinion of him. You have been healed, you have formed some judgment of your benefactor, what is it ? In the greatest simplicity and candour, he gave his opinion, that he was not a sinner, but a prophet of God : and this was an evidence of his gratitude, though not yet a believer.

They resented the expression of this good opinion, and their own evil hearts surmising that he was false for Christ ; they refused to believe that he had been born blind. It is well that his parents were within reach, or this denial of his blindness from his birth, might have sup-

pressed, or invalidated the evidence. The parents are called and interrogated. The more the truth is pressed, the brighter it will appear; this the Pharisees afterwards found in experience, and saw it was best not to inquire too strictly, but to suppress investigation; as yet they had not gained this knowledge, with respect to the miracles of Christ. How unfair their question, they wished to intimidate the parents, "who ye say was born blind." They answer, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind." This was the best evidence that could have been given; who would, after this, have denied that the man had been born blind? The parents did not know, except by information, how he had received his sight, and prudently gave evidence only of what they knew. But his having received his sight, was undeniable, for every man present had ocular proof of this.

If these parents had acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ, they would have been excommunicated. How shameful to demand evidence, and yet to use means to shackle, and prevent a discovery of the truth. They had confidence in the prudence and wisdom of their son, and therefore after they had testified of his identity, and his blindness from his birth, who was in the present enjoyment of sight, they refer the Pharisees to him who had experienced the miracle, to learn the manner of it, and to discover the person who had effected it.

Met, and opposed by the truth in every direction, the Jews are forced to recur again to the man who had been blind. When interrogating be-

fore, they would not believe that he had been born blind, and called his parents; but they affirmed that fact in such manner, that the obstinate incredulity of the council was overpowered.

He was born blind, he now sees, and Jesus has done it for him. When Achan concealed the golden wedge, and the lot fell upon his tribe, and then upon his family, and lastly upon himself, Joshua said to him, "give God the glory," &c. be false, and dishonour God no more; but give him the glory, by speaking the truth. So the Pharisees again call the man, and say, "*give God the glory,*" tell no more falsehoods, but speak the truth. How shameful such an accusation by the council of the nation, how grating to the feelings of a man of candour and discernment, as this man evidently was; but every honest and sound mind present, would judge from his being found true, after his former accusation of falsehood, that this adjuration proceeded from their aversion to the truth, and desire to smother it.

He answers cautiously; but persists in the truth. Whether he be a sinner or not, "*I know not, one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*"

As the parents, notwithstanding the intimidation, persisted that this was their son, and that he was born blind, so the man himself testifies the truth of which he was certain; namely, that let Jesus be a sinner, as the council affirmed, or not, he was not mistaken in this, that, whereas he had been always blind before, by the help of Jesus, now he could see.

Never were men involved in a more difficult dilemma than these Pharisees, by opposing this miracle of Christ. They had undertaken the investigation, they could not relinquish it. They denied that he had been born blind; but the man's parents identify his person, and prove the fact of antecedent blindness in such manner, that it was impossible not to believe them. They have no escape, to deny that the man sees, would be to incur the contempt of all the people present; they had some hopes it would seem, by affirming that Christ was a sinner, and roughly interrogating the man again, to make him depart from his former evidence, and assign some other cause of his seeing; through fear of their power and resentment, the man prudently avoids a further defence of Christ's character, lest they should injure him, as they had said that *they knew Christ to be a sinner*; but maintains the fact which proved the power of Christ: "*one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*"

What shall they do? If they leave the matter thus, they have established the miracle beyond a possibility of contradiction. What could any modern unbeliever have done, had he been present? Is there any question omitted? did the council leave any thing undone that could have been done? What if some modern philosopher had been present, and espousing the sinking cause of the embarrassed Pharisees, had very gravely urged that nature was more credible than any human testimony; he must either have denied, as the Pharisees had done, that the man had been born blind; but here were his parents



and neighbours, as well as the man himself, unanimous in the fact of his native blindness; or he must have denied that the man could now see; but this would be to contradict his senses, and become ridiculous to every person present.

Try every part of this narrative, where is there a flaw? why then do we not believe the miracle, and admit its consequences?

But these Pharisees have yet one further expedient which they will adopt, and which unbelievers generally resort to, when overpowered with truth, that is to silence its advocates by angry resentment and invectives. In this instance we have as fair a victory as truth ever obtained; but these men knowingly opposed the truth and therefore were determined to yield to no evidence; their only remaining mode of escape, was to raise a quarrel, that they might cover their retreat.

After twice interrogating him, and then refusing to believe him, they had called his parents; again they insolently demand of him the truth, as if he had dishonoured God by falsehoods in his former answers; and now that they may entrap or insult him, they require him to tell the same things all over again. The poor man who had been the subject of the miracle, harassed by their questions, fatigued by the lengthy examination and variety of answers, and discerning that he could never, by speaking the truth, satisfy men who were inimical to it, he ventures to refuse to renew his labours, and go over the same ground again, "*I have told you already, and ye did not hear, wherefore would ye hear it again.*" He then insinuates the inveteracy of their preju-

dices, and their disposition to pervert his evidence, by asking if they would seriously be convinced, and become the disciples of Jesus.

They resent this answer, profess their adherence to Moses, and their ignorance of Jesus. "We know not whence he is."

They upbraided him with being born in sin, because born blind, and excommunicated him because he adhered to the truth.

Thus has it frequently happened that ecclesiastical censures, and separations from church privileges, have subserved the angry passions of men, who regarding their own honour more than truth, and the glory of God, have made them engines of oppression for the destruction of the peace of the followers of Christ. But truth gained the victory. The man had been born blind, he had been brought to the satisfactory enjoyment of vision, and this had been most undeniably accomplished by the power of Jesus Christ.

Here was a miracle examined, at the same time, and place where it happened; the subject of it brought by the common people, to the council of the Jews, who try, and sift the evidence in every way they could devise; but the truth comes forth only the better refined. If this miracle is not established by such an investigation, we despair of establishing any truth.

## LECTURE III.

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LUKE, CHAPTER X, VERSE 25 TO 37.

AND, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, a certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*, and went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that

fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

WHILST our Lord was discoursing with his seventy disciples, a croud collected around him. amongst these a scribe, or doctor, whose business it was to teach the law of Moses, assuming a conspicuous attitude, impudently undertook to try or question him as to his knowledge. He calls Christ master or teacher, a title which his appearance, years, and standing generally procured him. If he had been less, the competition would have been thought by this man, who was such himself, unworthy of him; the disgrace of being foiled, if it could happen, greater; and the honour which he hoped to gain by vanquishing him, would have been not worth the trouble. “*Master,*” you have been congratulating your disciples upon the advantages of your instructions, and because their names are written in heaven, “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*”

How natural is it for a man to lean to his own arm, to imagine that he can pay the price, and restore himself to the favour of his offended God by his own efforts. The question proposed by the scribe is not, can I be saved by doing? On this point he leaves no alternative. The inquiry is confined to the nature and manner of the obedience which would save. This was the subject, which was the burden of his publick instructions, and upon which he could with great confidence dispute in the presence of the people. Yet how often are we ignorant about the very things which

we think we understand the best. Thus was this insolent boaster ignorant of the extent of the very law it was his occupation to teach, and he neither possessed the knowledge of the imperfection of human obedience, nor of the way of salvation.

It was with the greatest propriety that Jesus in answer asked him for the import or substance of the law, for he thereby virtually said that the law contained the rule of duty, showed his approbation of it, its consistency with the gospel, and at the same time directed the attention of the scribe to that which might detect his guilt, discover his impotency, and lead him to seek salvation in the way of God's appointment.

The question proposed by this self-conceited teacher of the law, was without a view to the gaining information; but to triumph over the Redeemer as inferiour in knowledge; the meek and lowly Jesus, though perfectly acquainted with the evil motives of the man, yet returns good for evil, by asking the scribe a question by which he might convey to him instruction. "*What is written in the law? how readest thou?*"

The scribe answers. "*thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.*" This was the preface unto, and summary of the ten commandments, and that which the scribe was accustomed to read in the Jewish service, and was therefore the proper answer to the Saviour's question.

Jesus replied, "*thou hast answered right. this do, and thou shalt live.*" You have asked me

what you shall do to inherit eternal life, and the answer you have given from the law is my answer. "This do," was spoken imperatively; not, if thou hast done these things thou shalt live; he excludes every supposition that the scribe had performed them, and plainly supposes his delinquency. His language imports that such perfect obedience is impracticable to him. Who can render it? We are to love the Lord as such, because of his own excellency, who is perfect. But who can conceive of, or love him as his loveliness merits? We are to love him as our God, the author of all our blessings, and as ours in covenant. But who is not chargeable with ingratitude? And who, except a believer can love him as his God? and even then as he should do. We are to love him with all the heart. But where's the man whose affection is undividedly for his Maker? Where is the love for creatures, which respects them only as such, and ever recurs to the Creator, who imparts to them whatever they possess, which is lovely? The faculties of the soul, and powers of the body, are all to be subservient unto this ruling affection, and particularly the understanding should be chiefly occupied in the contemplation of his amiableness, and the beauties of his holiness. But where is the man, who whilst on earth, is so wholly given up to the employment of heaven?

We pretend not that the Scribe took instantly such a survey of the law, but he felt so forcibly the retortion of the Saviour, and the force of his question, that he durst not say with the simple young ruler, "all these things have I kept from

my youth," nor venture to allege with Saul, "that he had lived in all good conscience before God until that day." He had been probably less conscientious, and was the more afraid of detection. He had impudently attacked the Redeemer in hopes of obtaining a victory; but the issue is now joined upon the life and character of the assailant, a most embarrassing condition, and a merited correction of his insolence.

There was, nevertheless, mercy in this chastisement, the scribe is fairly put to the test, and required to make the attempt to be justified by the law. If he, or any person who heard it, would have made the experiment, by the divine blessing they might have discovered the vanity of the hope of being justified by an imperfect righteousness before the bar of a God of perfect justice.

The law, as a school-master, corrects and leads us to seek mercy in the way of God's appointment, and becomes the lovely pattern, to the saint, of that holiness which he delights in, and ever aspires after; but if he sees, and uses it correctly, he will adopt the language of Paul, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto Christ."

The scribe avoids the close and searching inquiry which was now commenced upon his own conduct, and wishing to justify or make himself appear righteous, shuns the question of the practicability of keeping the law, by inquiring who was meant by the word *neighbour*, in the law; "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" How pitiful the subterfuge, and how ri-

diculous must he have appeared in the eyes of every sensible bystander.

But he was less, if possible, successful in his second, than in his first inquiry; he held the words of the law correctly, but neither knew them spiritually, nor experimentally. The words brother and neighbour, the Pharisees seem to have confined to import only those of their own blood, religion, or nation, and so to exclude strangers from their love and beneficence; whereas these words are used with a contrary view, not to exclude strangers, but to lead us to consider even strangers as our brethren, and neighbours, where they need our help; for when we do acts of kindness, we should possess correspondent affection.

The Jewish sentiment was, "thou shalt love thy friend, and hate thine enemy;" but the gospel rule is, thou shalt "love thine enemies." To preserve them from idolatry, the Jews were prevented from familiar intercourse with others; but it was not intended that they should not commiserate their distresses. He who loves others as the creatures of God, can even love his enemy. To see the beauty of this parable, we should keep its design in view, which was to show that the Pharisaic interpretation of the word neighbour, was not the true one, but that all men should be esteemed our brethren and neighbours, where we can relieve their distresses.

If Christ had attempted to prove this to be the sense of the word neighbour, by moral principles, and abstract reasoning, this caviller would have found something to say in answer; but when he describes a suffering Israelite, lying in a publick



road, robbed, wounded, and apparently near his end, and yet despised and neglected by those of his own nation who passed by, and even by those who should have set an example of compassion and love; when he describes a stranger, one esteemed the natural enemy of the helpless person, a Samaritan, forgetting all national and religious distinctions, and giving full scope to that sympathy which the God of nature had implanted in his breast for the good of the human kind, as pitying him, washing, dressing his wounds, and taking up, and carrying him to an inn, staying with him all night, and even engaging to pay an Israelitish landlord for all future charges which should be incurred by the landlord's suffering brother; What could the scribe reply? Shame would have forbidden him to censure the conduct of the Samaritan; yet he was no brother, no neighbour, doing no duty, nothing praise worthy, if the scribe's interpretation of the word neighbour was the true one. By making the Jew the sufferer; his brethren of Israel, the uncharitable persons; and a Samaritan sinful idolater perform the good office; this contracted Pharisee is overpowered, the feelings of his heart were caught, and even contrary to his own maxims, when asked who was the neighbour of the sufferer? he is obliged to call the Samaritan the neighbour, and to admit that the priest and Levite were not such, either in the eye of God or men.

Never was a man more handsomely conquered, and silenced than this self-conceited scribe, who had thought by his knowledge of the law, to have gained a triumph over the Redeemer;

but Jesus awakens the feelings of his heart, and makes use of these to overcome the prejudices of his understanding.

Christ did not inculcate a conduct he was unwilling to conform to himself; his enemies reviled him as a Samaritan; he has acted the part of this Samaritan, though he did not intend this parable as a picture of himself. We are all travellers through this wilderness, we have been assailed, wounded, and slain by robbers, sin and satan; the law, like the priest and Levite, has no compassion but leaves us weltering in our blood. Christ espied us in this situation, and though we hated, and despised him, and esteemed him our enemy, he flew to our relief, when we were in our sins, and in our blood, he said to us live; he has dressed our wounds, and poured into them the oil and wine of spiritual consolation; he has paid the price for us; shall we not love him who has done so much for us? And if we do, we shall love our brother, our fellow men also.

## LECTURE IV.

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LUKE, CHAPTER VII, VERSE 36 TO 50.

AND one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him ; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house. thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but

this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.

THOUGH there be some uncertainty as to the city in which this occurrence obtained, it seems more than probable that if it was not Capernaum, it must have been some other city of Galilee ; but if we waive the difference of the places, there are so many differences between the circumstances here narrated, and those of the supper at which Lazarus was present, that there is no reason for concluding that the same transactions are referred to in the different accounts.

Simon, the Pharisee, who invited Jesus to dine with him, seems not to have been so openly inimical to Jesus as many of his sect were. He had some regard for him as a teacher, and perhaps as a prophet, and we suppose invited him to his house with a view to obtain a better acquaintance with him.

Jesus accepted the offer, that he might do good, and set an example of civility ; with such expectations we may venture to follow his example, and pursue a like conduct ; but should always remember that we are liable to dangers from mixing with the avowed enemies of the gospel, to which he was not subjected.

The name of this heart-broken female is nowhere given us ; it may have been concealed

from motives of humanity. The conjecture that it was Mary Magdalene is improbable, and that it should have been Mary the sister of Lazarus, we suppose altogether unworthy of credit.

Her particular crimes are not mentioned, she is called in the general, a sinner; and what descendant of Adam has not merited this epithet? Her following Jesus to the Pharisee's house in such affliction, indicates that she had been convicted under the teaching of Christ, whose discourse had been set home upon her conscience by the divine Spirit.

Her sorrows induced her to follow him, even to the Pharisee's house, a most unsuitable place for a penitent to appear in, especially when seeking an interview with the despised Jesus. But when he has wounded, to him application should be for the cure; and the soul, which he has afflicted, will seek its comfort from him, and will follow him whithersoever he goes. This was her voluntary act, and yet no doubt divinely directed for the advantage or condemnation of the Pharisee, and his companions.

Not a word does this disconsolate woman utter. She comes into the house, into the room where they were dining, places herself behind Jesus; accounting herself unworthy to speak to him, she was afraid to go away in her unpardoned state, and afraid to sue for pardon. She had heard him probably, in some discourse, denounce her guilt and her doom, she had heard him, we presume, offer his gracious invitations of mercy. But why do her sorrows appear to be greatest, when in the presence of him who could give her relief? This is

not uncommon, silent sorrows will prey upon the vitals, and destroy the life, whilst not a tear can issue; but when a comforter approaches, or a ray of hope breaks into the mind, the bitterness of the heart vents itself in lamentations and tears. A sense of unworthiness puts her hand upon her mouth; but nothing can express the bursts of sorrow where heaven-daring guilt, and obstinacy are seen to have been overwhelmed by free, and abounding mercy.

According to the custom of the Jews in that day, as well as of others, Jesus reclined when he ate, his feet were upon the couch behind him, and his sandals were off as was usual. She was standing behind him at his feet, and it is probable, before she noticed it, her tears had, as the word literally expresses, rained upon his feet; discovering it, she stooped, or kneeled down, and out of love to her Redeemer upon whom all her hopes were placed, she carefully wiped off the tears from his feet with her hair, and kissed the feet which she seemed to have dishonoured. Whether she had brought the precious ointment to anoint his head, and had not courage to do it, or whether she had had it for other purposes, we know not, but she thought it not too good to be expended upon his feet, which she had possibly unintentionally, wetted with her tears.

But how was this scene understood by the Pharisee? The pride of that sect, on account of their hypocritical strictness, was not greater than their censoriousness, and contempt for others. Though guilty themselves of the greatest crimes, they must not touch any person or thing that was

in their estimation unclean, lest they should be defiled. If their boasting, and high pretensions to holiness were to be received as evidence of their holiness, penitential confessions would be only in their eyes proof of guilt. The sorrow of this dejected mourning penitent, in the account of this Pharisee was no symptom of grace, but a proof incontestable of her being worse than others.

For her to touch Jesus, in his view, would be to defile him, if he were holy; and a thing to which he ought not to submit, if he knew it. He had been doubtful whether Jesus was not a prophet; it does not appear that he had the least apprehensions that he was the Christ. But now allowing Jesus to be a holy man, he determines him to be no prophet, or he would have known this woman's character, and prohibited her to have touched him.

Jesus knew his thoughts; but what must be done? To have exposed them to the guests, would have given great offence. If he had asked Simon directly whether the woman was as good a person as he was, or in other words whether she had as great a respect for him, or love to God, the question would have created disagreeable sensations, and have received an unjust solution.

Yet in truth this daughter of affliction was in a better state than the Pharisee, and Jesus will, by asking an answer to a parable, make him give judgment against himself. According to the custom of those days at feasts, he first asked his host permission to speak. This was granted with

the complimentary title of Teacher, Sir, or "*Master, say on.*"

There were two debtors bound, the one in ten times as much as the other to the same creditor, who might have afflicted each of them, they being unable to pay him; but he compassionately exonerated both; which of the debtors will think himself most obliged, be most grateful, and affectionate, supposing them of similarly constituted and instructed minds?

The Pharisee who had already concluded that Jesus was no prophet, and consequently did not imagine that he knew his thoughts, and probably did not suspect that the question had the least reference to the woman, without hesitation gave what appeared to him the solution of an easy question. His opinion was, that the debtor who had received a favour ten times greater than the other, would feel the strongest obligations to gratitude.

Jesus pointed him to the woman, that he might apply his answer to her case. You esteem her the greater sinner, yourself a righteous person, you suppose for your sacrifices, your debt to divine justice has been paid, and I declare that her numerous sins are also forgiven; then by the rule adopted in your answer, she must love most. Her conduct which appears to you to be offensive, is but the effect of, and so proves her greater love.

The conclusion was undeniable, he proceeds to alleviate her embarrassment, by justifying her acts of kindness to him.



The several ancient customs of washing the feet of guests, of kissing in salutation, and even of the feet in homage, and of anointing the heads of guests with oil, have often been, and may at any time be easily shown by the scriptures, by ancient writers, and some of them by eastern usage to this day. This Pharisee had known them, or they would not have been mentioned as omitted by him. They had been neglected, probably, lest offence should have been given to the people of his own sect. The seeming harshness of the suggestion that it was *his* duty, would not be felt when custom imposed it upon the host himself, and not upon his servants. The omission of those ceremonies could have given no offence to the humble Jesus, but deserved reprehension, as it proceeded from pride and unbelief; yet it is probable that this was less the design of the Saviour, than to put a good construction upon those actions of the woman, which were offensive to the company.

It is not wherefore her sins which are many are forgiven; "*but wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven.*" Wherefore I have evidence, sufficient to say that her sins are forgiven. The evidence you have given of your love, or regard for me in inviting me to dine with you, is little in comparison of the proofs of her love to her Saviour. You are righteous in your own eyes, seem to yourself to have little need of pardon, and so love but little; but her sense of guilt, and need of forgiveness is very great, her sorrows are therefore

great, and her pardon being so much more important in her view, is accompanied by higher affection.

Jesus is here speaking, rather of the evidence of their love respectively, than of it, as it was in fact; for it is not clear that Simon had a real love for the Saviour.

Jesus had spoken to the company of the remission of her numerous sins; but he chose to give her comfort by speaking directly to her, and declaring that her crimes were forgiven. Her joy must have been proportioned to her former sorrows. He that wounded, healed; and no other can administer real comfort, where he afflicts.

To the unbeliever, every thing becomes a stumbling-block. These Pharisees were offended that Jesus should suffer a sinner to approach, and touch him, though this was their own real character. They were thus induced to question his purity, and deny his prophetic office. But when he pronounced her a pardoned woman, this seemed to them to be the highest presumption in arrogating the unalienable prerogative of God himself.

For the sake both of the company, and of the woman, we presume it was, that in dismissing her, he declared the way of salvation. "*Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.*" It is not by virtue of any authority as a man, that I declare your sins are pardoned; but your faith in me as Messiah, and Redeemer, has been the instrumental cause of union to me, and the evidence of your interest in my sacrifice, and so of your salvation. You are in a state of peace with God.

Happy the man whose sorrows are thus turned into joy, whose conscience, being disburdened of its guilt, by flying to Jesus, he can claim an interest in him, whilst a peace which passes all understanding of the ungodly, calms the troubled and agitated soul, and the believer freed from disquieting fears, stays himself upon his God.

# LECTURE V.

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MATTHEW, CHAPTER XXV, VERSE 13 TO 30.

**WATCH** therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. For *the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several abilities; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler of many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard*

man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed : and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo, *there* thou hast *that* is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed : thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance : but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

THE Redeemer had, in the preceding chapter, among other things informed his disciples of the approaching judgment ; and because there is no preparation in the grave, he represents in the parable of the virgins, the surprise of those who shall be found destitute of true grace at the appearance of Christ, and counsels them to be provided for his advent. Their own interest is pressed in that parable as a motive ; the neglect of it is termed folly. In this parable they are exhorted, not merely to preparation from motives of interest ; but to perform the work respectively assigned them for the glory of God, upon the pain of punishment for negligence.

This parable was not designed particularly to teach us the necessity of special grace, but to excite us as voluntary, and accountable beings, to exert ourselves in the service of God. The King in the parable furnished natural means, and rewarded, or punished the industry, or indolence and contumacy of his servants, evidenced by

their conduct in improving, or neglecting their advantages for doing good.

The Master who was about to travel to a far country, was Christ\* who was shortly to ascend into Heaven. This was calculated to correct their mistaken notions of a temporal kingdom, but the disciples still entertained such sentiments.

The servants to whom he entrusted his goods, were in the first instance his disciples, to whom he was directing himself; but such are also all others to whom he has given the means of instructing others, or of doing good. They are "*his own servants,*" whether they will acknowledge his divine right, and authority, or not. He has made them for his own glory, their good is coincident, but subordinate. That the subjects of special grace are not here exclusively intended is plain, because he who had been possessed of the one talent was wicked and condemned. That the goods or talents committed to their care were not saving grace or the sanctifying operations of God's Holy Spirit, appears from several considerations. Such grace would not have lain inoperative, and hidden, nor would it have been taken away, for it is a gift "without repentance." By the nature and force of the parable, no improvement could be required but in proportion to the talent; and consequently if no talent had been given, no improvement would have been demanded, which is true, only with respect to physical powers and advantages; to be without

\* The 13th and 31st verses show the words "the Son of man" should be here supplied, instead of "the kingdom of Heaven," and also the sense requires it.

faith, love, and holy dispositions which proceed from the sanctification of our natures, is guilt; and no man can excuse himself, because grace is not given, otherwise it is not grace. If grace were supposed a talent here intended, it could not be known to be possessed but by its improvement, and the condemnation for misimprovement would have been improper, unless the party knew he had had the talent.

The King could not even give natural internal powers, and therefore the talents are distinguished from these, where he is said to have given to every one according to his several "*ability.*" Nor could it have been intended to have discriminated between natural endowments, and grace, because both are equally the gifts of God. The talents probably, therefore, signify various external advantages for the promotion of the declarative glory of God, and doing good to the souls of men; these he entrusts to different men whether they will exercise them or not, and often according to their capacities, that is he has previously bestowed the natural ability which qualifies the party to do the good, and then intrusts him with proportional advantages for it.

The gains made by the talents which were used, signify the advantages which the cause of Christ derives by the efforts of his faithful servants. Though he is not really profited by what we do; but we are advantaged by the good which he enables us to perform, yet so in mercy he accounts it, and gives us the rewards of favour. The reason that he who had but one talent is represented as the slothful servant, is perhaps to

intimate that God is not disappointed by the slothfulness of his servants, who are circumscribed in the powers of doing evil; but accomplishes what he intends, by means that will not fail him, and in the day of final accounts, the purposes of God will appear to have been effectuated by the good and evil actions of men who are to answer for their intentions, and conduct.

The Master came after "*a long time.*" Some of the early christians ran into the error of supposing the coming of Christ to judgment was then near at hand; but they had little reason for this sentiment from this passage. And it is a great mistake to imagine Paul thus erred, because he said, "we who are alive shall be changed;" for he uses the first person to distinguish believers who should be alive, and be changed after the dead in Christ should arise, and in his next letter to the Thessalonians, advises them not to be troubled, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

He came and "*reckoned with his servants.*" Christ will come and bring his servants to his bar, the disobedient as well as the obedient. The righteousness of the righteous shall be rewarded, for it is sufficient to justify them before men, and they have been already justified in the purposes of God for the sake of the righteousness of Christ.

That day has been appointed to clear up the divine dispensations, and reveal the wisdom, power, mercy, and justice of God in the conduct of his providence in every age, which has necessarily appeared dark and interrupted, because of our limited prospects; our ignorance has ever



been necessary to prevent, in many instances, a derangement of the course appointed. These purposes of the final judgment demonstrate that it cannot begin, till the matters which are to be reviewed have been brought to a close. It is to take place for the satisfaction of intelligent creatures, and consequently in such judgment, men may be justified or condemned by their works. Those whose names are found in the book of life, and who shall be saved by grace, will be found though in many things defective, to be justified in comparison with others, in the sight of men and angels by their works.

Perfect justice will be administered; the improvement of five or even of ten talents will not be required of him who had been intrusted only with one. And as God has a sovereign right to bestow what number of talents he chooses, so he has a right to call him who gained but two talents into the possession of those joys into which he had invited him who had gained five. Yet there may be and no doubt are different degrees of glory in the same heaven without either injustice or discontent. And it is some consolation that we shall be rewarded according to our faithfulness, and not according to our success.

“*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,*” either this refers to the rejoicing which might have obtained because of the Master’s return, and which would well answer to the exultation of the saints at the last day, or as it follows the judgment of approbation it may be expressive of the happiness of the heavenly state, and then it fixes the sense

of the parable by leading the leader to the thing intended in the picture.

There was no foundation for the excuse of the slothful servant, for he had had a talent committed to him ; if there had been no talent confided, no improvement could have been demanded ; thus this parable reproves such as complain that faith is required without evidence, holiness without grace, love for that which does not please, and joy where there is occasion only for sorrow ; in these instances the defect lies in the blindness and prejudices of the carnal mind.

He was informed that if he would not be active himself, he should have furnished others with the means he possessed, that the talent might have been productive.

This man did not waste his talent, he returned it safely, but was guilty because being a servant he had robbed, by his indolence, his master of services which were his just right ; his apology which was a false accusation of his master, was undeniable evidence of his malignity and wickedness.

This man had not the privilege of enjoying his master's feast, but was excluded in darkness, which represents the hopeless despair of those who are condemned in the final judgment.

If negligence discovers so much guilt, and merits such punishment, what shall become of those who waste or purloin their master's goods ? We are all creatures, and the servants of another, we have all received talents, or a talent at least, and must all sooner or later render our accounts respectively. One has received a pious education,

or a learned one, and is able to search for truth ; another has influence ; another riches ; many have the care of families ; all have the talent of publick worship intrusted to them, or the light of nature. What improvement have we made ? Are we ready for the reckoning ? Suppose the master to have already come, could we say, we have gained other five or two talents, or should we have need to offer an excuse ? What apology could we render ? It is no defence that the master has come too soon, he is just, he will require only the work suited to the time he has given us, whether he calls for us in youth, maturity, or old age ; and this he has a right to do, for all our time is his.

Shall we be found to have buried our talent in the earth ? Or have we been worse than slothful ? have we claimed as our own his goods, the advantages God has given us for his glory ? Have we refused to acknowledge our tenure from him, used them for ourselves, or consumed his goods upon our sensual appetites ?

O to be found faithful, and to receive the approbation “ Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joys of your Lord.”

# LECTURE VI.

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MATTHEW XII, VERSE 1 TO 9, AND 18 TO 23.

THE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them. but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of

riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that receiveth seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it ; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

**THERE** being a great multitude of people collected on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret, Jesus went into a small boat, from whence he might be seen and heard ; and because he usually commenced his discourses by observing upon, and improving some present occurrence, we suppose the circumstances attending his preparing to address the crowd called up to his mind the work of preaching, and the different effects of the gospel upon the different minds of men. He chose to express himself in a most striking allegory, a parable nicely adapted to convey instructions the most important.

A sower went forth to sow. Through the field upon which he designed to cast his seed, there passed a publick road, beaten hard by the feet of men and beasts. Another portion of the field was a thin soil, covering an extended and solid rock ; a portion also of the ground was crowded with thorns, and a remnant of it was good. When the sower cast the seed, part of it fell by the side of the road upon hard ground, remained uncovered, and was taken away by the birds. Some part of it fell on the thin soil which covered the rocks,\* and being warmed by the reflected heat and nourished by moisture which would not subside, grew up speedily, but perish-

\* Επὶ τὰ πετρώδη.

ed, both because the thin soil was soon deprived of its moisture, and because there was not space for the roots. Some fell among thorns, which sprang up and choked it, and some fell upon ground freed from all these disadvantages, and produced abundantly.

But how should the multitude understand a parable, of the meaning of which even his disciples were ignorant? He had already displayed before them the most surprising miracles, yet they denied his divine power; he had spoken as never man spoke, but they had denied his doctrines, they hated holiness and loved sin; the important truths of the gospel were therefore clothed in allegory, and involved in mystery; and they were justly left to their natural obduracy.

The disciples ask for the meaning, which would not have been denied to any candid inquirer: but it was the more proper that they should be instructed in its import, because it contained a just representation of the future effects of their preaching upon men.

The sower is the preacher of the gospel, as Christ then was; the field is the world; the different soils are the different minds of men, and the seed is the word of the gospel. The parable represents the access of the word to four kinds of hearers, by grain sown on the way side, on the stony ground (or the rock covered with thin soil) on the thorny, and on the good ground; and accordingly we see that some receive no impression; others receive the word, but retain it only a short time, a third sort receive and preserve what they hear, but it is mixed with the cares of life, and a

choked, and a fourth receive, nourish, and produce fruit to the glory of God.

In the parable of the talents, the approbation or condemnation of the servants depended upon their activity or indolence respectively; but in this parable the success of the word is represented as depending upon the nature of the soil, the disposition of the heart of the hearer. Each representation is useful, it is vain to expect the final approbation for our holiness, or to imagine we have an interest in Christ, if we neglect to improve the talents committed to us, or refuse to do what our Divine Master has commanded; so also is it useless to expect that we shall produce any fruit to the glory of God, unless the heart is corrected and softened by divine grace.

The word is fitly denominated seed, because of the multitude of things it brings before the mind, the glorious nature and perfections of God, the character and offices of Christ, the nature of holiness and sin, immortality and happiness, and the means of attaining it, and because remaining in the heart, it produces fruit in the life and deportment. He who dispenses the word may be fitly represented as a sower. To preach is to scatter the word, which produces fruit to the glory of God, but only when the Lord opens the heart to receive it, when he has prepared the soil and made it good, when it is not hard as the beaten road, when it lies not over a barren rock, nor is crowded with them, but is softened by grace, and rendered capable of culture.

Christ has explained the way-side hearer to

mean one who, though he hears, does not understand the word, or does not attend to or regard it; he does not reflect upon, nor treasure it in his mind, but allows it to escape, as the way-side is hard, and receives not the grain which is cast upon it, but leaves it exposed to the fowls of the air

There may be causes which have conduced to render the ground hard. *The way-side had undergone no cultivation*, and being hard, the seed could make no impression; the minds of men should be cultivated in infancy: if they have not been taught to reflect; if no pains have been taken to soften their natural obduracy; if they have been accustomed to neglect the word, or if, when they have attended sermons, they have always left the subject at the church, never to be again called up to remembrance, such want of culture will render their minds impenetrable to the gospel seed, which must and will be lost upon them. *The way-side had been often beaten by the foot of the traveller*, and therefore was too hard to receive any impression from the seed. When the minds of men have been oppressed with the business of this life, and their memories charged with every knowledge except that of religion; when their affections have been wrought upon by every imaginary scene that art could contrive, and they are now rendered wholly insensible to every motive and argument presented from the sacred desk, the word has no effect, but lies exposed upon the surface of the memory, liable to be removed and erased by any the next occurrence which obtains,



Seed is sown by the way-side, when the gospel is preached to inattentive hearers, who regard not the word. How few of us can satisfy our consciences that we belong not to this class! we collect together often without purposing to improve by that which we may hear: we attend to the language, the manner of the speaker, and to the appearances of those around us; we rarely reflect that our everlasting happiness may depend upon this foolishness of preaching, or, if our apprehensions should be excited, we act like the man who beheld his face in the glass, and immediately went away and forgot what manner of person he was.

The seed of the word which may remain upon the surface of the mind, after it has been sown upon it, is liable to be taken away by a variety of birds. Satan the master magician sits behind the scenes, and, though unseen, his hand moves the wires: he can raise storms in the elements, angry passions, idle visitants, frothy conversation, or sabbath amusements, and thus efface every thought, can pick up every seed, and leave the mind even more naked and insensible than before.

The second class of hearers is described under the figure of rocky ground, a thin soil covering a rock. This soil received the seed favourably, but could not bring it to perfection, because the rock would not receive the roots, and denied nourishment when the scorching rays fell upon it.

How many hearers, whose hearts are as hard as the rocks here described, receive the seed of

the word with joy. It appears to them conducive to their happiness, as this is the object of their pursuit, they seize the offers of salvation, and think to obtain the prize whilst their hearts of flint are insensible to holiness; such appear at first to promise well, but they cannot produce fruit; the seed is afforded no room in their hearts to expand its roots, and must wither as soon as the scorching rays of persecution, or the drying winds of temptation, fall upon the tender plant.

Such professors do great prejudice to the cause of Christ in the world: they acknowledge the name, adopt the profession, and run well for a season; but the heart of stone has not been changed to flesh; they fall into sin, and it is impossible for men to renew them again unto repentance, for we have no other gospel motives to lay before them than those they may have heard; but if they should renew their profession, and often receive the seed of the word, it would be to no purpose whilst the heart of stone remains. This rock lies concealed from the human eye. Such hearers bear the aspect of incipient christians, and then fall away and bring dishonour on the profession; but though they go out from us, they are not of us; for if they were of us, they would no doubt continue with us; but when they go out from us, it is that they may be made manifest that they are not all of us.

It has pleased the Great Head of the church to give peace to Zion, although the potsherds of the earth are striving together, religion is nowhere in christendom persecuted as such; it is therefore extremely possible that men may in our

peaceful days assume the garb of religion, and their empty profession may remain unscorched by the rays of persecution ; but when the harvest shall arrive no fruits will appear.....Suppose the fires of persecution were rekindled, could we endure their scorching heat? If we could not, then shall we be found in the end destitute of fruit.

Afflictive providences, of whatsoever kind, generally take the side of religion, and co-operate with the word, and men of obdurate hearts often seem softened by them ; but as soon as the pressure is removed, they return to their former state. Such were the repentances of Israel and Judah. “ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?” “ Shall I destroy or spare? when I punish, you repent, when I take off the rod, you return to your follies, your righteousness is as the morning cloud and early dew, that pass away.”

The third class of hearers, whom Christ represented as ground which received the seed among thorns, which grew up and choked it, he has interpreted to signify such as hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches prevent its growth and production of fruit.

How great is the proportion of professing christians, who pursue the world as their chief portion, the highest stake ! whose worldly cares or desires are so numerous and strong, as that their good intentions and convictions are smothered ; they enjoy the means of grace, and have the strivings of God’s Spirit ; but though they are not ignorant that God is pleading with them

by his mercies and warnings, and have strong desires to become more holy, yet do they love the world more than God; they pay their first homage to idols, though they neglect not the worship of the sanctuary. They receive and seem to cherish good impressions; they love and serve God, but they love and serve the world more; the thorns choke the good seed. How pitiable to be not far from the kingdom, and yet to miss it? Mercies aggravate guilt; and if so, their condemnation may justly be apprehended to be tenfold.

The blessings of God ought not to be spurned: they should be received with thankfulness; but they are at best only evidences of his love, often aggravations of our guilt, and therefore of far less value than an interest in his favour. These things are by such acknowledged in theory, but in theory only, in practice they deny them. But the language of scripture requires decision: "choose you this day whom you will serve; if the Lord be God, worship him, if Baal be God, worship him."

There is a fourth class of hearers described as good ground, which received the seed, and bore fruit abundantly. It affords matter for thankfulness, that the sower does not wholly spend his strength for nought; that there are those who receive and understand the word, and cherish its impressions, and bring forth fruit to the glory of God. The produce was unequal, even in the seeds which fell in good places: some grains produced an *hundred-fold*, whilst others produced nothing, so that the field upon the whole might have returned such a crop as was expected.

Every good comes from God : he prepares the ground, the heart, by his grace ; the glory of the fruit is his ; yet in a surprising manner without destroying our liberty, duty, or accountableness. We are to endeavour to receive and understand the word, to pray for help, to break up this rocky ground, or turn the flint to flesh, and must incessantly cultivate the soil, and remove the thorns and cares which would choke the word.

If there were not a fourth class of hearers, if no part of the field would produce fruit, who would be willing to sow ? But the least fruit is of incalculable value ; we ought therefore in the morning to sow the seed, and in the evening to withhold not our hand, since we know not which may prosper and produce fruit to the glory of God.

# LECTURE VII.



MARK X, 17 TO 24.

**AND** when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.* Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest : go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved : for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God !

**THERE** are several things which recommend this person : his youth, riches, and power, would make friends for him in the world ; his

virtue, his early solicitude about eternal life, his anxiety, for he ran to the Redeemer, his humble attitude, which was kneeling, and especially his frank ingenuous abruptness, spoke the goodness of his heart, and all show that his inducement could not have been an idle curiosity.

His error was the common one of a legal spirit; he must inherit eternal life by doing. "*Good Master what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?*" He does not ask whether he can be saved by doing; he assumes that as an undeniable point, and only inquires *what* he shall do.

It was important that before the Redeemer should answer his question, he should endeavour to correct his error. He had called Christ "*Good Master,*" accounting him but a mere man, perhaps at most a master or teacher sent from God; the Redeemer therefore avails himself of this expression by denying the epithet "*good,*" to show the young man that by doing he could not be made "*good,*" or so perfect that he should deserve to enjoy eternal life. You've called me good, and yet suppose I am only a man; if I am a fallen man, as you imagine me to be, I am not good, nor is any being good in the strict sense of the term, but God only.

"*But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*"\* Though neither you nor any other fallen man can be perfectly good, yet if you will "*inherit eternal life,*" of which you seem desirous, you must be holy, or conformed to the obedience required by the law; but if you will be saved

\* Matt. xix, 17.

by your own merits, try the experiment, and you may discover the impossibility of obtaining eternal life by the performance of the condition of keeping the law; yet if your obedience to the law be a spiritual obedience, you shall enter into eternal life or happiness. He that doth what is lawful and right from proper principles, and to a proper end, possessing a renewed mind, will save his soul alive; for such sanctified obedience is the best evidence of a state of justification before God.

If it be asked, why did Christ recommend doing the duties of the law? it may be answered, that the question required such direction. It was proper to show this legal man his inability to render a perfect obedience, by directing him to the experiment, that the law might become a schoolmaster to lead him to Christ. The answer was also proper, because every believer should test his faith and love by his obedience.

If it be said that this recommendation is a proof that we may be justified for our doing; we answer, that Christ upon that supposition would not have prefaced this direction by saying that no one is good but God. The duties here prescribed are only those we owe to men, the duties to God are here wholly omitted, and the Redeemer surely, upon the supposition that we may be justified by works, would not have told him he should enter into life, without performing any of the duties he owed to God. Nor would Christ have suffered him to go away in sorrow, who had walked so correctly from his youth.

Nothing can more plainly show the blindness



of this young man, than his answer that he had performed the law from his childhood. This construction of the law was that of the Jewish teacher. He sufficiently explained his introductory question, when he asserted that he had observed all that the law of Moses required, and asked for some further law, if Christ as a teacher could prescribe any that was yet necessary to be performed: "*All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*"\*

Like Saul of Tarsus he was "alive without the law." And Christ pointed him to it, that it might come home to his conscience, when he should go again and try to keep it, paying due attention to the hint he had received, that none was good but God. How dark was his prejudiced mind! he did not understand Jesus; he thought him directing only to that which he had already done from his early youth.

The kind and mild Redeemer pitied his blindness, and loved his sincerity; he therefore made another effort to show him that the principle from whence his obedience flowed would not stand the test. But the truth in this second attempt shines so bright, that it dazzles, confounds, and drives him back to his idols.

"*One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.*" Why was this commanded? Is every rich man bound to sell all he has, and give the proceeds to the poor? This is Christ who speaks; he knew the heart;

\* Matt. xix, 20.

if this man would have done it, perhaps it would not have been commanded; and yet a community of goods seems to have been soon afterwards required by the exigency of those times of persecution.

Christ knew that he was rich, that he loved riches more than God, and though he earnestly desired eternal life, he loved the present life still more. The young man thought his obedience perfect, and did not know his own heart. But if he had gone away and reflected upon this criterion of his love to God, he might with the blessing of grace have discovered that no portion of his obedience had been that of the heart, and so have found that he could not inherit eternal life by doing. God has formed us, and bestowed upon us every blessing, and is himself infinitely more excellent than all his works; he is entitled to our highest affection therefore, because he is the most worthy object, and because we owe him ourselves; the alienated heart of apostate man naturally inclines to creature objects; and whilst thus addicted to idolatry, man cannot perform the law of God; for an exterior of obedience where a supreme love of God is absent is but hypocrisy; and any test which will show our preference of any of the creatures to the Creator, will discover the vanity of our religious professions.

“*He went away sorrowful,*” because he must either give up earth or heaven. And who is not sorry that reads of his departure from Christ, the only Saviour? His virtue, his strict observance of the commands, his anxiety for eternal life, in a young rich ruler, show that nature

had done much for him, but he loved the world more than God, and was at last but an idolater.

He that loves father or mother, son or daughter, or his own life, more than God, is not worthy of him. Are you young? so was he....rich? so was he....honourable? so was he....virtuous? such was he. Do you believe in a future state? so did he. Do you live conscientiously? so did he; but one thing he lacked, love to God above all other things.

The Redeemer drew an important moral from this interesting occurrence, for the instruction of the disciples; as the love of riches excluded this young man from heaven, he observed, how difficult for those who possess the love of the world to be saved!

His disciples took the alarm: they were looking for a temporal kingdom to be erected by Christ, and expecting the honours of it; but when Christ said that a camel could as easily crouch down\* and pass through a needle's eye, as for a rich man to enter Heaven, they exclaimed, "*who then can be saved?*" Here they were running into the error of the young man, that we can save ourselves; but Christ shows them, that what might be impossible to men was possible with God, and herein confirms what he had before inculcated, that none are perfectly good, or possess eternal life by the merit of their own obedience.

\* Vid. Orient. Customs, 1 vo'. 400.

## LECTURE VIII.

LUKE, CHAPTER XV, VERSE 11 TO 32.

AND he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it.

and let us eat, and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field : and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in : and therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering, said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee ; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment ; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.

**I**N childhood we have not learned the extremes of folly, and the mind, though more disposed to follow evil than good example, is too innocent to become dissipated at once ; in old age, wisdom and experience render men usually more prudent than to run to excess in vice, except such habits have been contracted at an early period ; and even at the age of maturity, men, who have not gone astray in their youth, have too much regard to their character and standing among men, to be eminently dissolute ; it is in that stage of life which exists between childhood and maturity, that those habits and inclinations are formed, or at least conceived, which terminate in prodigality and the destruction both of character and earthly prospects.

This parable, whilst it delineates to the life the pictures of an impatient youth and an indulgent parent, the consequences of too early a relaxation of parental restraint, the miseries which follow extravagance, and the tender pity of a fond parent receiving again into his bosom a son ruined by debauchery, but humbled to the dust by adversity, was chiefly designed to show in the angry, jealous son the character of those Pharisees who censured the Saviour for eating with sinners, the unreasonableness and turpitude of their malevolence against him who kindly received such, and the bowels of compassion of the Heavenly Father, who was about to receive again the nations who had wandered away in ignorance and dissipation, and were starving for the bread of life.

The eagerness of a youth to receive his portion into his own hands, augurs badly for him; it indicates self-conceit, and an impetuosity of temper which may prompt him to hazard, and through inexperience to lose his inheritance. The picture is just: a young man who in such circumstances might solicit the possession of the portion intended for him, would not in the least expect that he should so soon expend it; he would calculate upon the frugal management and great and successful increase of it; nor is it extraordinary that such an one should induce his parents also to be sanguine of his contemplated success.

But he had not long possessed the management of his estate, before the same self-confidence which led him to covet the entire controul of his property, induced him to venture into a strange

country. As the true religion was chiefly confined to the Jews when this parable was given, it consequently supposes the youth to have gone into heathen lands. Had the father foreseen this, he would perhaps have withholden his portion until his son had become fixed in his native climate; but still the youth, against whom nothing criminal had been alleged in his father's family, except that he had not relished filial subjection, though he might wish to remove beyond the reach of parental reprehension, might not intend or even suppose that he should be led astray into prodigality.

Having lost by his removal from his kindred and friends the advantages of their admonitions, and being less exposed to shame when he might err from the path of propriety, he became less fearful of indulgence. Among strangers young men are more usually off their guard, though they should be then more circumspect. When exposed to enemies without a guide, inexperienced, and unable to discriminate among characters, the young are immediately discovered by the evil to be suitable persons upon whom to practise their deceptions. Such as have chosen to dwell with infidels, require little solicitation; they soon of themselves remove the restraints of a religious education. It does not appear that the young man in the parable was tricked out of his estate by gaming; he was not imposed upon by trusting it into the hands of men of fictitious credit, trading upon nominal capitals; nor did he lose it through unskilfulness in his own particular calling; his father, we presume, must have judged of this

before he committed to him his portion ; but  
*“ he wasted it in riotous living.”*

The loss of parental restraint ; the absence of the admonitions of friends ; the removal of the guard of the publick eye ; and a separation from the warnings of gospel ordinances, will give sensual appetites great advantages over youthful inexperience. A little indulgence clouds the understanding ; and the torrent becoming irresistible, bears down all before it. His appetite demanded and had indulgence, till his estate was consumed.

Whilst his portion continued, he could not fail to find even strangers themselves friendly ; but it was consumed ; and another equally insuperable obstacle to their charity occurs in the parable ; a famine came on, and they had need themselves for their food. Though unwilling to work whilst he had any thing to live on, when destitute, he must labour ; and so great was his need, that though a Jew, and educated among them, for he is supposed to have emigrated from those to whom the parable was spoken, he condescended to become the feeder of swine, an unclean animal, of which an Israelite could not eat without breaking the law of Moses.

He was hired as a servant, but evidently upon the terms that he should feed himself ; and so hungry was he, that he could almost have eaten the very husks he was dispensing to the swine, but no one gave him food.\* Hunger is the just correction of prodigality ; and such a servile em-

\* *Kai edes edes xai scilicet qm, n.*



ployment would be a marked chastisement of one who was too self-important and licentious to be in subjection to an indulgent and bountiful father.

*“When he came to himself. he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!”* Whilst the youthful mind was filled with pride, or flushed with the vanity of self-government and independence, it was in a state of intoxication, and passing immediately into the extremes of sensuality, he is properly depicted as in a state of mental derangement, “when he came to himself;” yet the loss of his estate did not cure him; he did not immediately return to his father; he was not yet sufficiently humbled; but hunger, and the prospect of starving, dire necessity, brought him to reflection.

How many prodigal sons, after having wandered from their friends and fathers’ houses, have found themselves thus sitting hungry, helpless, and in the attitude of subjection, whilst their fathers’ servants have enjoyed better circumstances than they!

His necessity silenced his pride: he said, *“I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee,”* &c. He saw that his disrespect for his father was a sin against God, which he was punishing. He would return, confess his fault, and solicit only the situation of a servant, not a son.

Providential chastisements are often mercifully sent to humble the pride of men, to teach them

reflection, and to bring them home to their Heavenly Father; and they never seem more happily timed than when they recall to the memory the prosperity, which, being abused, had led the youthful mind into scenes of dissipation; force upon the memory a contrast of conditions; induce penitential sorrow, confession of guilt, submission to a just God, prayer for forgiveness, and reformation of life.

He put his design in execution: he returned: but when he came within sight of his father's house, his heart failed him; he seemed, though pressed by hunger, unable to venture into the presence of his father's family. By the garment which was sent for and his business of feeding swine, we may discern that he was ragged and filthy; his health wasted by the extremes of debauchery and hunger, his poverty and sufferings, and the conflicts in his mind whether to come into his father's house, or perish with hunger, must have changed his appearance, and rendered him unknown to the family whilst seen hovering at a distance.

Filthy, ragged, pale, and wasted, skulking afar off, and afraid to be seen, his father's eye first distinguishes him; the distressful attitude and appearance of the son awakens that affection and compassion which a father can feel: such was his agitation, he had no time to speak: he sees, he pities, he runs and falls upon his neck.

The unhappy son begins to confess his guilt, and to utter the humiliating confessions which he had prepared for an injured parent; but the father, anxious to terminate his sorrows, will not

wait for the doleful tale; nor will he introduce the child of affliction covered with tattered raiment into his house, until he has sent for the best robe, and clothed him, and put shoes on his feet, and even acknowledged him again, by putting his ring on his hand; nor is he more anxious to remove his rags and clothe him anew, than to furnish him a refreshing supply for his hungry appetite. Instead of a strict scrutiny into crimes heartily repented of, the father's fondness vents itself by exclaiming, "*my son was dead, and is alive, was lost, and is found.*" Instead of parental reprehensions, his heart, unable to sustain the tale of woe, melts upon the view of the effects of heaven's chastisements inflicted for the violation of filial duties.

When a guilty sinner comes to himself from his delirium of pride and sensuality, discovers he is likely to be overtaken by destruction, and finds that the husks of sensuality will not satiate his hungry soul; when he discerns himself a slave of sin, filthy and loathsome, is brought to remember that the weakest servant of God enjoys better provision than he, and resolves to arise, and go to his Father, and confess his sins, he may determine to say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, even in thy sight; I am unworthy of the name of a son, give me the meanest place in thy service; but when he puts his resolution in practice, and essays to come, his sense of guilt and unworthiness makes him hover at a distance, how can he approach that God whom he has so often blasphemed? but the merciful heavenly Father sees him afar off; he pities and comes to his relief;

he clothes him with the best robe, and seals him his own son; he brings him into his house, and the possession of the privileges of his children; he feeds him upon the best of food, and puts into his mouth a song of joy and gladness; she gives "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

All this household, except the eldest son, rejoiced with the father of the family, because his son who had been dead was alive, because he who had been lost was found; so every child of God rejoices, and even the angels in heaven, upon the return of a wandering prodigal to his father's family; a sheep which had strayed away, to the fold again.

The elder brother was angry, and would not go in unto the feast; and so the Pharisees, who were Israelites, and claimed to be children of God according to the prophecy, "Israel is my first born," were angry at Christ's receiving and eating with publicans and sinners. They would not partake of the gospel feast themselves, and censured the entertainment. They, like this eldest son, could boast of their good deeds for many years; and as he condemned the bad conduct of the returning prodigal brother, so these Pharisees thought and spoke in the most contemptuous manner of those whom Christ was admitting to the gospel privileges.

The eldest son complained that he had had no such marks of favour conferred on him; but the father replied, "*thou hast been always with me, and all I have is thine;*" so the Jews had no right to complain; they had been a favoured peo-

ple ; to them had been committed the oracles and the advantages of the true religion.

We have all received the blessings of a kind father, who has provided for us, and instructed us. We have all been impatient of restraint, desired to be independent, and wandered from him. We have all been feeding upon the husks of sensual pleasures, and been starving for want of spiritual food, which the meanest servant of our Father's house enjoys.

Can we say we have "come to our right minds," discerned our condition, and resolved to return to our Father, and to confess, Father, we have sinned against thee, even in thy sight. We have been dead in sin and lost, have we been found by grace, and restored ?

Happy for us if we have returned from our wanderings, been received by our Father as sons and daughters, clothed with the best robe of righteousness, had his signet put upon us, received a name and a place in his family, and been invested with the right of dwelling in his presence, where there is fulness of joy for ever more.

# LECTURE IX.

MARK, CHAPTER X, VERSE 13 TO 16.

**AND** they brought young children to him, that he should touch them : and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.

**AMONG** the numerous descriptive predictions of the Messiah given us by the evangelical prophet, this is one : "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."\* These words have not only an important figurative sense, but are literally fulfilled by the Saviour, in the occurrence here related, if these little ones can be called the lambs of his flock. And why not? They were unquestionably Jewish children ; his embassy was confined to that nation ; "He came to his own." Israel!

\* Isaiah, xl, 11.

was his first born. He came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. The Jewish dispensation was not yet removed, sacrifices were still lawful, circumcision was still in force. The Jews and their children were still members of the church of God. When an Israelite believed Jesus to be the promised Christ, it was not necessary, whilst the Saviour was yet living, that he should renounce his religion. All that Christ required of the Jews was not only consistent with their worship, but according to the Mosaic dispensation in its purest form. They were therefore the lambs of his flock, it must be presumed, by visible church membership.

There were under the Mosaic dispensation Jews outwardly and Jews inwardly, the natural descendants of Abraham, and the spiritual seed; the circumcision of the flesh, and the circumcised in heart; the latter were as truly the invisible church of God reconciled in Christ, in the time of the then Jewish as since in the time of the New Testament church: accordingly he could then say, "the kingdom of God is within you," and so in this passage, "*of such is the kingdom of Heaven.*" If some have been subjects of spiritual and saving blessings from their birth, as John the baptist was; and if infants were capable of receiving such blessings, and that they were is plain from Christ's putting his hands on them, and both blessing them himself, and praying for his Father's blessing on them; then infants could at that time be not only members of the Jewish visible church, but also of the

invisible church of God. What children are and what are not of the invisible kingdom, we cannot tell; we know persons only by their fruits, nor then infallibly, and children can show none; but Christ knows his own. When children are taken away before actual guilt, we seem to have a right to conclude such are Christ's, and people his kingdom.

Whether the individual children presented and blessed on this occasion were members of the invisible church, is not here asserted by the Saviour; his purpose was not to reveal the secret things of God, but to speak unto and after the manner of men. The words "*for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.*" being general, but not exclusive; the term *such* referring to children, as well as others; here is direct and positive proof that at least some children belong to the invisible church of God: yet, when taken with the context, it manifestly appears that there is beside this literal sense a further implied one, that such as are members of the invisible church bear resemblance to children. To confine the words to this last sense is to wave the natural and original for the implied meaning, and to limit without authority general expressions to a particular sense.

With respect to the precise age or size of the children nothing is very directly said; they were taken by Jesus into his arms; they are said by each of the three evangelists to have been brought. Luke says indeed Christ called them, but the expression is sufficiently satisfied by his saying "*suffer little children to come unto me;*" or he might have either directed them to be called back,



or have spoken aloud to them himself. The disciples are said by Mark to have rebuked those "that brought them." Luke has an additional word, which is used for such as are at the breast. If these children had been capable of receiving instruction from Christ, we cannot imagine that his disciples would have attempted to prevent their access to him. They erred with respect to their capacity for blessings, or the propriety of bringing them to Christ ; and for this they were corrected.

But what could have been the motives of the parents in bringing them ? They were not brought to be healed, for there is not the least intimation either of their sickness or cure. It was at Bethabara, beyond Jordan, that these things happened. Jesus was there some months, and it is possible that the news of his kindness to children, which he had shown at Capernaum, might have reached them, or they might have heard of some other instance of his regard to children not recorded ; surely they had conceived themselves encouraged to act this part, or they would scarcely have done it. The children were blessed, hands were laid on them, and they were presented to God in prayer ; they were treated as children devoted unto God, and already received into the church, but no instructions were given unto them, and neither repentance nor faith required of them, because they were children, and incapable of these duties, though the proper subjects of blessings. Also the parents hereby evidenced an high estimation of the Redeemer, at least as a holy person, whose blessing might be advantageous to

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their little ones, temporally or spiritually, or in both respects; it was at the same time a testimony of regard to Christ, and an evidence that they thought that their children might be the subjects of blessings, as well as grown persons.

But why did the disciples rebuke them for bringing their children to Christ? Not because they despised little children, not because they did not deem them members of the visible church of God; for this must have been familiar to every Jew. Shall we imagine that the disciples thought that this work engrossed too much of the Saviour's time, interrupted his publick teaching, and would become troublesome to him? No doubt such reasons would be thought at this time valid, if the preaching of the word should be much interrupted or prevented by the frequent bringing and offering of children to Christ, and would be complained of even by those who might be willing to admit them as church-members. It is not therefore certain that the disciples supposed the children could receive no advantage by it.

As Christ reproved the disciples for preventing the bringing of children to him, it must be conceded that they had no sufficient justification for their conduct. If we suppose the disciples to have rested their vindication upon the incapacity of the children, then Christ has decided the case of incapacity, and that he will receive them notwithstanding, and bestow his blessings upon them, and account them such as belong to his kingdom. If the children were incapable of receiving any advantage from his benediction, then it was useless, a consumption of time, and an act

calculated to lead us to erroneous conclusions ; and then it will follow, that whether the disciples had entertained such conceptions or not, they ought not to have been reprov'd. The conduct and words of the Redeemer do therefore show, that children who know not to distinguish between good and evil, were capable of spiritual blessings, were proper subjects to be offer'd to him, and were treated as those who had been actually received into his kingdom.

If infants were capable of being offer'd up to God in the arms of faith and prayer at that time, why should they not now be so dedicated to him ? If they were fit to be members of the visible church under the legal, why not under the gospel dispensation ? If they were capable of temporal and spiritual blessings then, why not now ? Jesus did not withhold his blessings from them then, because they would not, or rather could not, repent and believe ; nor did he even attempt to teach them, for they were incapable of receiving instruction ; and yet he did not then suspend his blessings upon those impossible conditions ; why therefore should we reject them as reprobates now, because they cannot receive instruction, repent, and believe ?... He who then confer'd his blessings on them, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; he is as able and as willing to bless them now as he was then. If he encouraged those parents then to seek God's blessing upon their children, it is his pleasure that parents should do so now. If he intended that these children should have his goodness to them as an inducement, when they came to their

first discretion, to apply to him for his mercies, he is now willing that children should be under similar inducements. How endearing was this kindness of the mild Redeemer! how affectionately to be remembered by these parents! How could they have renounced that Jesus who had so kindly received their little ones into his arms, and blessed them? how could these children, when they should afterwards learn his goodness to them, ever become his enemies? If Christ intended such obligations should be laid on parents and children then, are they not equally necessary know? He knew with precision the then future circumstances of his visible church, and his Spirit has caused the default of these disciples to be recorded by three evangelists as a solemn warning in future generations, to all who would prevent little children from being offered up to him, or who should deem them incapable of his blessings, because incapable of receiving instructions.

Some have understood by "the kingdom of Heaven" here, the kingdom of glory. His disciples had lately contended about the chief place in "the kingdom of Heaven," by which is meant his reign, his kingdom on earth, and he then set a child in the midst of them, and required them to become as such; for such were all those in disposition who were of his kingdom. And it is most likely he purposely mentions again the qualifications of the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, to correct their erroneous and carnal views of the kingdom he was about to set up. That he is not speaking of the visible church is obvi-

vious, for many were members of this by circumcision at that time, who did not possess the child-like disposition. The expressions do not exclude children, and if children may be members of the invisible church, why should they not of the visible? if they are honoured with the greater blessing, why should the less be withholden from them?

But if the kingdom of glory is here intended, and if consequently it is here assigned as a reason, that because infants go to heaven, therefore they shall be permitted to be offered up to Christ, it is even thus a strong encouragement to parents to do so; and if they become heirs of glory, it is hard to say they are unworthy to be received into the visible church, who are innocent, with respect to actual sins; we may be deceived as to the character of adults, but we know the qualifications of infants. If infants are set up as patterns for those whom Christ will receive, shall the patterns themselves be rejected? If Christ took them in his arms, they are worthy to be associated with us in the visible church; he directs them to be received in *his name*, and accounts it a receiving of himself: how can we refuse to admit them to a connexion with him?

What parent, who enjoys the comforts of the gospel, and at the same time parental affection for his children, does not feel grateful to his Redeemer for his kindness shown to children, and his general invitation to bring them to him for his blessing? How can the young help rejoicing in the goodness of that God, who manifested his

willingness to receive them as his, even before they knew any thing of him or his ways ?

Upon the whole, let us imitate the innocence and simplicity of children ; and endeavour to keep them from contracting the vices of adults ; teaching, instructing, praying with and for them, and living examples of holiness before them, that we may in the end be able to say, “ here am I, and the children thou hast given me.”

## LECTURE X.



LUKE, CHAPTER XVI, VERSE 1 TO 14.

AND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mam-

mon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

WHEN the Scribes and Pharisees, who hypocritically affected great preciseness and sanctity of manners, saw publicans and sinners coming near to and hearing Christ, they pronounced that he received and ate with sinners. Jesus, to counteract their error, and vindicate his conduct, spake to them the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son. The parable of the unjust steward he directed more immediately to his disciples, but in the presence of the Pharisees, who, when they discerned their own vices reprimanded by it, derided him. The views of the disciples were as yet temporal; but they do not appear, except Judas, to have been either wasteful, as the steward, or mercenary and uncharitable; the parable was therefore a pointed correction of those who could pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin, and neglecting mercy and justice, rob widows' houses. Being intended for others, though immediately addressed to the disciples, it was perhaps designedly a just representation of the then Jewish church. The priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, who possessed its offices, and enjoyed its temporal advantages, were wasting their Lord's goods, and making no provision for themselves against the time when they should be cast out; for as unfaithful stew-



ards they were soon to lose their stewardship, and the care of the gospel church was to be confided to other hands. Or the rich man may represent the Lord of the universe, to whom all things belong; the steward any man unto whom God commits the trust of temporal riches, honours, and advantages; and the debtors or tenants who occupied under the steward the poor and dependent part of every community.

The present importance of the parable lies in this, that it shows us we are but stewards, and possess the property of another; that we must soon render an account to him, to whom all things belong of our employment of his goods, and that it is prudent to prepare for it; that charitable actions are the best and wisest means of securing true gain by what we possess; and that covetousness is idolatry, and incompatible with the love of God.

The enemies of christianity have attempted by means of this parable to cast a reproach on the morality of the gospel; they object that here an unjust man is set up as an example to christians; his unrighteous deeds made a rule for their conduct, and iniquity thus commended. But a fair and full answer may be easily given to these groundless imputations; it is the wisdom, not the injustice, of the steward, which is commended, for he is left under the censure of being an unjust man; it is not his fraud that is to be imitated; but his forethought and provision for his approaching change of circumstances, that are set up as an example. When death shall ter-

minate our stewardship, and the master shall call us to account, happy will it be for us, if we shall have made provision for that change of condition. A parable is an instructive picture ; it is not supposed that the facts are true, nor is it any more necessary that every action should be just and honest, than that every countenance in a picture should be comely.

This parable is instructive, both in the whole and in its several parts. “ *There was a certain rich man who had a steward* ” who wasted his goods ; we are all stewards only ; we possess nothing but that which we have by tenure from another ; all that we have is the Lord’s, for “ of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.” If we account any thing so much our own as to lose sight of the terms by which we hold it from him, we purloin his goods ; if we consume any portion by intemperance, or in any other manner prohibited by him, we waste his property ; if he requires us to use any portion for him, for example, to feed his poor, or to send the gospel to those who are destitute, and we neglect or refuse to do so, we are then negligent and unfaithful stewards.

The master required him to prepare “ *an account of his stewardship,* ” and informed him his stewardship would be taken from him. Death ends our stewardship, and judgment is the time of account. This is one among many scriptures, which point to a judgment day, when every one will be obliged to render an account not only of every talent and advantage, but for every thought, word, and action. It is towards that day

that all things are tending; then the hidden things of this world will be brought to light; what we do not now understand we shall know hereafter. Then will many, who have been mighty and honourable men, upon whom the world has gazed with wonder or envy, appear in shame and confusion, laden with guilt, and desirous of annihilation, or any condition in preference to that of appearing before their Judge, whilst those who have been trodden under foot in the road to honour, whose honest reputation has been blasted by the poisonous breath of calumny, or who have been despised for that adversity which their Heavenly Father sent upon them for their real good, shall appear with confidence, and rejoice to approach a Judge who will judge righteous judgment. As it will be a day of the revelation of God's righteousness in the government of the world, and not to inform the Judge of the true characters of men, who are marshalled at death to their respective places suited to the conditions they chose in life; according to present views, it will be necessary to bring up different individuals, and examine their conduct at the same time, so far as they have been associated together in wickedness, or have conflicted with each other. Thus it is probable the unjust and cruel oppressor will be confronted with those whom he has despoiled; the account which must be rendered of the discharge of relative duties will, we suppose, require that parents and children should in many instances be examined together, or in immediate succession, whilst the solemnity of the occasion and the dignity of the Judge must re-

strain their mutual recriminations; happy will be the parent who can then say, "here am I, and the children thou hast given me." Then also shall ministers give in their account for the things which they have spoken, and the people for what they have heard.

This parable shows us we are not always to be stewards; our consciences, in strict accordance with this parable, warn us that an account is to be taken, and the inequalities of this life also clearly prove that a day of final retribution is necessary to display the divine justice. The steward reflected that he should be destitute when removed, unable to dig, and ashamed to beg. Though he had been a wasteful and improvident as well as an unjust man, yet these deliberations were the result of some wisdom and prudence. When death approaches, there are few of the wasteful stewards of this world who are not uneasy for their condition; they dread the moment in which the master shall take his property out of their hands, and deliver it to others; but this concern rarely obtains whilst there is yet time for a preparation. Many seem to act upon the principle, that they will have time for repentance, and can bring their minds to it when it shall be necessary, or, less wise than the steward, take no thought for the approaching hour of calamity. Each of these courses indicates extreme folly, and must terminate in consequences the most deplorable. This unjust man called the tenants \* one after another while he was yet stew-

\* Such the original word will allow them to have been; also his own occupation being husbandry, whilst in the

ard, and whilst his principal would be bound by his acts, and lowered their rents; or knowing that he would soon be insolvent, allowed them false credits; this was done to secure their unjust and unworthy friendship, or, as some understand it, to correct his former injustice to them. This provident, though wicked conduct is instructive, and ought to show us the wisdom of employing the property intrusted to us in ways compatible with, and evidential of our future happiness.

“ *The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had acted wisely.*” These words are the rich man’s approbation of his steward’s wisdom; the commendation is his, not Christ’s; it is not an approbation of his injustice, the steward still remains branded with the character of an unjust man, but of his prudence in preparing for his future wants. The explanation of the rich man’s commendation, “ *for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light,*” may be considered as spoken by Jesus. This world’s goods are sought after with more ingenuity and earnestness than the things of religion, though the latter are of infinitely more value; and the men of the world discover more wisdom in their pursuit of vanity, than others, who are measurably enlightened by grace do, whilst they have the glories of Heaven in prospect. This inconsistency is often

character not of a tenant, but a steward. and their being possessed of the evidence of their debts, indicate that these debtors were tenants.

noticed by infidels, who, comparing religious with worldly pursuits, sometimes think, that if they could believe what christians profess to believe, they would be more zealous than they discern christians ordinarily to be ; but when they have been afterwards forced to yield to the truth, they are seen to become lukewarm as others are.

Jesus then gave the application of his parable : “ *make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*” (by the proper use of false and uncertain riches) “ *that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*” “ *Mammon*” is put for riches, and “ *of unrighteousness,*” is the Hebrew idiom for “ unrighteous,” or rather, “ false ” or “ insnaring ;” for it is afterwards contrasted with “ *true riches.*” The friends here must mean the poor ; by charitable deeds done to them, you have not only their prayers, but, if they should reach heaven before you, they may receive you with joy into everlasting habitations. Riches on earth are indeed deceitful ; they tantalize with a false happiness ; but though heaven can be purchased neither by the application of them which is here recommended, nor by any other act of ours, the blessed will be graciously rewarded for their charitable deeds ; and this is making the best advantage of them.

“ *He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much,*” is, like most other proverbs, liable to exceptions ; but surely in the general, when we see men correct in their affairs, though they be small, it affords a favourable presumption of their integrity, and we should be

the more willing to put confidence in them. The residue of the sentiment, "*he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much,*" is subjected also to exceptions, and yet, when the temptation is stronger, there can be little dependance upon his integrity who has yielded to weaker inducements. The sincerity and correctness of christians in their worldly affairs, and their charitableness to the poor, afford some evidence of their attention to the true riches, whilst a want of integrity in those lesser matters, and of compassion to their suffering brethren of the human family, are the strongest proofs of their disingenuity and hypocrisy, who engage in the more important concerns of religion. Christ then adds, "*If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*" Which is the emphatical annunciation of an important truth, that those who are dishonest in their dealings with men are not the subjects of the grace of God: "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of Heaven. "*If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's,\* who shall give you that which is your own?*" If the Lord has intrusted you with his earthly blessings, which he intended to take from you after a few days, and you have proved unfaithful, how can you expect that he will intrust you with everlasting blessings? such as might, when given you, be called your own, because they would never be taken from you. "*No man can serve two masters,*" whose de-

\* *Εν τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ,* "in that which was another's."

mands are in opposition to each other; to obey one is to disobey the other; he that serves God cannot at the same time give his heart to sensual pursuits; if any man set his affections upon riches, honours, or mundane enjoyments, this is disobedience to God: If it be asked, why do men conduct themselves in this world as if what they possessed was so their own, as never to be separated from them? It must be answered, that they are infatuated by sin, blinded by its allurements, and prejudiced against true good. Of a world lying in wickedness this is to be expected; but that men should pursue the world with every energy, and employ all their thoughts about it, and yet claim the gospel character of christians is absurd; such conduct is diametrically opposite to the precepts and examples of Christ and his apostles; and he who will take the pains to compare the characteristic marks given in the gospel of the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus with the conduct and deportment of many modern christians, will be obliged to say with one of old, "either this is not the gospel, or we are not christians."



# LECTURE XI.

LUKE, CHAPTER XII, VERSE 13 TO 21.

AND one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto me, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

WHILST Jesus was addressing himself to his disciples in the presence of a very great concourse of people, encouraging them to cast off the fear of men, and to fear God only, and assuring them of the reception of aid and support from the Holy Spirit, one of the crowd, in a very un-

seasonable and undesignedly rude manner, interrupted the gracious discourse by asking Jesus to direct his brother to divide the inheritance with him.

Some have supposed that this was an attempt of a younger brother to force the elder, by gospel principles misunderstood, to yield to him a portion of the inheritance, which was, by the law of Moses, wholly his own. Others imagine that some injured person was then taking advantage of his injurious brother's presence in a large assembly to bring him to do justice. It seems most probable, that this unseasonable petitioner was one who fully expected that the Messiah would set up a temporal kingdom, and if Jesus were the Christ, he was disposed to avail himself, by an early application to his judicial authority, of his help to obtain justice from his brother; but Jesus rejected the application as incompatible with the design and nature of his mission, authority, and power, whilst under the law. His kingdom was spiritual, not carnal; his subjects were believers, not mere worldlings; he leaves the final adjustment of right and wrong until the day of the last account; he disposed whilst on earth not of earthly but everlasting inheritances. But if, after so many denials of temporal power, even his followers appear to have expected his assumption of it, it is less wonderful that his enemies should have supposed this his object, and afterwards have charged him with it. How important was the rejection of the petition? for if in this instance he had decided the case judicially, he could not have appeared innocent, as it was

necessary; he should, when accused before the Roman governor.

Jesus, according to his manner, improved the occurrence, to instruct those who were present, and particularly the man, who had, instead of attending to the excellent advice which the Redeemer had been giving, suffered his mind to be occupied about the inheritance which his brother was withholding from him. That men should take care of their own, and exact their just rights, is not reprehensible; but there is a fault, when their minds are suffered to run upon these things at seasons appointed for inquiring after the heavenly inheritance. Covetousness not only imports the sinful desire of the property of another person, but is taken in a general sense to signify an over-anxious solicitude about this world's goods: and it is this vice which Jesus here chastises.

Nor is this exhortation to be viewed only as a reproof intended for the rude applicant, as a lesson for the multitude present, and for his disciples themselves, whose history shows how suitable it was for them; but was calculated as a solemn admonition to the unjust brother, if he was such; for if an inordinate attachment to the world be so dangerous, how much more so, when accompanied by flagrant acts of fraud and injustice?

The reason he assigns for guarding against an intemperate attachment to earth is, that even in the greatest affluence our lives, that is, our happiness, life being often put for happiness, depend not upon the things we possess. Great possessions do not secure happiness; they increase

the cares, and often the labour and anxiety of the possessor; a little will be enough, with contentment, both for the necessities and comforts of life; the desire of possessing increases usually with our possessions, and becomes insatiable; our appetites, when cloyed, produce misery, not pleasure, and though not surfeited, their demands become frequently the more imperious by gratification, and increase the pain which we aim to allay.

An abundance of possessions can neither prolong our days, nor preserve us from the stroke of death, an event which depends upon the will of him who gave us life; and when the appointed time for it has arrived, he can effect it by any mean he pleases; if he withholds his supporting hand, we return to our original dust.

The parable which he spoke on this occasion was designed not to reprove some vice notorious to all, but to expose the folly of living for this world, and neglecting a preparation for the next; conduct not ordinarily deemed reprehensible, and almost never destructive of character.

“*The ground of a rich man brought forth plentifully.*” Here is one whose wealth was not increased by fraud and deceit, nor by oppression and injury, nor by avarice and penuriousness, but by honest industry in cultivating the soil; the God of nature had caused his fields to produce plentifully. There was no crime in the mere act of receiving the blessings of Heaven, nor could there be in taking care of them, for to do otherwise is waste, which is a contempt of divine goodness.

*“ He thought within himself, I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.”* This thought was not in itself criminal, but the crime lay in the suffering it to exclude others. The Lord had given him abundance, and he fastened his heart on the gift, regardless of the giver; here is the crying sin of ingratitude. There is no stronger evidence of a sordid earthly mind, than to receive the most distinguished temporal blessings with atheistical indifference.

Men are stewards, and accountable, and therefore when their master confides to their trust larger portions of his bounty, they should be the more industrious to use them for his glory. But this man makes no inquiry about the intention of the giver, and deems the goods his own: *“ there will I bestow my fruits.”*

His hesitation, *“ What shall I do ?”* is a lively description of the cares which usually come with the increase of riches. When the anxiety or cares which temporal concerns involve us in, have the effect to interrupt our devotions, or produce a neglect of our everlasting concerns, then do they become a snare, and poverty is in such case better than riches. Every man's experience may teach him that he cannot be calm, self-possessed, and on his guard against temptation, or wait upon God in his ordinances of publick and private worship with that zeal and fervour which he should possess, if at the same time his mind is tossed with worldly perplexities, and his repose interrupted by intruding cares. How much to be pitied are those who spend their days in such

agitations, that they scarcely discern that they are living, or remember that they are to die, and have not a moment to prepare for it, every particle of their time being claimed by some earthly concern!

He resolved “*to pull down his barns, and build greater.*” Not unfrequently, when men enter upon active life, they propose to themselves a certain point, to which, should they arrive, they imagine they will be contented, and strive for no higher attainments. Their barns are of a size large enough to contain as much as they hope for, or even at that time desire. Whilst thousands of these children of hope are cut off by untimely death, or have every project ruined, and every expectation blasted, there are a few who surpass in prosperity their most sanguine expectations; but instead of devoting the surplus to God, by feeding his poor, or applying it to other important purposes, rarely do they remit their labours, that they may prepare for a better world; they build larger barns, conceive higher expectations, and place at a greater remove the point in wealth towards which they aspire; at length, their desires keeping pace with their prosperity, they conceive no bounds or limits that should confine them, and would grasp the world.

There are also instances in which the new and larger barns are filled, when, like the man in the parable, the sons of prosperity cease from their labours to enjoy what they have received; they adopt the language of the foolish man: “*Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.*” Take thine ease, though destruction is pursuing

you even at your heels. We are travelling through the prowling wilderness of this world, beset with dangers, and this is after gathering a few useless blossoms by the way, to sit down contented until the night of death overtakes us, before the journey of the day is accomplished. "*Take thine ease ;*" as if nothing were necessary to our comfort, but the possession of this world's goods. How dangerous as well as foolish this determination ! the foxes may gnaw our vines, thieves may break in and steal, the moth and rust may corrupt, our wealth may take wings and fly away ; the tongue of the viper may wound us, and our characters become tainted by the poisonous breath of calumny ; our sensual appetites may gain the ascendancy, put their feet on our necks, and make us more despicable than the swine which wallow in the gutters ; the storms may blow down our young trees in blossom, and take from us the delight of our eyes ; or, which is worse, they may take to evil courses, and break our hearts ; the hand of the Lord may be upon our persons, and our sorrows may be such, that when it is morning we may long for the evening, and when it is evening our words may be, " would to God it were morning ;" above all, the uncertain moment of death may arrive, and involve all our projects in complete disappointment, and send the soul down into the regions of endless despair ; yet in the face of every danger, according to this example, we are to take our ease until the evil hour has come. How foolish soever this conduct may appear to those who read the parable, and reflect on the lesson it

affords, it is nevertheless the very course which the major part of the human family pursue. But some see no folly here, and would even justify this wealthy planter, who was saying to himself, “*eat, drink, and be merry;*” where the harm in eating, drinking, and being merry, provided there be no intemperance in these enjoyments? The man in the parable is not charged with intemperance; he neither frequented theatres, nor went to balls; he neither lived on the property of other men, nor rioted on his own. What harm did he do? It must be admitted, that, by the supposition, the rich man was chargeable with none of these follies; his life and character appear even better than those of many, who bear with credit the title of christian in our day; yet Jesus has pronounced him a fool. Nor is it at all difficult to make good the charge against all such. Wisdom is seen in the choice of the best ends, and in the adoption of the best means to attain them. Do eating, drinking, and being merry, in carnal security, whilst death is standing at our elbow, and hell waiting for our reception, evidence our wisdom? Merriment in men consigned unto everlasting destruction is folly in the extreme, the sport of devils, if sport they can enjoy. Amusements are madness in the man whose everlasting stake has not been secured.

The Lord is represented as saying to him in the parable, saying to him in the course of his providence, “*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*” Literally, thou fool,



this night *they* shall require thy soul of thee. This night infernal fiends shall come for and take away thy soul down to the chains of infernal darkness. “*So (that is, such a fool) is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.*” Every man who sets his heart chiefly on the riches, advantages, and enjoyments of this world, and accounts them his chief happiness, and consequently has not secured an interest in the incorruptible riches of Heaven, is acting this foolish part.

It is not probable that such as have their expectations, like this rich husbandman, fastened upon the produce of the earth, will see the importance of this parable; nor can the saints themselves, though disposed to believe the words of Jesus, very clearly discern the force of the strong language here used. But death will take the scales from our eyes, and unmask the vanity of earthly pursuits. Our friends and fathers who have gone before us, now discern its truth, and see that if they had possessed kingdoms, such possessions would have been injurious, not advantageous, that their most afflictive and darkest dispensations have been their richest blessings. Whatever our sentiments may be with respect to earthly goods at present, after a few more risings and settings of the sun, we shall see as they do, and our judgment of present worldly pursuits will be like theirs.

## LECTURE XII.

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MATTHEW, CHAPTER XXV, VERSE 1 TO 13.

THEN shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them : but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins awoke, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, *Not so* ; lest there be not enough for us and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage : and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

THIS parable should be taken in connexion with the subject with which the preceding chapter closes, which is not the destruction of Je-

rusalem, but the final judgment. Thus it becomes an interesting and very solemn warning to be ready for that event; and the application being immediate, it constitutes a valid argument that no preparation for the judgment can be made after death.

“*The kingdom of the Heavens,*”\* is a phrase differently used in the gospels; it seems to allude to a similar mode of expression found in the prophecies, † to express the Messiah’s reign, which was to be set up by God, who is sometimes figuratively denominated by the place of his manifestative presence. “*Then,*” at the judgment, “*the kingdom of Heaven,*” Christ’s administration of the Mediatorial government may be compared unto the watching of young ladies for the approach of the bridegroom at a marriage.

The nuptial ceremonies here referred to are not in use among us; but those who are acquainted with the ancient marriage rites of the Romans, and of the Greeks, ‡ or with the present nuptial rites in some places of the East-Indies, will discern that part of the same ceremonies are here referred to; for among all these the bride must be conducted in the night-time to the house of the bridegroom by the light of torches; so here it is said, “*behold, the bridegroom cometh;*” that is, with his bride; the virgins here

\* Τῶν οὐρανῶν.

† Dan. ii. 44, vii. 13, 14. Mic. iv. 6, 7. Vid. Campbell’s Gospels.

‡ Kennet’s Rom. Antiq. p. 329. Potter’s Antiq. of Greece, 2 vol. 286-7.

mentioned are not the companions of the bride, who might come out with her, from her father's family, but those who professed to be the bridegroom's friends, who waited at his house with torches, that they might go forth to meet him returning with his bride, bearing lights in their hands; otherwise his rejection of any of the virgins, his late hour of arrival, and his approach, though in the midst of the darkness, being visible, could not be accounted for. The parable was intended only to give us a part of the nuptial ceremonies, and alludes merely to the concluding one, the reception of the bride into her husband's house. The parable is descriptive of the last day, when Christ the bridegroom shall bring his spouse, the church, with him to judgment, and place her at his right hand, to dwell with him for ever. The marriage is supposed to have antecedently taken place in this world, the habitation of the bride.

As by the bridegroom Christ is intended, so by the ten virgins are meant professors in general; their lamps or torches are their professions, by which they shine before the faces of men. The oil in the vessels is true holiness, grace in the heart, which is necessary to replenish the torch of a profession, and keep it from going out.

Some of the virgins were wise and provident, others thoughtless and negligent; a distinction which points to the well known difference between careless, unwise professors, who are merely nominal friends of the bridegroom, and those who are the real friends, and are wise to salvation.

Professors will be adjudged wise, or foolish, according as they have, or are destitute of the holy unction, a sanctified nature; and this will become conspicuous in that day in which true religion will be distinguished from the mere form of godliness. But though this distinction even now exists, it is not a subject of publick notoriety. The wise virgins did neither judge, nor refuse to associate with the foolish, nor so much as inquire whether they possessed oil; so we are to search our own vessels, our hearts, and, without deciding on the spiritual states of others, to be contented to retain in our number those who make a credible profession of their friendship to the bridegroom.

We are not authorized to assume it as a supposition in the parable, that the unwise virgins were really ignorant that they had no oil in their vessels; they seem to have all known it, and yet they slept unconcerned till it was too late to obtain it; this was folly indeed.

And still more foolish are they, who, knowing that they are not prepared for death and judgment, sleep away their time without preparation, till it is too late to obtain that which alone can prevent them from being cast into outer darkness. The denominating those professors foolish, who are destitute of true holiness or sanctifying grace, is perfectly accordant with the other scriptures, which justly charge the blame of the want of faith, repentance, and other graces of the Spirit, upon man. His indisposition to holiness, which tends to prevent his sanctification, is that which makes Divine grace necessary, and is the cause

of his condemnation. His bias to sin prevents his discerning the excellency of spiritual things, and keeps him in blindness and ignorance; he cannot come to Christ by faith, nor hear, that is, understand his word, because his obstinacy prompts him to despise and reject the only Saviour.

It is equally the duty and the interest of every man to take the warning here offered, and arrive at some satisfaction on this point, whether he have only the mere lamp of an outward profession, or also that true holiness of heart flowing from the unction of the Holy Spirit, without which there is no ground to suppose that he is justified by the righteousness of Christ.

All the virgins are represented to have been off their guard, to have not only nodded, \* but to have slept, whilst the bridegroom delayed to come; the force of which is, that professors in general, not only those who are foolishly contented to remain without the oil of true sanctification, but also the subjects of saving grace, the real friends of the bridegroom, are oppressed by the benumbing torpor of sensuality. How languid is the fervour, how cold the zeal of the most ardent christians, when compared with the strength of the motives which are set before us to excite our hope, and love, and joy!

When the bridegroom shall be seen coming in the clouds of Heaven, accompanied by his celestial hosts, there will be the greatest consternation amongst the inhabitants of this earth; the dead:

in Christ will rise first, and, together with the saints who are upon the earth, will go forth to meet him.

The force of this parable is directed chiefly to this object, to excite professors to a preparedness for the judgment; it was not intended merely for those who shall be found alive upon the earth at the last time, but is to be used in every age as an admonition to be prepared for death.

Upon the approach either of death or judgment, every living professor will become solicitous to be prepared for the approaching event. Every one who has the lamp of a profession will endeavour to trim or put it in order; the foolish or graceless are frequently much more anxious at such time than those who have wisely sought for and are provided with the oil, which will qualify them for meeting the bridegroom.

All are willing to die the death of the righteous, and desire that their last end may be like his, how averse soever they may be to the holiness of his life. Here is a distressing picture of the fearful disquietude which seizes many of those who have not been savingly anointed by the Holy Spirit, when they are awakened to a sense of their danger, by the immediate approach of the bridegroom, whether at death or judgment.

When a guilty conscience is alarmed by the near advent of the king of terrors, and discovers that the lamp of a mere profession will go out with life, when there is a conviction that there is no oil in the vessel to replenish the lamp, that there is not that true grace in the soul that

will shine most brightly in the dark valley, and lead the immortal spirit through the gloom of death, to meet the approaching Bridegroom; such self-deceiver and nominal christian will call upon every one who is near to supply his defects, and to address the prayer of faith in his behalf.

Holiness is neither hereditary, nor transferable. A gracious parent cannot change the nature of his impenitent dying offspring. Nor has any mere man any holiness with which he can endow another. When you are called to the death beds of such as the pains of hell are taking hold of, your heart may bleed for, but you cannot relieve them; you can only tell them to go and buy oil, to apply for grace, though you know the bridegroom will come before they can attain it. What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God takes away his soul? will the Lord hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Whilst nominal christians are striving to acquire that upon the immediate advent of the Judge, which they have neglected, and in their hearts perhaps contemned through all their lives, no respite is allowed, no time to get the oil; but death, a stern executioner, steady to his purpose, giving no quarter, permitting no delay, repeats blow after blow, till his dreadful work is finished. The guilty soul is driven from its abode, and taken away in its sins, even whilst entreating for mercy, and the saving influences of that Holy Spirit, who will not always strive with man.

The virgins who were provided with oil, though they had been sleeping also, yet having only to



arise and trim their lamps, were ready to go forth to meet the bridegroom. The dead in Christ, when the last trumpet shall sound, shall rise first, and their separate spirits, being again united with their newly raised bodies, shall literally go forth to meet him, whilst the graceless and impenitent, being unprepared, and left behind, shall never enter in unto the marriage-feast, nor enjoy the blessings which the Bridegroom has prepared.

It was not fit that they who had been so regardless of the bridegroom as to neglect the ceremony which was usual on such occasions, should partake of the entertainment provided in his house, and accordingly he would not afterwards acknowledge those to be his friends, nor receive them into his house to partake of his entertainment, who had not welcomed him and his bride by meeting them with torches. This shows us that they who are not ready at death and judgment will never be received.

Mercy can only be exercised consistently with justice, and when mercy has delivered any over into the hands of incensed justice, hope terminates. How pitiable the condition of that man, who, measuring the unchangeable justice of the Eternal Sovereign by the weakness of his own sensibilities, builds his vain hopes upon the fallacious supposition that the Almighty will wave the demands of his justice to save his enemies in their sins.

The moral of the parable, given by Christ himself, is, "*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the son of man cometh.*" It was addressed by him to those who

were then hearing him, yet he knew that they should not live till the day of the final judgment; he must therefore have intended that a surprise in an unprepared state at death, would be a final exclusion from the happiness he has provided for his people.

We are not only to bear the lamp of an outward profession of christianity, but we are to have oil in our vessels, grace in our hearts; nor only ought we to have it in habit, but in exercise, and be found watching whensoever God shall be pleased to call us; because for an event which will certainly happen, and may take place at any time, reason requires that we should be always prepared.

## LECTURE XIII.

MARK, CHAPTER IX, VERSE 33 TO 50.

AND he came to Capernaum : and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way ? But they held their peace : for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be* the greatest. And **he sat down**, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If ~~any~~ man desire to be first, *the same* shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them : and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me : and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us : and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said. Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto **you**, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thine hand offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into

the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

**UPON** their entering into a house in Capernaum, Jesus asked his disciples what they had disputed about on the way, but they were afraid or ashamed to answer him. Motives of interest had led them to quarrel about precedence in the temporal kingdom which they were vainly looking for. Jesus sat down, the then usual attitude for imparting instruction, and called his disciples to him, that all of them, even those who had not been present when he interrogated them about their strifes, might hear the lesson. He then renewed his injunctions of humility, and taught them, that this was the road to preferment in his kingdom. He placed before them a child, as a pattern of simplicity and humility. He received it into his arms, that these disciples, who were to feed his flock when he should be absent, might be instructed thus to receive and honour the humble, and assured them, that if they did so, he would account it as done to himself, and his Father would judge in the same manner of the action.

The loving disciple, the tender hearted John,

hearing the gracious condescending language of his Redeemer, was at the same time testing his own life and conduct by it. It occurred to him, that he and some of his brethren had lately violated these rules with respect to a person whom they had found casting out devils in the name of Jesus, and forbidden, because he did not follow with, and was not one of them. He therefore stated the case to his Master for information, and the question was, whether a man acting as a disciple, but without an express commission, should be prohibited from the exercise of spiritual gifts. Jesus immediately decided the question, and declared the prohibition improper, not only because God owned the labour by crowning it with success, but because such were not the enemies of the gospel. Happy had it been for the church and the world, if the disciples of Christ in every age had conformed to these directions of their Master.

He had cast out devils in the name of Christ, a much greater work than the giving a cup of water in his name, and even this shall not miss its reward. The crime of the disciples in prohibiting the person had the apology of ignorance; but it is not likely they would have ventured to have again done the like, after they had heard that it was better to be cast into the sea, fastened to a mill-stone, than to lead into error a humble follower of Jesus.

Their pride and ambition had led them to dispute by the way which should have the pre-eminence; and the same causes had induced them to prohibit some one, who was not of their denomi-

nation, from casting out devils in the name of Jesus; but he warns them against such sinful dispositions, and though they might be as natural to them, and as dear as their hands, or feet, or even their eyes, they must be contented to part with them, because it is much better to enjoy heaven hereafter, though we suffer these privations in obtaining it, than to have our sinful appetites and passions gratified in this world, and suffer in the infernal tophet for it for ever hereafter.

“*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,*” have been thought by some to express the same thing, the duration of the sufferer, according to the different ways of disposing of dead bodies by burial or burning; such imagine the force of the passage to be, that the worms shall not perish for want of nourishment, nor the fire be extinguished for want of fuel. But to a common reader these terms would rather express that the sinner shall neither die or cease to exist, nor his torments come to an end. If we should suppose the worm is put for the conscience, and the fire for the wrath of God, still the intention of the speaker is virtually answered. These are the words of him who is the Judge of quick and dead, and they express the eternity of the future torments of the impenitent, without a possibility of evasion. The term “*where*” relates immediately to the word hell,\* and the language is negative, so that if the person who is cast into it shall be at any time relieved, or annihilated, how remote soever it may be,

\* Not *ἀδης*, but *γέεννα*.

these words would not be true. Christ, who well knew what he was saying, as a faithful preacher of righteousness, thrice expresses the same words, that neither his disciples, nor those who should come after them, might be mistaken on this important point; and by his example has left it as a duty obligatory upon all his ministers seriously and importunately to express the awful nature and perpetuity of those pains.

This doctrine has met with much opposition, and it is much to be apprehended, that this has chiefly arisen from diminutive notions of the evil of sin. The carnal mind can have no just conceptions of spiritual things, nor discern clearly the obliquity of moral evil. If it be unjust to punish rebellion against an infinite Sovereign with everlasting misery, there would have been little need of the sacrifice offered by our glorious Mediator.

To assume the position that all punishment is designed to ameliorate, and will have an end, is not warranted by the scriptures. The finally impenitent are spoken of as enemies, to be separated from the saved. Instead of chastisement, they receive the vials of Divine wrath: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." "If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." It is said that his "Spirit shall not always strive with man;" and if grace do not accompany to sanctify afflictions, they will only heighten despair, exasperate the sinner, and make him the more an enemy of God. This is the day of salvation; there is no other; there is no repentance in the grave; and

without a change the souls of the impenitent will not be fitted for entering into Heaven, where no unclean thing can enter; their "end is destruction." As the tree falls, so it will lie; they will remain without the least prospect or hope of being lifted from the infernal prison to the paradise of God.

Whilst some have built their hopes upon the general mercy of God, and so have frustrated, as far as their feeble strength could reach, his grace given us in Christ Jesus; others have attempted to arrive at the same conclusions, by building their expectations, even for the finally impenitent, upon the merits of Christ. That he died for all in a certain sense, and that his sacrifice is offered upon the pole of the gospel unto all, we do not deny; but that all will be saved by him, is a position not warranted by the scriptures. He himself said, "he that believeth not the Son, *shall not see life*, but the wrath of God *abideth on him*." "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go ye cannot come." This, and such language could not be true, if all such were at some time or other to be saved.

Because the words which we render for ever, everlasting, and eternal, are sometimes used in a limited sense, some have vainly imagined they must be so understood when applied to the torments of the damned. The original words are as strong as the English words; and if they do not express perpetual duration, there are none in those languages in which the scriptures were first written that will do so. That they are to be understood to be limited when the subject re-



quires it, that is, bounds their extent, must be allowed; thus when we read of "everlasting hills," we are not to suppose the hills will continue after the earth shall be destroyed, but they will continue as long as it is possible for them, that is, until the earth is consumed. But these words import perpetual duration, unless so limited, and accordingly all understand them, when predicated of the happiness of heaven, as spoken of endless pleasures; and so they are restricted by nothing when spoken of future miseries.

But the words used in this scripture, "*where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.*" are free from every such objection. The perpetuity is here expressed without the words for ever, for ever and ever, everlasting, or eternal. And if all such passages of scripture were waved, which we have no right to do, the perpetuity of the torments would still rest upon numerous unequivocal testimonies in the word of God. Such language as this, "He will gather his wheat into the garner, and will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire:" "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom;" cannot be reconciled with the entering of every one into the heavenly kingdom. Christ addressed himself to certain persons, and said, "Woe unto you that are rich! for you have received your consolation." How could this have been affirmed, if these persons were at some future period to obtain the possession of heavenly consolations? Christ also spoke of some "whose end is to be burned;" that is, whose final condition is to be in burnings; but this would

be a mistake, if they are to be finally happy. The scriptures show us that there is to be a time when a recovery from the pollution of sin will be impossible: "he that is filthy, let him be filthy still;" but this would be also an error, if all men are at some period to be holy and happy.

We do not say that a man cannot be a christian, and a holy man. and err on this point; but we must say, that he either does not read, or does not understand the scriptures, and is not innocent; and the awful relaxation and indifference to spiritual things, which this doctrine brings with it but illly comports with the character of a humble, watchful, penitent believer.

It is indeed astonishing that there should be men hardy enough to preach this doctrine, whilst the general language addressed by the scriptures to the "righteous" is, that "it shall be well with him," but to the wicked, "it shall be ill with him:" such preachers, upon their own authority, and not that of the scriptures, encourage men really, whether they design it or not, in their sins, as often as they declare that it shall be finally well with all. The Lord said to the first parents, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" but Satan asserted, "ye shall not surely die." Publick teachers ought well to consider such scriptures, before they put forth their hand to touch the ark.

This doctrine is not only unprofitable, if it were true, but if it be false, it is a most awful practical deception. And that it is false, may be gathered from its very aspect, for it teaches, that though men may live without faith, without love,

without holiness, without Christ, enemies to God, murderers, and be every thing that is flagitious, and die in impenitency, yet they shall all be saved at some time, owned and blessed as the children of God, his faithful servants, for whom the kingdom of Heaven has been provided before the foundation of the world.

It is strange that such shocking contradictions should be received by some under the plausible pretext of magnifying the love and mercy of God. To pronounce a judge destitute of benevolence and mercy, because he passes sentence of death on a malefactor, would be flagrant injustice. On the contrary, who would not censure the judge, who, though he be bound by the most solemn ties to do justice according to law, should deliberately discharge a culprit, under the weak and despicable pretext of showing mercy to the miserable? To suppose the guilty sinner shall escape without any satisfaction to divine justice, is to suppose the Sovereign Judge will wave the obligation of his laws, justify rebellion, suffer the order of the universe to be subverted, abdicate the supreme government, vary from his promises and threatenings, and thus cease to be, as he is, unchangeably just and holy.

But it has been thought that the exercise of mercy in the pardoning of sins, may be more fitly compared unto and justified by that dispensing power which is reserved and lodged somewhere in most governments. But why is there such a dispensing power in civil societies? Because their laws may be imperfect, and might

condemn the innocent ; their judges may be defective in wisdom ; the execution of the laws may endanger the community ; and because the good of the whole being more important than the honour of strict justice, the latter must yield to the former. None of these things obtain in the divine government ; the laws are always good ; they must be administered without imperfection ; none can elude the notice of God, disappoint his wisdom, or resist eventually his power. Such dispensing power finds no place therefore in the divine government. The scriptures ; the consciences of the guilty, when awakened ; the sacrifices of the old world and those of the Jewish dispensation ; and, above all, the sacrifice of Christ, all exclude the hope of pardon without satisfaction to justice. Such satisfaction has been provided before the law was given, or broken, and justice can ask no more of him who is interested in it ; but to expect pardon in any other way is an additional act of rebellion.

“ *For every one (of them) is salted with fire.*” He had said, “ *their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*” That there should be a fire which should not destroy the person cast into it, would be strange. The laws of nature must be changed, and the fire must be supposed to have lost its properties, according to this language. To prevent the supposition that this objection had not been weighed, it is added, that every such person will be salted with fire, the fire shall retain them as its perpetual fuel. Their bodies will be spiritual bodies, such as we can form no adequate conception of. Fire is the em-

blem of divine wrath, which follows death, as the fire consumed the sacrifice after it was slain : and this just wrath must preserve its object, that infinite justice may not be defeated.

Jesus closes his instructions by eliciting an admonition from this idea of salt and fire, which were a part of the temple service, in which the salt upon the sacrifice was probably used as an emblem of Christ's purity, or for a lesson of the same kind to all who offered sacrifices. Jesus had on a former occasion termed his disciples the salt of the earth, and he now reminds them, that if they should yield to pride and ambition, they would lose their saltiness, and become wholly useless ; he therefore counsels them to have salt, simplicity, humility, and purity, and, instead of disputing with each other about precedence in his kingdom, that they should cultivate " peace one with another."

## LECTURE XIV.



LUKE, CHAPTER XIV, VERSE 15 TO 24.

AND when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him. Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto them, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and he sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

JESUS had been recommending humility in attending at, and charity in inviting unto feasts,

and had promised future rewards in the resurrection of the just ; whereupon a person present uttered a pious reflection, "*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*" To eat bread, according to the Hebrew idiom, means to partake of a meal of any kind. Thus the sabbath day refreshment, at which this parable was spoken, in the house of a chief Pharisee, is so denominated in the first verse of this chapter. The terms, "*the kingdom of God,*" may be understood either of the then expected reign of the Messiah, or of the kingdom of glory in Heaven, and the parable accordingly refer to either. Considering the circumstances under which it was spoken, at a meal, in the house of a chief among the Pharisees, as well as the expressions themselves, it is probable that he who spoke the pious sentiment was also a Pharisee. If the reign of the Messiah was intended by him, it was a virtual denial of Christ's character and authority; and the parable, upon such construction, must have been a very severe reply, and suitable correction. Or if we imagine that it was proverbial, and that the speaker intended it of the kingdom of glory ; being a Pharisee, it would certainly imply that he thought the righteous men of his own order would be those blessed ones ; and thus also this lesson was well directed to show him his awful mistake, if he persevered in rejecting the gospel.

The parable is a very perspicuous prophecy concerning the Jews, which we can now see to have been literally accomplished, and so has be-

come an additional evidence of the foreknowledge and truth of Jesus Christ.

By the man who made the supper is evidently intended the greatest and best of beings, even God himself, who provides all things. By the supper which was provided must be meant the blessings of grace and of glory, which give more pleasure than delicacies to the taste, and the enjoyment of them with the saints may be compared to convivial hilarity. It has been supposed that it was denominated a supper, rather than any other meal, because the gospel has come in the end of the world; but it is more probable that the true reason was, because that was the meal which was more usual for feasts. It is called a great supper, in allusion to the ample provision made for the gospel guests, or because of the extent of the invitation, which was to be directed unto all.

The terms "*and bade many,*" are referred by most commentators to the first preaching of John, Christ, and their disciples. But since no denial was offered to this invitation; and it appears that it was an antecedent one, which was to be followed by a notice of the particular time of the preparation of the feast; and as the first invitation is not said to have been made by the servant who gave the notice afterwards, it seems more probable that this refers to the invitation given by the prophets, which the Jews so far received as to be waiting for the gospel, though when it actually came they refused to partake. The subsequent invitations were directed to some who were not called at the first, but the many said to have been



bidden in the first instance, well answers to those who had been blessed with the Old Testament offers.

As the servant, who was sent at supper time, was the same that made each of the subsequent invitations, it cannot be meant of John the baptist, nor of Jesus, who took upon himself the form of a servant, for neither of these preached to the Gentiles; but must have been designed to represent all the apostles and ministers of Christ, who have in successive ages been sent to call men to the gospel feast. His being sent at supper time shows that supper was not ready at the first invitation, which was therefore before the gospel came.

This message is particularly and exclusively sent in the first instance to those who had been before bidden, and the nature of the message was precisely suited to those who had knowledge already of the feast, and needed only the information that "*all things were now ready.*" Thus the disciples were directed to go, when first sent to preach, only to the lost sheep of Israel, and not into the ways of the Gentiles. They gave information to those, who had been invited, "that the feast was now ready;" that the Son of God, the promised Messiah, had at length arrived. This restricted message was repeated after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. The Jews had the first offer, not because the Lord did not also intend the calling of the Gentiles, from the first; the prophecies of the Old Testament clearly show such purpose; but it was proper to confine the gospel to the Jews for a time,

because of their prejudices against the Gentiles ; a general invitation might have so disgusted them, as to have destroyed even the partial success the gospel had gained among that people.

But they all, the nation of the Jews as such, “ from one cause,”\* excused themselves, or refused to attend the feast which they had professed to be waiting for ; they preferred other pursuits, and neither desired his company, who made the entertainment, nor his feast. It was not likely to prove to be such a one as would suit their carnal appetites, or answer their worldly expectations.

Their respective avocations were lawful in themselves, but the error lay in preferring them to the gospel. The difference of these answers, “ *pray have me excused,*” and “ *I cannot come,*” is probably designed to show the different treatment that the offers of the gospel receive from men of business, and men of appetite ; the former wish frequently to retain some favour with God, whilst the latter bid him defiance.

In each instance ingratitude and contempt are obviously conspicuous ; and the consequences, to every one who persists in his refusal, will be the same.

The resentment of the Lord against those who were first bidden, has been awfully displayed in his judgments upon that nation to whom the first invitation was exclusively made.

He then directed his servant to go into the streets and lanes of the city : still were the calls

\* Αποκα: Lightfoot.

confined to Jerusalem, and the land of Canaan; though the nation as such had refused to receive their Messiah. The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, included those whom the Pharisees would have accounted defective in holiness, and ignorant of the law, or have denominated publicans and sinners; this invitation also embraced, we suppose, proselytes and Jews, who might not have been found in Canaan. The term "poor" might have been intended to be taken literally; for "to the poor the gospel is preached:" and in like manner those who were literally the halt and maimed, when they should be miraculously healed by the apostles through the name and power of Christ, would generally believe on him: or the direction might be to receive from among the Jews the poor in spirit, and such as account themselves maimed and halt in their obedience, and blinded by ignorance; these being the subjects of grace.

But those who espoused the christian cause among the Jews, and in the land of Canaan, were not the whole number of guests, that were designed to be partakers of the gospel feast; there remained still more room after these had been received into the church.

With what gratitude, love, and joy, ought we to read these words, "*and yet there is room?*" The grace of God is of unlimited extent; in Christ there is plenteous redemption; his church is not confined to one city and temple; the universe is his temple. There are in Heaven many mansions; ample provision is made by

him, who has provided the feast, for all who will come in.

The first gospel call was to the Jewish nation, priests, Levites, Scribes, and Pharisees, who had the prior right, having had the promises, types, and prophecies; upon their refusal, it was preached to the poor and despised, to publicans and sinners, to proselytes and scattered Jews, who were not found in Jerusalem and Canaan, but was still confined to the streets and lanes of the city, that is, it was not at that time to be carried to the Gentiles; but the gospel church not being full, a third command issues a new commission; "*Go out into the highways and hedges,*" without the city; "go preach the gospel to every creature."

How pressing the invitation to the Gentiles! "*compel them to come in;*" make it, or show it to be necessary\* for them to come in; show them the riches of him who has provided the feast; describe to them the soul-reviving pleasures of the entertainment; tell them that no price is expected from them; dwell upon the love of him who sends the invitation; tell them to come just as they are, and to make no excuses, for the Lord intends that not only one apartment, but that his *house shall be filled*, and it contains many mansions provided for them.

It is strange that any should have taken authority from these expressions to attempt the propagation of the gospel by force of arms. The original implies no such thing. It is to a feast, not to

\* ΑΙΤΙΟΛΟΓΙΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΤΙΚΑΙ.

a prison, that they were to be brought, according to the parable. If actual force had been intended, the parable would have shown many, not one servant merely, sent to fill a house with men.

It was keenly observed by an ancient father, "that it is not *religion* which forces to religion." The kind and mild Redeemer directed his followers to a different course of action; "go teach all nations;" not go, kill, and destroy them.

It is equally as unreasonable as it is unscriptural, to attempt to force the minds of men. The will admits of no violence; physical compulsion can never convince the understanding; and every seeming success is but the production of hypocrisy.

Here is expressed in strong language the duty of the ministers of Christ. How unreasonable is it to censure them for the zealous but affectionate invitations and warnings which they deliver occasionally from the desk, when the tenor of their commission runs in such terms as these, "*compel them to come in.*" Their earnestness is justified by the exigencies of the people; men are perishing in the hedges and highways, and, if they could be induced to realize their condition, and duly appreciate the offers, they would be glad to come in: but they are wedded to their misery, and choose death rather than life, and the strongest persuasions prove ineffectual; sometimes, even when they do discern their misery, they will not believe in divine mercy, and remain in despair.

Many of the Jews did believe; and yet the words, "*none of those men which were bidden*

*shall taste of my supper,*” which seem wholly to exclude them, admit a rational interpretation ; for they refer to those who were invited in the first instance by prophecies and promises, but who, when notified of the arrival of the gospel, refused it ; and not to those poor, halt, maimed, and blind Israelites, who came on the second invitation from the streets and lanes. This text condemns those only who rejected the gospel.

It may also be remarked, that none of the Jews, as such, have become christians ; for all those who accepted the gospel have been denationalized ; they have been accounted as having ceased to be Jews in all ages, who have accepted christianity.

What an important warning is afforded us in the example of the Lord’s ancient people ! His Spirit will not always strive with man. They refused to come in to the feast ; and the Lord has pronounced of them that refused, that they shall never taste his supper ; they shall never enter into his rest. If he has not spared “ the natural branches,” what can we expect, if we refuse the offers of his mercy ?

The Lord has prepared the rich feast of the gospel ; it has been provided at vast expense ; he has invited us from the hedges and highways to come in and receive a salvation which costs us nothing, but which is calculated to make us happy in time and eternity ; if we refuse to come in, his just indignation will be kindled by our ingratitude and contempt ; and the evils we shall sustain will be proportioned to the mercy we have despised.

## LECTURE XV.

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LUKE, CHAPTER IV, VERSE 16 TO 30.

AND he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the

land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them, went his way.

IN this passage we have the treatment which Jesus received in the place of his early residence, and an incontestable proof, that the purest life and most correct deportment form no counterbalance to the contempt which poverty and confined circumstances bring upon a man in the eyes of the world. Christ, who was "Lord of all, became poor for our sakes," and was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

"*As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.*" Jesus, who performed all righteousness, has left us an example of attending on publick worship, lest we should "neglect the assembling ourselves together as the manner of some is." This was the place to which he had been accustomed to resort, before he entered upon his publick ministration, according to the precept, "ye shall reverence my sanctuary, and sanctify my sabbaths, I am the Lord."

His reading in the synagogue worship on this occasion, in his own village, is some proof of the approbation of his private character by his neighbours. Whether he had done so before; or whether it was because his own friends wished



it, knowing his fame abroad, and hearing of his miracles in other places; or whether it was to the testimony John had given of him, that he read on this occasion is not clear.

Jesus conformed also to their custom of standing up to read. This was a token of respect the Jews paid to the law of God, which had been given with great solemnity; the same custom was also observed with respect to the prophecies. The book of Esther they might read sitting; and this was the posture their teachers assumed, when they taught.

Not only did priests and Levites read, but so might any Israelite, with the approbation of the ruler of the synagogue, who usually appointed the person who should officiate. To teach or expound was frequently performed by the person who read, but sometimes by another. When Jesus stood up at the place assigned for reading, the person, whose business it was to take care of the books, or, rather, parchment rolls, upon which the sacred records were written, brought him the roll containing the prophecies of Isaiah. When he opened or in part unrolled the scroll, the lesson of the day presented itself between the two rollers, and was, it is supposed, from the first verse of the sixtieth to the tenth verse of the sixty-first chapter, according to our division of chapters. Whether he read the whole lesson, or only so much as is recited by Luke, is not clear.

The portion of the prophecy which fell to be read that day, was perhaps as well suited as any one in the scriptures to announce to his neighbours of Nazareth his true character and com-

mission; it is in the midst of a prophecy of the most excellent things which were to come upon Israel; and especially it is descriptive of the character and commission of the Messiah.

“*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.*” The Jewish kings, priests, and prophets, who were set apart, or consecrated to their respective offices, were anointed with oil. It was anciently in the East, and is still in some hot countries, usual to anoint with oil, especially the head and feet. It was done medicinally in some instances; in others for the sake of the odour; but in others as a ceremonial investiture in office. The term “anointed,” here must signify the same as commissioned. The passage in Isaiah, which is here expressly interpreted as a prophecy of Christ, is a direct proof of his being commissioned as Mediator, and in this derived character he must be inferiour, and so could say, “my Father is greater than I.” Thus did he, who is over all, God, blessed for ever, humble himself for us, to become man for our sakes.

Another part of his humiliation was his emptying himself of his glory, not only so as to execute the offices of a prophet, priest, and king, in Zion, but to be qualified as such by receiving the Holy Ghost, that he might teach the people by that Spirit, whose part in the economy of redemption is particularly to apply it for their salvation. The Spirit descended upon him at his baptism, and dwelt in him, not by measure; thus was he anointed “with the oil of gladness above his fellows.” He purchased this blessing for us,

and we receive out of his fulness grace for grace.

The Spirit was not so much given him, because he was anointed; the sense seems rather to be, that the Spirit was given him for that very purpose, \* for which he was commissioned, and that he might perform the offices he bore for our salvation.

He was commissioned and qualified “*to preach the gospel to the poor,*” the burdened, afflicted, or meek. The character of the gospel returned to the baptist, in answer to his question, was, that “*to the poor the gospel is preached;*” it is a strong argument for the divine authority of the Christian religion, that the offer is made without reference to worldly distinctions, and that it is to be obtained “*without money and without price.*”

Christ chose the condition of a poor man for himself, though Lord of all; and the people to whom he was now preaching must have known, that though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, he had not where to lay his head. He has shown the danger of the temptations, which riches bring with them, when he said, that “*it is as easy for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven;*” yet it is possible for Almighty grace to work this miracle. The love of the world, or of any idol, is incompatible with the spiritual love of God, who has a right not only to our supreme affections, but to our whole heart;

\* 2 576X67.

for our affection towards his creatures, so far as it is lawful, always ultimately terminates on himself.

But poverty in estate may often exist with a proud mind, and be where there is no poverty of spirit; it is to those who possess the latter, that the blessings of the gospel are more peculiarly suited. This, above all other traits in the christian's character, is most distinguishable, and most conformed to the example of the meek and lowly Jesus. Such are never violent in church or state; patient under insults and injuries; willing to be instructed by the meanest saint; loving God, they therefore love their brother also, and rejoice at his exaltation, though they be themselves abased: "Would God, that all the Lord's people were prophets!" was the language of a man of meekness.

The word, which is rendered in this passage "to preach the gospel," is the very same which the seventy Jewish interpreters had used in this prophecy centuries before Christ came, and is the same in sense with the word which is rendered in our version of the prophecy in Isaiah by the terms to "preach good tidings." We have therefore in this instance a prediction of the gospel by the very name it now bears. It is also remarkable, that the angels are represented by this evangelist as using the same language: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings, of great joy which shall be to all people."

Another part of his commission was "*to heal the broken-hearted.*" He was touched with our infirmities; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; there were never sorrows

like unto his sorrows. He bore this grief for us; and still aims to comfort his children.

But it is not every broken heart that shall receive his comforts. If we fasten our affections on the earth, and in righteous judgment our idols are torn from us, or we are carried away from them; "will the Lord hear our cry when trouble comes upon us?" It is not the heart that is broken by temporal losses merely, that is to be healed. So the heart may be broken for sin, and never receive a cure; there is a sorrow of the world, which ends in death; a man may deplore the consequences of sin, and deservedly, whilst the heart inclines as strongly as ever to the poisonous sweet; and if the pressure of calamity should be taken off, all the verbal promises and soul deceiving resolutions he has made, will be "like the morning cloud and early dew which vanish away."

But when the soul is pierced and distressed because of its own vileness; and loathes its sins, because justly offensive to an infinitely holy God; when, through deep conviction, men discern that they have been guilty of the basest ingratitude, have made the vilest returns for his innumerable mercies, and have crucified the Lord of life; such are the broken in heart, whom Christ came to heal. These are the sorrows which he will turn into joy; such sorrows may for our good continue for a night, but joy cometh in the morning; he will cause the day to dawn upon such benighted souls, and to shine brighter and brighter till he opens them out of darkness into an everlasting day.

He came also to “*preach deliverance to the captives,*” to discover more plainly the way of deliverance from the curse of the law, to give deliverance to such as are in a state of captivity and bondage to sin, to free them from the reigning power of iniquity, to break their chains and discharge them from the slavery of corrupt affections and habits, and to rescue them from the usurped dominion of Satan, the god of this world, who rules in the hearts of the disobedient.

The whole human family in their natural condition are the captives here intended, and consequently the gospel is directed to every guilty man. “Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest.” He came to call “sinners to repentance;” his call is general; every man is warranted to flee for refuge to him; he will save us from the demands of justice, and rescue us from those who desire our destruction.

In consequence of our captivity to sin, as if to prevent our escape from our enemies, our eyes have been put out.\* Carnal minds discern not

\* Instead of the words, “the opening of the prison to the bound,” in the prophecy which might seem a repetition of the “deliverance to the captives,” Luke has the words, “and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised;” and considering the putting out the eyes, and bruising with the chains, as embraced in the idea of captivity and imprisonment in the days of Isaiah, and consequently a part of the prophetic figurative representation of the spiritual achievements of Mes-

\* *Vide etiam Isa. lviii, 6, in the Septuagint.*

spiritual things. We must be enlightened by grace, to discover the light of the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Another consequence of our captivity to sin is, that we *are bruised* and galled by our chains. The servitude of sin is extremely oppressive and afflictive, when we have been brought to the true discernment of it. When the ungodly kiss their chains, it is a proof of the subjection of their minds, and that their understandings have been impaired by their calamities.

Messiah was also to proclaim *the acceptable year of the Lord*, or his jubilee. Such the Jews had once in fifty years; every Hebrew servant was set free; all debts due among themselves were remitted; all lands reverted to their original families; no servile work was done; and what the earth produced spontaneously belonged to the poor and needy. This prophecy, which ascribes to the Messiah the bringing in of that year or time, shows that that ordinance pointed to gospel days; slaves to sin are emancipated; the debt we owed to justice remitted; the true religion returns, like their forfeited inheritance, to the Gentiles. The rest from servile work well represents the rest of the believer from the slavery of sin. The poor and the needy enjoy without money and price the rich increase of the gospel harvest.

Jesus opened this scripture with such strength

siah, Jesus might well have given the passage this turn in that beautiful illustration which it must have received in this discourse.

of discernment, clearness of method, readiness of thought, and propriety of speech, and at the same time with such unaffected ease and gracefulness of manner, that his former fellow-citizens could not but admire and approve his discourse, even whilst they uttered the reproach; “*Is not this Joseph’s son?*”

He knew their thoughts, anticipated their objections, and showed them that their opposition was perfectly in character for them. He referred them to the examples of Elijah and Elisha, who had respectively relieved a Gentile, whilst there were many suffering, but justly neglected Israelites; and thereby not only intimated the ill deserts of the Nazarenes, but even the lawfulness of preferring the very Gentiles to them. They understood his allusions, and being already inimical to his purity, and invidious because of his repute, became exasperated at his presuming to reprove them. They made an immediate attempt upon his life; but his work not being accomplished, he disappointed their purposes; which he was at no loss to effect, either by natural or extraordinary methods.

To announce to men, that they are not all Israelites indeed, who are of Israel; that the enjoyment of external privileges is no infallible evidence of being heirs of glory; and that a few only, and those the despised ones, are healed and restored by Christ, is always offensive. But we do well to take heed lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should come short; and to be on our guard lest we take offence at Christ, and he withdraw wholly from us.



## LECTURE XVI.

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JOHN, CHAPTER VI, VERSE 25 TO 45.

AND when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, ever more give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Fa-

ther giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven ? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him : and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

**UNLESS** we should refer the cause to the depravity of the human heart, we shall not be able to account for it, that the persons conversed with on this occasion, who had been fed by miracle the day before, the bread growing in their hands as they put it to their mouths, should have so soon disputed with, and deemed themselves wiser than the teacher to whom God himself had given such testimonials. But if the sensual mind is proof against every thing but the grace of the Almighty, it ceases to be strange that men, educated in the expectation that Messiah should erect a temporal kingdom, and who were then waiting for him, should have been induced by this miracle to conspire to make Jesus their king, and to rebel, against a government odious to them on various accounts. Their error was

not only an hindrance to their reception of instruction, but was embarrassing to him. He determined therefore to speak more plainly of the nature of his embassy, both that the spiritual might be instructed, and that the carnal might, if they would, be so offended, as not to harass him with treasonable projects. You ask me how I came hither, because you saw I did not enter into the boat with the disciples. I could tell you that I walked upon the waters, or have arrived at this place by means of those powers which I can exert when I choose ; but I am not anxious to display them before you, for it is not because of the miraculous attestation of me which you witnessed yesterday, that you have attended upon me again to day ; you care nothing for my doctrines, who am a teacher of righteousness ; it is not holiness, but riches ; not the glory of God, but your own honour, that you are in quest of. You wish me to be a king even by compulsion ; for you discern that I can heal you when sick, and feed you by miracle when hungry ; your views are wholly mercenary ; you are the enemies, not the subjects, of the kingdom of Messiah. If you wish to be partakers of the happiness of his reign, of which such excellent things are spoken in the prophets, "*labour*" or work "*not for the meat that perishes,*" not for temporal advantages, "*but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life ;*" for blessings, spiritual and eternal, which I can bestow from my Father upon whomsoever I will.

They did not immediately take offence at the plainness and severity of his language, but in-

quired how they should gain the benefits he mentioned. They used the same word in this inquiry, which he used in his reproof. He had advised them to *labour*. They ask what they shall do, that they may thus *labour* or work the work of God. Their views were merely temporal. How perfectly in character nevertheless for such men was this reply ! Man is conscious of his natural liberty ; his hands are not tied ; he is but little sensible of the habits of iniquity, though bound in chains, and the slave of sin ; he thinks he can obey the divine laws from proper motives ; he sets a high price upon his obedience, and is willing to put the matter of his salvation at risk upon the merit of his own works. The pride of the corrupt heart of man will not consent to give to God the honour of his salvation. He naturally inclines, and often resolves, even after a profession of christianity, in the face of the gospel, to turn the religion of Jesus into a system of mere morality, and to go back to the broken covenant of works.

These Jews seem to have understood by “ the meat which endureth to everlasting life,” some temporal advantage, otherwise it is not conceivable that they would have asked what work they should do to attain it. But their own scriptures might have explained this allusion for them : surely they had read the words of wisdom : “ Come eat of the bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled ; forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding :” and in their prophets, “ Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour

for that which satisfieth not ; hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

If Jesus had only said to them on this occasion, this is the work which God requires of you ; rise in mass, and drive the Romans out of your land, and you shall enjoy the advantages which you are in quest of ; with what delight would they have caught his words as they escaped from his lips ? what rapidity, what confusion, would have ensued ? Not only the village of Capernaum, but all Galilee, would probably have caught the flame, and rebellion might have spread from Syria to Egypt, and from the desert to the shore ; nor can we calculate the effects even in regions more remote, so general had been the expectation of the Jewish Messiah. But, as he afterwards told the Roman governor, " his kingdom was not of this world ;" so, in the same views, "*Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*" The Lord is not profited by any work of man ; the kingdom of God is not to be erected by any labour you can perform ; the civil powers that are, are ordained of God ; your opposition to them is rebellion and guilt ; he is no gainer by all your carnal obedience to the law of Moses, nor by your performances of the voluntary uncommanded Pharisaic ceremonies ; but the work which is first in order for you, and your principal labour, is not merely to believe him whom the Father has sent, but that you should believe *on* him, or put your confidence and trust in him, as the only way of access unto the

offended Majesty of Heaven; the truth or substance of the fulfilment of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament; the author, procurer, and giver of spiritual and eternal life to every one who shall receive him.

The opposition of the sinful human heart to God, and the arguments of infidel minds, are much the same in every age; that "Christianity requires faith without evidence," is a vile aspersion; the evidence is strong enough, but evil minds will neither search for, nor weigh it. So these Jews, when required to believe on Jesus, demand a sign; "*What dost thou work?*" notwithstanding all his miracles, and particularly the miracle which they had witnessed the day before, of being fed, though thousands, on a few loaves and fishes. They upbraided him with the miracles of Moses, who had fed their fathers with bread, which, they allege, he furnished from heaven, whilst Jesus only increased the common bread; this also was but one meal, but Moses had fed the people of Israel forty years in the wilderness. His humble appearance made them doubt whether he was the personage spoken of in the prophecies, and described by Moses to be like unto, or greater than himself, and to demand miracles as great, or greater, than those which the Lord had given by Moses, whose prediction he seemed to them to oppose.

Jesus, in answer, distinguished between the manna given to Israel and the bread or food which could nourish to everlasting life, which he had mentioned. He lays a stress upon their words "*Moses gave*" it. It did not come from Hea-

ven, in their sense of the term, the highest Heavens, it fell only from the lower visible heavens. Nor was it *that* bread, which he had alluded to. The bread that he had encouraged them to expect by believing on him, was every way preferable; God was the giver of it; he gave it from the highest Heavens; and it was the true bread, of which the manna was only a type or shadow. It nourisheth to everlasting life; but those who had eaten the manna were all dead. Besides the manna fell almost every day, and required to be fresh, for the supply of those who ate of it, who were soon subjected again to hunger; but he that should eat of this bread should never again hunger.

Though every thing that he had said was calculated to lead those who heard him to understand, by the bread he was describing, himself, as given and sent by the Father; greater than Moses; from the highest, not the visible heavens; as that, or the true bread,\* the substance of the typical bread, which Israel ate in the wilderness; and as able to nourish the receivers of it to everlasting life, yet the Jews did not understand him; a part of them, at least, being desirous, we presume, of some supposed but unknown temporal gift, answered, "ever more give us this bread." He immediately showed them that he intended, by what he had been saying, him-

\* In verse 33, ὁ καὶ α βρωτων refers to αἶψος; instead of "he," it should be "that." Otherwise Christ needed not to have explained it in verse 35.

self. But he added, that they did not believe, nevertheless others would, even all that the Father gave him ; these he would not reject, for he came to do his Father's will, and would accomplish the salvation of such.

When he had thus expressed plainly that he was the bread intended, that he came from Heaven, and that those who come to him and believe on him should never again hunger or thirst, and that this was not merely his own will as a man, but the purpose of God, and therefore worthy of the belief and entire confidence of every one who heard it ; the Jews murmured ; they knew his parentage, and could not admit that he came from Heaven. So gross were their conceptions, they seem to have understood him, that he descended bodily from thence. Seeing the unreasonableness and obstinacy of many of his hearers, he did not choose to explain the figurative language he had used ; but asserted still more strongly the necessity of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, that they might have eternal life.

If the gospel is a mere system of morality, what necessity or even propriety was there, which could lead to, or even what excuse, for speaking in such dark mysterious language ? Why was not the guilt of sin described, or the beauties of virtue depicted before them ? Why were those who wished to make him a king, opposed with doctrines which appeared to them incredible and impossible ? Instead of condescending to their terms, the Saviour, in answer to their murmurs, expresses the argument he had used before in a manner still more repugnant to their views and expectations



than he had done : “Murmur not among yourselves ; no man can come unto me, except the Father draw him.”—You need not confirm each other in incredulity, by referring to my parentage ; your unbelief and carnality are proof against my instructions ; nothing but the grace of God can change and draw you to me. He then shows from their own scriptures, that men require “to be taught of God.”

This doctrine, at first so opposite to their prejudiced minds, would have a tendency, when applied by the Spirit of truth, to humble the pride of their hearts ; in after ages it teaches the saints to give the glory of their salvation to God, and all men to ask it of him, who is ever ready to hear the humble, and to produce that poverty of spirit which characterizes his children. This hard doctrine is not inculcated that man should withhold his obedience until he discerns his help to have been given him, for grace is not known but by its fruits ; we are bound to come to Christ, and believe, because the truth demands our regard ; because he commands us ; because we have need of his mercy ; and because the duty is in itself excellent.

We have his solemn assurance, that those who will come to him, Christ will in no wise cast out ; this is not given to deceive, but to encourage us : and first to question whether the Father has given us to the Son, and whether he will draw us to him, instead of rising up at his command, and coming is but to find fault, and argues our depravity ; if we will prostrate ourselves at the

feet of mercy, and leave to God to fulfil his own purposes, he will not cast us away.

The eating and drinking here is not meant of the sacramental supper, for it had not been instituted; and also because it can neither be said of it, that all who partake shall live for ever, nor that none others have life; but these words and that ordinance each represent the same thing—a living faith. And those who refuse the ordinance, in opposition to their consciences, act the part of these enemies of Christ, and reject him to their own destruction.

## LECTURE XVII.

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LUKE, CHAPTER XX, VERSE 9 TO 19.

THEN began he to speak to the people this parable : A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard : but the husbandmen beat him, and sent *him* away empty. And again he sent a third : and they wounded him also, and cast *him* out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do ? I will send my beloved son : it may be they will reverence *him* when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying. This is the heir : come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our's. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed *him*. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them ? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard *it*, they said, God forbid. And he beheld them, and said, What is it then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner ? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And the chief priests and the Scribes

the same hour sought to lay hands on him ; and they feared the people : for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

**WHILST** Jesus was teaching publickly in the temple at Jerusalem, the chief priests, scribes, and elders, came to him, and demanded by what authority he thus entered into the city with noise, and took upon him to teach the people, and drive out of the temple the oxen and sheep. It would have been in vain for him to have alleged in his defence the prophecies of himself, and the miracles he wrought ; their hearts were carnal and full of envy ; they were jealous for their religion, although it was now but a mere form. He therefore determined to protect himself by the people present who were friendly to the memory of John the baptist, who had been slain ; and required their decision on a previous question as the condition of his answering theirs ; he asked, what was their opinion of John ? They discerned, that if they should acknowledge John, they must acknowledge Jesus, for he testified of him ; if, on the contrary, they denied John's commission, the people present would resent it, and might proceed to worse measures with them. Their refusal to answer justified his. He then reprov'd them in parabolical language, and brought them to condemn themselves. There were two sons ; their father commanded one to go and work ; he promised, but did not go ; the second, upon a like injunction, refused to go, but afterwards repented and went ; he asked the priests and scribes, which of the two obeyed ?

they answered the latter, and thus they preferred thieves, and others, who repented and obeyed God, to themselves, who professed an obedience which they did not render.

Having his most inveterate and powerful enemies before him, in such circumstances as that they durst not injure him, he intended in the next parable to give them their own true picture, to show them that they had revolted from God, using his religion only for their own emolument; that they had rejected or murdered the prophets, and would soon slay him; that God would also reject them, and transfer the visible church to the Gentiles. These things he determined to speak to them in such manner as not to be misunderstood; he seems to have taken the analogy from the fifth chapter of Isaiah,\* with such variations as the then present circumstances made necessary.

“*A certain man planted a vineyard.*” The Lord had instituted the Mosaic dispensation of religion, which we suppose to be the vineyard here intended, of his own planting: or if, as in the parable of Isaiah, the people be intended, Israel was a noble vine, wholly a right seed, though they afterwards became “the degenerate plant of a strange vine:” but as the kings and people, and not the priests and elders, only had slain the prophets, which crime is here charged upon the husbandmen; and the vineyard is not represented as having degenerated, but to have been claimed by the husbandmen; it seems to

\* Isa. ch. v, v. 1—7.

be more correct to refer it to the dispensation of the then visible church.

The Lord having pronounced the law, and by numerous visible displays established his church, he gave the immediate care of it to the priests and Levites, appointed also the people to bear their part in its support, and allowed all of them to derive certain advantages from it: these were the husbandmen; but still the church was his, and the glory due to him; he retained his right to the fruits of the vineyard. The withdrawing his more immediate visible manifestations, and displays of miraculous powers, is represented by the landlord going into a far country. It is said to have been "*for a long time.*" This is expressive of the many ages through which the Jewish church was the vineyard of the Lord; during all which time it was intrusted to the more immediate management of the priests and Levites, the extraordinary interventions of the divine power and majesty being withdrawn.

At the season for expecting fruit, he sent his servant again and again. The Israelitish church had been planted, that it might produce fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. When he sent his servants the prophets to them, if the priests and people of Israel had been faithful tenants of the vineyard, and had intended to have given God the glory due to him, they would have received his prophets kindly, and treated them as the messengers of the Lord of the vineyard; and the prophets would have been witnesses of the integrity of those to whom the immediate care of the vineyard had been intrusted. But

the husbandmen dishonoured the servants sent from the owner of the vineyard, paid them no rent, beating some, and killing some. In the same manner did the priests and people of Israel treat the prophets of God, sent to them from time to time; they took it ill, that the prophets should reprove them for their sins, and demand of them more holiness, and the tribute of glory to God; they beat some, and killed others, cast them out, and sent them back to their Master, without any acknowledgment of his right, refusing to give him the fruits of the vineyard, the glory due to his name.

The owner of the vineyard might have removed these husbandmen from the vineyard with strict propriety, upon their first denial of his right; but he left them in possession from year to year: when they murdered his holy servants, he might justly have destroyed them; but notwithstanding all the blood of the prophets shed by Israel, he still spared them, and at length he even sent his own son to them.

This parable was spoken in the temple to the chief priests and elders, the successors of those murderous husbandmen, possessing the same principles, and, so far as they approved their actions, partaking of the guilt of their predecessors. It was therefore spoken to show them what the Lord had a right to expect, and what judgment must be passed on them for denying him his fruits, and persecuting his servants; and not to reveal the secret views and purposes of an all-wise God, who knew that though they ought to reverence his Son, they would murder him, our gracious Redeemer.

But the husbandmen reasoned among themselves, that if they should kill him, the inheritance would be theirs. Thus did Jesus expose the secret counsels of those men, who were often conferring together that they might take his life, and so save their vineyard to themselves; for their envy against him was chiefly founded on their expectation that his miracles, and doctrines would overthrow their ecclesiastical authority, and influence.

That they really knew that he was the heir, cannot be affirmed of them all, since it is elsewhere said that they slew Jesus ignorantly, and that they would not have murdered him, if they had known he was the Lord of life. Yet the expression here indicates that at least some of them acted against their own convictions.

When he said in his parable, "*they cast him out of the vineyard and slew him,*" how exactly did he foretell to them their future leading him out of the city, and slaying him!

When Jesus had exhibited his parable, with all its circumstances, he then asked publickly, what would the master or owner of such vineyard do, whose right to the fruits had been denied, even by those whom he had favoured with the care of it; who had superadded to their injustice the maltreatment of his servants, and at length had killed his son? "They say unto him,"\* the common people who were present, and were more numerous and friendly to him, answered; and

\* These words are given in Matthew's gospel, but omitted in Luke's.



the injustice and ingratitude of the husbandmen in the parable must have led all who were impartial to say, "he will come and destroy these husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others." But the priests, scribes, and elders, who could not help seeing that they were themselves intended by the husbandmen, bore their testimony against the answer given by the people, and spoke for themselves, "God forbid."

Thus did they justify the conduct of men who were guilty of withholding from the true owner that which was not theirs; and of rejecting and killing his servants, and murdering the heir.

And Jesus "beheld them;" he looked upon the people, and upon the priests and elders, and saw that his enemies refused to approve the natural answer to his question arising from the parable, and which the common people had given; he therefore addressed himself to his enemies; and as they professed to believe the scriptures of the Old Testament, he adduced prophecies from them, to prove that the answer which the common people had given was true. He asks for the sense of this passage: \* "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.*" These words are capable of being understood, in reference to David, but these priests and scribes did not urge such interpretation; and it may be fairly concluded that they themselves understood the Psalm as a prophecy of Christ. It is remarkable that this is the same Psalm out of which the people had sung, "Ho-

\* Psal. cxviii, v. 22.

sanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,"\* when Christ came up to this feast; which circumstance was, it is probable, a principal cause of this attack made upon Jesus in the temple. These men were, or should have been the builders; they possessed the authority, but they rejected Christ, who has become the head of the corner, the foundation, upon which the whole building, his church, rests; he is the corner, both sides of the edifice rest upon him—the Old Testament church and the New.

He then addressed to them an awful warning, which has been verified in every age; even these very priests and scribes have fearfully established its truth in their destruction. "*Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken;*" he is as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, and those who, through perverse blindness, stumble at the doctrines of salvation in a Redeemer, and discern neither form nor comeliness in him, will be broken and destroyed; but "*those upon whom it shall fall it will grind to powder;*" those who shall oppose, and fight against Christ, so as that his fury must fall upon them, they will become as dust or chaff before the tempest.

The chief priests and scribes knew he had spoken against them; but they feared the people, and durst not seize him.

There is, we presume, not a reader of this parable, who does not take the side of Christ, and blame the conduct of these priests and scribes,

\* Psal. cxviii, v. 23. 26.

and so *they* built up the tombs of the prophets, whom their fathers had slain, and said they would not have been partakers in the blood of the prophets; but Jesus asserted, that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have done the same things; and their murdering him proved he spoke the truth. Every one who refuses to close with Christ, and become wholly a christian, possesses the same enmity, and would have murdered the prophets, and Christ, had he been contemporary, and exposed to the same temptations. If we refuse to produce the works of righteousness in faith and holiness, we withhold from him the fruit of his vineyard, and both deserve to be, and will be cast out.

## LECTURE XVIII.



LUKE, CHAPTER VI, VERSE 6 TO 11.\*

**AND** it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

**THIS** transaction is recorded in the three first gospels immediately succeeding Christ's justification of his disciples for eating the grains of wheat on the sabbath day; their hunger being an excuse, as that of David and his men was, for eating the shew-bread, which was allowed to the priests only. Those were the exceptions of necessity, and the following, of mercy.

\* See also Mat. ch. xii, v. 9—14. Mar. ch. iii, v. 1—6.

The sabbath of the Jews was given to them in the wilderness, as a memorial of their deliverance ; as a type of the rest of the soul through the redemption in Christ ; and to prevent them from mixing with the idolatrous worship of the nations. The seventh from the commencement of the creation, the day of God's rest, and man's first day that he could count, was probably the first day of the week ; the holy day of the Gentiles, first sanctified or set apart ; the same on which Christ arose, and the Holy Spirit descended ; and always observed by christians since the resurrection of Christ. Now although he intended to substitute in his church, or rather restore, the original day, the reasons of the Jewish sabbath not extending to the Gentile nations, yet he did not intend to effect it, by impairing or at all relaxing the sacred duty, which is of universal obligation, to devote one seventh of our days to the exclusive service of God, according to the fourth commandment in the moral law. But he would correct the Pharisees, who had superstitiously inculcated a rest even from the duties of the day.

There was a disease to be healed, an act of mercy to be effected by a word of Christ's, in as little time as his enemies consumed in making the objection. On the other hand, there were spies present watching him, and desiring to entrap him, and take his life. The question therefore was, which was rather a breach of the sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save the arm, and perhaps the life, of this diseased man, or to take the life of another man, even of Christ himself.

The Redeemer argues the lawfulness of healing,\* from their own practice of relieving their creatures; according to which, unless the life of a sheep is of more value than that of a man, mercy may as well be shown to a man, as to a beast, and the cure may be effected without a breach of the sabbath.

If the argument drawn from their practice be waved, the same conclusion will arise from general principles; for works of mercy can scarcely be called exceptions from the rest of the sabbath, because they are required by God, and are his service, and therefore proper for the day.

The performance of this miracle on the sabbath day, was not intended by Jesus as an example of a relaxation of the sacred obligation of the fourth commandment; he often directed men to keep the commandments, and so enjoined obedience to that commandment; on the contrary, all that was said admitted the duty of observing that day; but the object was both to show the error of the Pharisees in refusing to perform acts of mercy to men on that day, which were founded in charity, whilst they performed without difficulty acts of mercy to their cattle, when their own interest was concerned; and also to save himself from their false accusations of him as a violator of the sabbath, a charge which might destroy the force of the miracle, considered as a testimony from the God of nature, that he was a holy person; for the Almighty would not give his testimony in favour of one who would break his law, and in the act of doing so.

The enemies of Christ had a knowledge of his

\* Mat. ix. xii. v. 11. 12.

compassion, and of his power to cure, or they would not have watched him. They neither desired the good of the afflicted man, nor to see the power of God, but thought this was a favourable opportunity to obtain evidence for the condemnation of Christ, if he should relieve the man on the sabbath. Nevertheless he who knows the hearts of men was aware of their intentions, and to prevent them from accusing him before the people on profaning the sabbath, he chose to show the whole congregation the propriety of the act before he would perform it. He therefore directed the man to stand forth in the midst of the people and synagogue.

His enemies supposing he would immediately effect the cure, artfully proposed the question to him, "*whether it was lawful to heal on the sabbath day,*"\* that they might have not only to accuse him of doing the action, but of speaking in its defence against the sacred rest of the day.

He not only vindicated the action, upon grounds which do not infringe upon the sacred service of the day, but hinted at their attempts upon his life, as a real violation of it. They could assign no reason wherefore relief might not be given to a man on the sabbath day, as well as to a beast; and the imputation of evil designs against him, was a thrust not to be parried; they could therefore reply nothing, without committing themselves, and disappointing their malicious purposes. "*They held their peace.*" When they were silent, he performed the cure.

\* Mat. ch. xii, v. 10.

“*They were*” instantly “*filled with madness.*” They had, instead of prejudicing the people against him, received a total defeat; their ignorance of the law had been exposed; their uncharitableness in preferring the good of their sheep to that of their fellow men; their malice also; and the whole conduct of Jesus was confirmed by the miraculous power of God.

All the circumstances contributed to evince the truth of this miracle. It was in a synagogue, a place of publick worship; on the sabbath day, when the people were actually assembled; and these were probably numerous, both because crowds followed Christ, and because the conduct of the Pharisees who were present shows that they had a respect for the numbers present. It was not performed among Christ's friends only, but in the face of his enemies.

It is remarkable, that the man's lameness was so visible to the scribes and Pharisees, that they were watching whether Christ would perform the cure. There appears no application by the man whose hand was withered, but Christ bids him to arise and stand forth in the midst. He obeyed, and no doubt joyfully. The dispute about the lawfulness of the action is begun by the Pharisees, the man still standing with his withered hand in the view of and in the midst of the congregation, until Christ had by reasoning silenced the objections of his enemies. Every eye was, we presume, fixed upon the man and his withered hand. There could be no doubt of the reality of the affliction, that the hand had perished, in the mind of any one present.



Time was given, before the miracle was performed, for reflection, for Christ looked around upon all the people, being filled with indignation and sorrow for the hardness of the hearts of his enemies, who were willing to resist the plainest displays of divine power, as well as to pervert the law. At length, when every one was anxious for the event, he says, "*stretch forth thy hand;*" the man obeyed, and, as he made the effort, power was not wanting; he stretched forth his hand, and it became whole as the other.

This miracle was of too publick a kind to have been concealed, and three evangelists publishing it in their gospels in substantially the same manner, afforded an early opportunity to controvert it, had this been practicable.

The relation of it, descriptive as it is of time, place, circumstances, publicity, opposition of enemies, delay of performance, a correct exposition of the duty of keeping the sabbath, an actual restoration of the withered hand, and the subsequent machinations of Christ's enemies, could not have been foisted upon the world, and either received by the christians, or submitted to by the opposers of christianity, if it had not been true. If true, it establishes the power of Christ, who spoke authoritatively, without asking the aid of another, and must be a divine person. His wisdom in correcting the Pharisees proves also the same thing. Such evidence is given us, upon which to build our faith. But if we will not stretch forth the hand, nor essay to believe at his word, it will be just if we are not healed, but left to perish in our unbelief.

# LECTURE XIX.



MARK, CHAPTER I, VERSE 21 TO 28.

**AND** they went into Capernaum ; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine : for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit ; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone ; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this ? what new doctrine is this ? for with authority commandeth he even unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

**THIS** cure by dispossession appears to have taken place in a Jewish synagogue in Galilee, on the sabbath day, at the time of publick worship, when the people were assembled together, and

openly before their eyes. The cure was effected after Jesus had been teaching; for the people, it is said, discerned that he “*taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes,*” who depended upon the oral laws, or traditions, which they said had been given by Moses; they pretended not to speak by their own authority, but on that of the Jewish lawgiver; but Christ spake as a divine person, or as a teacher, who had come from God. It is also said, that *they were astonished* at it, and that “*his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.*” This transaction, being in establishment of Christ’s authority, must have demanded the attention of the priests and rulers, as well as of the people at large; these were looking for the Messiah, and the former were jealous of their power and influence. The miracles which he performed could not have been by a common man; they showed superior power and authority, according to the declaration of a Jewish ruler, “no man can do the works that thou doest, except God be with him.”

These gospels would not have been received or accredited at the time they were first published, if this representation had been incorrect, because at that period the truth or falsehood of the relation could have been, and no doubt was easily investigated. We know the gospels are frequently quoted in books written soon after those days, and from thence in different centuries down to our own times; and no doubt they were immediately eagerly sought after, and much read, for they were

soon translated into various languages, as appears by the copies which have reached our age; the facts here recorded cannot therefore be reasonably doubted.

The possessed man, who had associated himself with the people in the synagogue, and had heard the discourse of Jesus, made an open and publick attack upon Christ, calling out, "*let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us?*" We are not to suppose that these words are the words of Satan, expressing his fears of being destroyed by Christ; that fiend was too cunning thus to speak against and reveal himself. The man challenges Jesus as one who had come to destroy the nation; and if there had been a tradition among the Jews that the Messiah was to destroy the Galileans, which is asserted, these words were particularly calculated to arouse their jealousies. Such a tradition well comports with the contempt poured upon them by the Jews, and will also account for his announcing him to be the holy one of God, a name given in the Psalms \* for the Messiah. There is nothing inconsistent in supposing fallen spirits to be the instrumental causes of calamities and afflictions sent on mankind; they are neither self-existent, almighty, nor independent; but being subject to the power of God, they are instruments in his hands, and, like evil men, completely under his controul, and may be used to punish the wicked,

\* Psal. xvi, v. 10.

as consistently with divine goodness, as fire, and hail, snow, and vapour, and stormy winds, which fulfil his commands. But Satan cannot force the will; if he could, it would be his sin only, not ours; every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed; when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. Yet he is a spirit of superior faculties; he can understand our constitutions and inclinations, and suit himself to them; he is evil, set on mischief, and goes about seeking whom he may devour. He is denominated the prince of the power of the air, or the powerful prince of the air; he has much power, yet he can do nothing but that which is permitted; he has much knowledge, but cannot search the heart: his change of place, being a spiritual nature, is rapid, but he is not omnipresent; we speak of him usually as one, not because we imagine he is in different places, but because one arch enemy tempted the first parents, and brought ruin on our race, or because we cannot distinguish between those secret enemies, yet they are numerous, and roam at large. In this instance it was the man, not the fiend, that spoke, neither did the unclean spirit take such a possession of the man, as to become the soul to his body, nor did he force him to speak against his will; the man spoke intelligibly; he knew what he said, Satan did neither in this instance, we suppose, cause him to speak as a mere machine without understanding, nor did he whisper to him what to say; the evil spirit excited him to speak just as he does any other man who chooses to blaspheme. He knew, we presume,

that Jesus was from Nazareth; he knew that in the scriptures the Messiah is called the Son of God; he knew that all the people were looking for his coming; he probably knew that the Jews had said that the Messiah would destroy the Galileans; his evil heart was filled with enmity at the holiness of the discourse Jesus had spoken; he vented his rage, or his pride, by saying what he did, and was actuated in the usual manner of temptations by Satan in doing it. Satan no doubt little expected by this temptation to be detected and dispossessed, but the heart searching Jesus discovered, exposed, and commanded him to depart; being compelled to obey, he exercised his diabolical power on the man's body, and in this case he was not restrained from throwing him into violent convulsions, and then left him; but Jesus healed the man, and thereby showed his superior power and authority.

Men of much piety and good understandings have supposed that we ought always, when reading the New Testament, to consider the demoniacs as sick men only; that every thing which is spoken of their possessions is spoken in conformity to the prevailing sentiments of that day; that the commands which Christ uttered to unclean spirits to come out of persons were spoken merely in conformity to prevailing ideas; and that the words of such maniacs, when they spoke in the name of the spirits, which they imagined possessed them respectively, ought to be viewed as flowing from the prejudices of the times, with which even the diseased persons themselves were affected. This opinion is thought also to re-

ceive strong support from the circumstance, that what one evangelist denominates a possession, another on the same subject calls, in some instances, a disease. It is said also that the supposition of possessions admits an unwarrantable interference of satanical power with the government of Divine Providence. Much stress has been laid, and this ground is indeed more than plausible, upon the promiscuous interpretation of some words wholly distinct, and never confounded in the original, the words demon and devil. With respect to the swine of the Gadarenes, it is alleged, and justly, that the God of nature might easily have transferred the madness of the demoniac to them, as Gehazi received the leprosy of Naaman. Principal stress has been laid upon the case of the damsel of Philippi, healed by Paul, because what our version calls in her a spirit of divination is literally a spirit of Python or Apollo. It is urged that Apollo was an imaginary god, and could not impart a spirit of divination, and as the apostle knew this, his language in commanding the spirit of Apollo to depart from her must have been merely an accommodation to vulgar prejudices. It has been thought that this way of understanding the possessions spoken of in the scriptures is preferable, because it not only removes difficulties in the subject itself, but also destroys the infidel objection of false miracles, and establishes the argument for the divine character of the Redeemer, founded on his miracles, on grounds much more defensible.

This is an important subject, for the miracles which Christ performed of this kind were nume-

rous; it has been said, and perhaps truly, that they are not only more numerous, but more minutely described, than the other miracles of Christ: if we account therefore all that is said in the scriptures on this subject to have been spoken merely in conformity to prevailing prejudices, we give up half his miracles to secure the rest; we dispense with a large portion of the sacred gospel as useless, and even do worse, for we not only suppose Jesus to have practised a conformity to popular prejudices, which would have increased their fears of demons,\* to which they were already too much addicted, but to have deceived by the appearance of the exercise of powers which were not exercised. This is to give up his moral character, and consequently Christ himself. If there were no real possessions by evil spirits, it is wonderful that Christ and his disciples should on some occasions speak to them, commanding them to be silent, or to come out of men, and directing them how they should dispose of themselves, at other times tell their numbers, or speak of them as numerous in the same person, and generally distinguish them in the plainest manner from the party possessed. Such a conformity to error is unaccountable, unless we should blasphemously waive Christ's integrity, and unwarrantably give up that of his disciples. If the disciples knew this was but an accommodation to vulgar opinions, it is strange that they should, when reforming mankind with the utmost simplicity and the greatest

\* Rendered in our version, "superstitious."



regard for truth, have left the christian church wholly unapprized of this fallacy.

That the same case should be called a possession, and a disease, is no proof that it was only the latter, for Satan might have produced the disease, and so both expressions have been proper. Does it follow, that because the same case is termed both demoniacy and lunacy, that therefore it is only the latter? We might as well say it was only the former; but the language requires that it should have been both, and if this be impossible, then the description is incorrect. But there is no inconsistency; Satan may possess, and also superinduce, by divine permission, bodily disease. If the same affection was, consistently with vulgar prejudices, denominated both lunacy and possession, there could have been neither necessity nor reason for representing that as a possession which was only lunacy; and such unnecessary conformity to supposed vulgar prejudices, was incompatible with the simplicity of the gospel.

To allege that this doctrine implies a power in Satan which might interfere with the government of providence, is to assume what is inadmissible, namely, that any power of that fiend's, or of any other creature, conflicts with that of the Almighty; his malice and power can only effectuate divine purposes, and the Lord may punish men by their instrumentality, in a manner as consistent with his own glory as in any other way.

The correctness of the distinction usually taken between demon and devil ought to be admitted, and that demons were strictly nothing at

all,\* that those who worshipped them worshipped nothing, and that where it is said in our version that men sacrificed unto or worshipped devils, it ought to have been, if we desire to represent the idea of the worshipper, that they sacrificed unto or worshipped demons or beasts;† but because the words demon and devil are distinct, and never meant the same thing when used by any of the worshippers of demons, it does not follow that the devil did not interfere with and claim such worship; nor will it follow that the Jews and first christians did not esteem demons to be devils, nor that the writers of the gospels did not understand by the worship of demons, the worship of devils, and take the words generally as synonymous.

It is obvious that the Pharisees deemed Beelzebub the chief of demons;‡ also, from the words Christ addressed to them, it appears that by Beelzebub they meant Satan, and that by demons they meant devils. “If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? and if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?” The same arch fiend cannot inhabit each of us who cast out devils; and if one evil spirit can cast out another of equal power and malice, Satan’s kingdom is divided against itself, and will go to ruin. The power, therefore, which we exert in casting out devils, is not from Beelzebub, or any other evil spirit, but from

\* Deut. ch. xxxii, 21. Isa. ch. xl, 29. Jer. ch. x, 8.

† Psal. cvi. ‡ Mat. ch. xii, 24.

God. Jesus immediately afterwards exhibits the grand argument which all these miracles were designed to enforce. "But if I cast out devils (demons) by the Spirit of God, then is the kingdom of God come unto you." Nothing can be clearer than that by the word *demons* here, Jesus meant devils or fallen angels. The disciples returned with joy, "even the demons are subject to us through thy name." The disciples accounted them beings, and evil ones; does Christ tell them, it is a vulgar error? on the contrary, he says, he "saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning;" unquestionably he intended by such language to encourage them to believe that they should prevail against the power of that enemy. Peter also had the same view of the matter, for he informed Cornelius that Jesus went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the *devil*.\* These scriptures show that Satan had, and exercised the power of possessing at that time, and that he did so in those very cases wherein *demons* were said to possess, and that the casting out demons was destroying his kingdom, and manifesting the power of God.

Because we adopt the use of the term lunacy for a disease, which is not occasioned by the moon, does it necessarily follow that the gospel writers used the term demoniacity for diseases which they knew were not effected by devils? On the contrary, the term lunacy, used for a disease, carries some presumption, that there have been those who have thought the disease occa-

\* Acts, ch. x, v. 38. Διαβουλ.

sioned or increased by the moon; and so the term demoniacy, if we should suppose it used for a disease, is at least some proof that there have been those who have imagined that demons inflicted the distemper. It seems strange, that the use of the term should be converted into a proof that those who used it saw its impropriety, and did not suppose that demons occasioned such diseases.

That the demoniacs were frequently affected by diseases we admit, but if Satan was the cause of them, they were real possessions. That there were vulgar prejudices then there is no reason to doubt; and that lunatics might fancy themselves possessed, and express themselves so, is very possible, and yet these things are by no means repugnant to the direct assertions of scripture, that unclean spirits assailed the Redeemer through the possessed person, and caused them to speak in the manner described in the passage before us. With respect to the damsel at Philippi, we admit Apollo was nothing at all; that consequently he could not send a spirit into the girl; that she could not strictly prophesy; and, if it will be any relief, that she was crazy, or lunatic; that all this was known distinctly by Paul; nevertheless it will not follow, that Paul, by commanding the spirit of Python or Apollo to come out of her, spoke otherwise than as he thought, or than as the fact really was: for though Apollo was nothing, yet the devil might have exercised that power which we have shown he had, in taking possession of her, and in affecting the body so as to bring on this fancy or madness, and those at-

tempts at soothsaying; and as he assumed the character of the idol, Paul, in dispossessing him by the power of Jesus, did well to call him by that name, to show these heathens that he was aided by one greater than their imaginary Apollo, whose character Satan had borrowed.

Let us be thankful that the power of those fiends is greatly abridged, though not destroyed. How dreadful to become their prey, and be always under their controul! If we resist Satan, he will flee from us. Let us therefore mortify the flesh, with the affections and lusts; watch against temptation and excess of every kind; keep close to God in prayer, and march carefully under the banners of king Jesus, who will give us the victory, and then graciously crown us for conquering.

## LECTURE XX.

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JOHN, CHAPTER III, VERSE 1 TO 13.

**THERE** was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell

you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

**AMONG** men who profess the same principles, and associate together for religious and other purposes, are frequently found individuals possessed of more than ordinary candour and liberality, and in a greater degree freed from those prejudices which are embarrassing to reason and inimical to truth. Education, social intercourse, wealth, and power, contribute often to that enlargement of views, and independency of conduct, which would render to every one the respect which is due to him, and produce that familiarity and friendly intercourse, which every man has a right to expect from his brother of the human family, and will obtain, except from proud spirits, restricted minds, and men of contracted habits, or from those whose selfishness or malevolence make them the enemies of mankind.

Nicodemus, if the same who is mentioned by the Jews as a counsellor in the days of Jesus, was a man of great wealth, as well as high in respect and authority, and was probably of a more generous soul than many of his prouder cotemporaries in meaner circumstances; he was a Pharisee, yet possessing liberality of sentiment; he was a moral, but unconverted man; and though not a disciple of Christ, he was too much the gentleman to be his enemy from the selfish, disingenuous motives of the pharisees; he was even his friend, so far as comported with the worldly views of a carnal heart. He was convinced that Jesus was an extraordinary person.

But, like the other Pharisees, he understood the prophetick descriptions of the glory of Messiah's reign to relate to temporal grandeur; he must therefore either have thought that Jesus was not the Christ, but some divinely instructed teacher, who might give information of him; or that Jesus would change his appearance and conduct, and erect his royal standard. Upon either supposition, by an early application to him this man of worldly wisdom would be the better enabled to make choice of the wisest course of conduct.

What induced him to come to Christ *by night*, can be only matter of conjecture; whether that he might suit the convenience of Jesus, or have a more satisfactory private conversation with him; or whether he hoped to gain more of his secret views, or designed to make propositions to him, or was afraid of the obloquy or resentment of his brethren, cannot be clearly discerned.

Candour requires that every man who makes light of the miracles, and other gospel evidence of Christ's mission, should pay respect to the salutation of this discerning ingenuous unbeliever; "*Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.*" Here is at least the faith of a Socinian; he knew that Jesus was a teacher come from God, that he wrought miracles, and that God was with him; and this faith was accompanied by a regard for the truth, and by integrity of conduct; but Christ would not own him as his follower, pronounced him incapable of seeing his kingdom, blamed him for his ignorance of spiritual things, and de-



clared that a work must be wrought in him by the Spirit of God, before he could attain to that, which he was seeking in ignorance, and from improper motives.

This reproof was designed in the first instance to communicate to him the reason wherefore he could not derive from Christ that information which he came in quest of.

*“ Verily, verily,\* I say unto you, except a man be born again, † he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Nicodemus, you come, impelled by interested motives, to know if I am the promised Messiah, whom you all expect; but you and your nation labour under a mistake; the kingdom of Christ “ cometh not with observation, neither shall men say lo here, or lo there, the kingdom of God is within” his people. The Messiah is a spiritual prince; his kingdom is not of this world, and you cannot understand, if I should speak to you, his true character.

This new birth is the inception of the life of sanctification; it is the work of the Spirit of God; but as it is known only by its fruits, it has been variously denominated from them, a new taste, perception, sense, life, light, heart, &c. yet

\* As none of the gospel writers, except John, repeats the word “ verily;” (amen) as he does so sometimes when another writer uses it but once; and only gives it when the Saviour speaks; it is probable John wrote it originally in the Hebrew character, and that he or some transcriber also inserted it in the common Greek letter. If so, Jesus used it singly, and it becomes also questionable whether it should be read adverbially.

† Some read it “ born from above;” but Nicodemus did not so understand it, as appears from his reply.

it by no means follows that the worthy men, who have afforded this semblance of difference in their descriptions, are really discordant in their ideas of this change.

But why did the Saviour choose to denominate this work of the Spirit a being "born again?" The answer is at hand: he accommodated himself to the ideas of Nicodemus. This Pharisee, who was a member of the Sanhedrim, must have well understood the words "born again" as a Jewish phrase; for the Jews accounted that every person who was proselyted from the Gentiles, by being adopted one of them, was "like a child new born."\* "And all those relations he had whilst a Gentile, they now cease from being so."† This is alluded to by Tacitus,‡ who, speaking of circumcised proselytes, observes, that they "renounce their country, and hold their parents, children, and brethren in the utmost contempt." "Born again" was to the mind of Nicodemus tantamount to becoming a proselyte, or changing one's kindred, nation, and religion. And the phrase "kingdom of God" must have been equally well known to him, because it was a common expression in his day among the Jews for the kingdom of the Messiah, which God was to set up. Taken together, the sense would appear to him to be, except a man be proselyted from his religion, nation, and people, of what country soever he should happen to be, he cannot enjoy the advantages

\* Jevamoth apud Lightfoot

† Maimon. in cod.

‡ Lib. v, c. 5.

of becoming a subject of the kingdom of Messiah.

The words nevertheless contained a latent difficulty in them, for the cause and nature of this change, intended here by the Saviour, were not such as obtained when every Gentile was proselyted to the religion of the Jews, though they ought to have been the same. But the sentiment understood by the Pharisee from the words, and which was correct, so far as it went, but was not the whole that was intended, must have been in direct opposition to the expectations of the Jews, who thought it sufficient to be the natural descendants of Abraham, to ensure to them the advantages of being the subjects of Messiah, when he should come: according to their own language; "There is a part allotted to all Israel in the world to come;"\* so they also termed Christ's reign.

It was this that appeared difficult to Nicodemus. To cease to be an Israelite; to renounce his blood, and also his religion; to give up all the gracious promises and prophecies made in this respect to the children of Israel, that he might become a subject of Messiah's kingdom, was a strange and a hard doctrine. To suppose he seriously asked if a man could be conceived again, or to imagine that he for a moment thought that this could possibly be the meaning of Jesus, are equally gross and absurd. He asks no explanation of the phrase, "*the kingdom of God*," because he came to inquire about Messiah's reign,

\* Sanhedr. in Lightfoot, vol. ii, p. 533.

and knew that that was the subject Jesus had spoken on; but he wished to know, whether even the Israelites, the natural heirs of the promises, must be denationalized to become partakers of the blessings of Christ's kingdom, so long before promised, typified, and described in the prophecies. His question was therefore directed to this single point, and well calculated to elicit an explanation of the figurative language, "born again."

Jesus in reply explains to him the terms, "born again," by substituting the phrase "born of the water and of the Spirit." Nicodemus knew that a purification by water had been practised upon proselytes, when received into the Jewish church, for centuries before. "No man is a proselyte until he be circumcised and baptized."\* Christ had used the words "born again," which were expressive of a change similar to that effected by a proselyte; and now to show Nicodemus that he did intend a being proselyted, as well as that which was still more important in the words "born again," and that even though the party was an Israelite, he adds the word "water," in allusion to the manner of making a Jewish proselyte; "Except a man be born of the *water* and the Spirit." But a further change of the expression was necessary; before it was, "he cannot see the kingdom of God," but now it is, "he cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God." A man may see that kingdom; he may be a subject of the saving change denominated a being "born again," without entering into or becoming a member of

\* Babylonian Ta'mud, vid. Lightfoot, 2 vol. p. 117.

Christ's visible church or kingdom ; but he cannot enter into or become a subject of the church of Christ on earth, which is a part of his kingdom, without being born of the water, that is, without being baptized. The different expressions of seeing, and of entering into this kingdom, are here used with reference to the distinction between a being born of water, and a being born of the Spirit, and were obviously necessary.

The question which the counsellor wished a solution of was, who would be, and how they should become the subjects of the kingdom which the Messiah would set up ? And particularly, whether an Israelite should be such a subject by descent ? Jesus therefore plainly showed him, that no man could become a member of his visible government, without adopting a new profession he must be proselyted, though a Jew, by the symbolical purification of water ; and to be a subject of his spiritual kingdom, he must be proselyted by an internal purification or change wrought by the Spirit of God. In such work of the Spirit, he represented man as merely passive, " except a man *be born again.*" Without this change, the Jewish ruler was not to expect to see or enjoy Messiah's kingdom ; to discern spiritual things, he must be first rendered spiritual, or be influenced by the Holy Spirit ; a change to be known only by its effects. "*The wind \* bloweth where it listeth,*" chooseth, or happeneth to blow, "*and thou hearest the sound thereof,*

\* The same original word signifies Spirit, which makes the figure much more striking in the Greek, than it now is to the English reader.

*but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, and so is every one who is born of the Spirit.*" This professor of the Jewish religion was not culpable for not knowing the manner of the operation of the Spirit, but he might and ought to have known the fact itself; for David says, "Create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me."—"Take not thine Holy Spirit from me." The Saviour, in answer to his astonishment, tells him, if he could not understand regeneration, which takes place on earth, he could not receive higher doctrines, such as relate to his heavenly glory and divine character; but to assure him of his knowledge of the truth of that, which he had asserted, he professes to have derived it from Heaven; and he declares, that whilst conversing with him, he, the Son of man, is in Heaven with respect to his divine nature.

That baptism was termed regeneration at an early period in the christian church, is not to be doubted; and whether it was so denominated because Christ used the expression "born of water," or because the Jews accounted their proselytes, whom they also purified with water, born anew, or from some other cause, is very immaterial. But that baptism was not intended by Christ as the only regeneration, is extremely plain; for if this new birth be baptism alone, it is baptism which causes a man to see the kingdom of God; and if so, it causes him either to see with his bodily eyes the gospel church, which none will pretend, or to discern the spiritual things of the gospel dispensation, which is still less proba-

ble; for surely that has no effect, either physically or spiritually, to make men see the truths revealed by the Spirit of God.

If baptism alone be regeneration, why is it said, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?" Upon this supposition, it ought to have been said, "except a man be born of water, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and the word Spirit being thus without meaning, ought to have been omitted; but if regeneration be the work of the Spirit, the internal purification, the circumcision of the heart, and baptism the external purification, corresponding to the circumcision of the flesh, "the outward visible sign of the inward spiritual grace," it was proper to connect it with the emblem.

If baptism be the only regeneration, it follows also, from the Saviour's words, that no man can see, or enjoy Christ's spiritual kingdom, and consequently the kingdom of glory, without being "born of the water," that is, baptized; whereas Christ has connected the *seeing* or enjoying the spiritual, and so the heavenly kingdom with the being "born again," that is, of the Spirit; and made the being "born of water" necessary only to the *entering* into or becoming a visible member of his kingdom or church. Baptism does not appear in the scriptures to have been declared essential to salvation, the contrary even is shown; "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not," and not he that is not baptized, "shall be damned."

Another argument may also be drawn for the same purpose from the words, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" for they exhibit the birth by nature contrasted, not with the birth by water, that is, baptism, but with that of the Spirit; which strongly evinces this latter only to be the regeneration, which is essential to salvation. Also when the apostle omits the word water, saying only "so is every one who is born of the Spirit," he clearly shows, that this is that regeneration, of which he is discoursing, which is exclusively the work of the Spirit as the efficient cause.

**This doctrine of the regenerating influences of the Divine Spirit is a counterpart to that of human natural depravity. The scriptures figuratively represent men as "dead in trespasses and sins," until they are quickened or enlivened by grace. A soul literally dead cannot be conceived of; the expression is from analogy, and imports that the mind has no more inclination to holy things, than a dead carcass has to the objects of sense around it. Regeneration is the passing from such a state of death, or inactivity, and apathy with respect to good, unto life, and is ascribed to the power of God. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" it is God who "creates anew in Christ Jesus unto good works;" his Spirit "dwells" in his people; they become "temples of the Holy Ghost;" he "opens their hearts to attend unto the word," and thus freed from their prejudices, and the chains of sin, the evidence of the truth has its effect upon them, they see their guilt and repent,**



they discern the offers of salvation in Christ, and believe ; they discover more of the beauty of holiness, and become progressively more holy, until they are removed to the upper house. As this change is discerned by, so is it frequently denominated from its effects ; and whatever instrumentally elicits the first exercises of grace, appearing to give the origin, is accounted the cause of it ; thus men are said to be “ born of the word,” and “ begotten again by the word of truth.” But, efficiently, we are born “ not of blood ;” we become the subjects of Christ’s kingdom not by descent from Abraham, “ nor of the will of the flesh ;” not of our own sinful natures, which are at enmity with him ; “ nor of the will of man,” not by their arguments, the carnal mind is proof against the efforts of moral suasion ; “ but of God,” we are changed from the temper and character of enemies to those of the subjects of Christ’s kingdom, by his Holy Spirit.

This doctrine has been assailed from every quarter, and in almost every manner ; perhaps, because it is in direct opposition unto the pride of the unrenewed heart, which is sensible of no impotency to good, and of no preponderating bias to evil. If we have no prejudices against, nor aversion to religious more than physical knowledge, we have need to exercise only our understanding ; our ignorance is not criminal, nor is there virtue in resisting our propensities to evil. But if we incline to evil, and possess an aversation of heart to holiness, we shall not incline against our inclinations ; we may obey from interest or fear, but holiness will not please us, until

the mind is regenerated from its sinful attachments. This inability is a moral, not a physical incapacity ; and being a disinclination to good, is our guilt, not our excuse. But still it is an impotency ; for “ the Ethiopian can as soon change his skin, or a leopard his spots, as that he who is accustomed to do evil shall learn to do good.” And “ no man *can* come to Christ, unless the Father draw him.” Yet it is purely moral ; for men will not come unto him, that they might have life. That God can release us from this, must be acknowledged by all who own his wisdom and power to be infinite. To demand a discovery of the manner is unfair, because, those who require it, cannot tell how he created the soul, or sustains it in existence, or governs the world, nor can they tell whence the wind “ comes, nor whither it goes.” But if we know not the manner, we may know what is accomplished in regeneration.

Unholy men receive not gospel truths, not because of any natural defects of understanding, for then their ignorance would be no crime ; an intellectual capacity, or natural powers of mind, are not therefore furnished in regeneration. Such men continue in ignorance of saving blessings, not because there is no evidence, or a defect of it ; this would be a valid excuse. It is because there is light enough, that they are guilty ; in regeneration, therefore, it is not the work of the Spirit to communicate knowledge in an extraordinary manner, as by voices and visions, nor to teach any other truths than those which are contained in the scriptures.

Such men continue in ignorance only because of their aversion to religious truths; they incline to evil pursuits; it is in this therefore that the soul is chiefly corrected in regeneration; yet the effects of regeneration necessarily extend to the whole man, and to every faculty of his mind.

Nor is this done by the mere operation of motives, for the carnal mind will not apply itself, or attend to the motives to good; but something is previously done; "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things spoken by Paul;" a work previous to any effect of Paul's words. "Open thou mine eyes," (said the Psalmist) not literally, open my mind, remove my prejudices against the truth, "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

But if it be objected that such influence destroys the morality of actions, we answer, that although the mind is passive in this imperceptible work of regeneration, which is the act of God, and so in it man is neither virtuous nor blameworthy; yet when the predominant aversion to holiness is thus removed, the obedience or disobedience which follows is as much voluntary, and free from external restraint or constraint, as any human actions are. Motives to repentance, faith, love, and joy, are therefore properly addressed; for the saint is as free in his good actions, and more so, than the sinner is in his course of folly, for the latter is the slave of sensual appetites and a corrupt nature, from which the believer is, though not wholly, yet in a great degree, relieved.

If no man can see the kingdom of God, ex-

cept he be born of his Spirit, what can be a more important subject than that which was involved in this conversation? The change here described must exist in every man, who renders an acceptable obedience; works wrought before it are dead works; they proceed from a person dead in sin, dead by the law, and whose motives are selfish and carnal. The soul which is at enmity with God cannot desire his glory from any other motives; for reason affirms that we cannot love and hate holiness at the same time. The morality upon which many rely as sufficient to recommend them to God's mercy, must therefore be the offspring of their pride, performed with minds averse to holiness, whilst eager for its rewards; such imaginary holiness is rebellion against God, being a substitute for the righteousness provided in Christ Jesus; is evidence of the unbelief and obstinacy of the individual; and will prove a ground of his final condemnation, unless repentance intervenes.

True holiness ever springs from this new creation by the Spirit of God, and consists in the deepest self-abasement and subjection to him, in a supreme love of his holiness, and an ardent desire for more purity of heart, and is calculated ever to give all glory to God, whilst it keeps its possessor in the dust.

# LECTURE XXI.\*

MATTHEW, CHAPTER IV, VERSE 1 TO 11.

**THEN** was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down : for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee : and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

**THIS** portion of scripture has been subjected to much examination, which has resulted

\* This lecture is the substance of an extemporary one given to a small society on a Tuesday evening.

in a variety of opinions with respect to the things contained in it. We suppose the major part of christians take the whole as a literal representation of the facts ; such seem to choose the safest side. There is another opinion, which is entertained by many ; that the whole was a vision ; the Saviour's being in the wilderness ; his fasting for forty days ; the several temptations ; and the relief afforded by the angels.

This latter interpretation is an assumption of unwarrantable latitude in the interpretation of the word of God. All are realities, even the presence and temptations of Satan, and the resistance given him ; but the temptations may have been proposed to the Saviour, when exhausted with hunger, and when sunk into some species of waking vision, little distinguishable from a dream.

Satan has not the power of forcing men into sin ; his temptations are always disguised ; for the knowledge that they are such, is the strongest motive for resisting them ; if therefore Satan had discovered himself to Jesus in a visible form, it would not only have been contrary to his usual course, but must have ensured him a defeat.

The replies of Christ were in every instance by scriptures recollected, which leads us to think that it was all before the eye of his mind only ; also one of Satan's temptations was from scripture ; these things well accord with its having been in vision.

The changes of place seem to have been too

sudden, and also impracticable. He was in the wilderness when the temptations began, and when they ended; which agrees with the supposition that his rapid transition to a pinnacle of the temple, and from thence to a very high mountain, were only in idea.

It is very unaccountable that he should have been transported to the battlements of the temple for a dangerous place, when the country afforded precipices enough, and still more so, that this could have taken place without publick observation; but such flights of the imagination, when the body is fainting with hunger, would not be extraordinary; nor would it excite any wonder, if the person in such exigency should find Satan occupied in giving a turn to his ideas.

There is not a mountain on earth from whence all the kingdoms are visible; here therefore we are obliged to give up the literal sense, and may discover an index to the interpretation of the other temptations.

It is not called a vision; in like manner neither did Micaiah nor Jacob denominate their visions. They represented what appeared to them; and so we presume Jesus related these things to his disciples just as they appeared to his mind.

Satan, though he can and does in various ways, by external and internal means, through the medium of our bodies, suggest thoughts, and thus take possession of our hearts in a certain sense; yet he knows not our thoughts; it is the attribute of God only to search the heart. Every thing acted by Satan in this instance could have taken place without his knowing the mind of

Christ.\* If it had not been in vision, then Jesus must have spoken audibly his respective answers; Satan would have known them, and, we presume, in some instance replied; but there is not one reply of Satan, which is an additional proof that he suggested the temptations, and the Saviour resisted them by mental answers, with which the enemy was unacquainted. Adopting this general view, the particular parts will be easily understood.

*“ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”* Jesus came into the world to perform all righteousness, and leave us an example of perfect obedience, and it was proper that he should encounter the task, subjected to the disadvantages to which we are liable, except that of a prevailing inclination to evil, his office and character requiring that he should be free from moral corruption. He was to be tempted in all points, as we are, but without sin. Temptations seem to have been incompatible with the presence and displays of his Divinity, in the time of his public ministrations; accordingly they preceded them, but attended again his sufferings in his last work. It is possible also that, as soon as Satan discovered

\* It is highly probable that Satan did not know that this was the Christ; he speaks doubtfully of his being the “ Son of God;” this he had heard, we suppose, at his baptism, a short time before. Satan is not omnipresent, nor omniscient, and probably knew less than the angels of these things which they desired to pry into. Christ’s divinity was chiefly concealed thirty years, not always shown in his life, nor at his death. It was the man only that could be thus humbled and tempted; God neither tempts nor can be tempted by any.



his true character, he was cautious not to make any farther attacks upon him, until the time of his sufferings.

He did not go up to the wilderness, except by the direction of that Spirit, who had lately descended upon him : because it is unjustifiable in man voluntarily and knowingly to expose himself to temptation. His delay in the wilderness was for a long space before Satan made his attempt ; when Jesus was exhausted with hunger, the enemy thought he had the fairest opportunity of working upon his body, and producing a disordered imagination, by means of which he might lead him into sin ; he can sift as wheat, but cannot force us to be guilty, a state which depends for the most part upon our choice, not his.

“ *The tempter \* came to him,*” we presume, in the same manner as he comes to others, to try them ; nothing can be collected from these terms, that indicates his having come in a visible form ; it is scarcely a temptation where Satan discovers himself : and to suppose he assumed the appearance of an angel of light, is still to admit that Jesus possessed the same advantage ; unless we allow that the Son of God does not know the angels whom he has made.

Satan, finding him hungry, weary, and exhausted, suggests to him, perhaps in a vision, or when his spirits were languishing in waking silence ; “ *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*” Why suffer thus in your human body ? why as a man live in

such submission to God? if thou be the Son of God, as has been pronounced lately at your baptism, exercise your own power. This was a temptation to distrust God, who had supported him for forty days, and could do it still; and also to exert as a man the power which belonged to God, and which it was not his will at present to exercise. Jesus remembered that the Israelites had been fed with manna, to show them they might rely on God's word, and not wholly on natural means;\* this recollection he opposed to the temptation to distrust, which had been suggested, and he was relieved in his mind.

Satan then took or led † Christ up, no doubt in idea, or vision, to Jerusalem, and placed him on a pinnacle, wing, or battlement of the temple. It is difficult to suppose he took him through the air, and we can scarcely believe that Christ ever yielded so far to Satan as to walk a step with him, much less to suffer himself to be placed by him there. But if the tempter represented this position to his human mind in some species of vision, as when he brings evil dreams into men's minds, then there being no consent of Christ, he committed no sin. Or such a representation might have come before the mind, as dreams ordinarily do, whereupon Satan might suggest a portion of a Psalm expressive of God's care of his children, and then that Jesus would be safe, if he should cast himself down. The insiduousness here consisted in a misapplication of the passage, we are not to expect extraordinary aid,

\* Deut. viii, 3.

† Mat. iv, 5, παραλαμβάνει, Luke iv, 9, ηγάγη.

when guilty of presumption. Christ banished the temptation by calling up to his mind a portion of scripture, whereby Israel was directed never to seek proofs of God's power or goodness, by unnecessary miracles.

Failing in his former trials, the tempter in the last instance offers rather an insult than a temptation. To show him in vision all the kingdoms, to call them his own, and then to offer them to Christ, by whom they had been made, upon the terms of his worshipping the tempter himself, was an unparalleled outrage. Jesus treated the other attempts as temptations in his mind. But now the presence of that cursed angel was so conspicuous, that it is possible he called him audibly by his name, and banished him, expressing the scriptural language which is recorded; yet it is possible that this might also have been wholly in his mind.

The being the subject of a temptation is not the sin, for we cannot prevent the enemy from directing his darts at us; but the least entertainment or harbouring of it is iniquity. Jesus therefore did not sin, and we should follow his example, by allowing no quarter to the evil suggestion. Every man sins in the temptation, "when he is led away of his own lust and enticed." But in the holy man temptations work patience, and this produces experience of God's grace, from whence springs a rational hope, which gives confidence and boldness to sustain the combat in this state of warfare, until we are crowned with victory, perfect and everlasting.

## LECTURE XXII.

MATTHEW, CHAPTER XVII, VERSE 1 TO 13.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And as they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done

unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

*AFTER* six days had passed between the time when Jesus had told his disciples that there were "some standing there who should not taste of death till they should see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," or entering upon his reign, that is, should see brighter displays of his glory, as the King of Zion, Jesus performed his promise, by giving to Peter, James, and John, a sensible representation of his glories. Peter \* plainly represents this transfiguration as his coming, and appears to account it the accomplishment of his promise.

What is here expressed by "after six days," Luke gives in these words: "about an eight days after these sayings." In heathen writers, and in the same author, when speaking even of the very same occurrence, this difference of computation is found. "After six days" is to be understood as excluding the day of the first occurrence and that of the last. "About an eight days after" includes the day when the first words were spoken, and also the day of their going upon the mountain.

These three disciples were the three who attended upon him in his agony in the garden; they might have been favoured with this glorious sight, to prepare their minds for the witnessing those more extraordinary trials. At least, it was

\* 2 Pet. i, 16.

proper that the persons who were to be witnesses to the world of his sufferings, should be the witnesses of his glory. Three were enough to render the facts credible, and it was unsuitable that they should be made known to many persons, until they should be explained by his resurrection and ascension.

It was an early opinion that the mountain here alluded to was Tabor, but we find Jesus about a week before near Cesarea Philippi; after the transfiguration, we first hear of him near Capernaum; and both those places are northwardly of Tabor. It has been supposed that the reason that Tabor was believed to be the place, was, that the words which we render "apart" were supposed to be expressive of the mountain's being "by itself," which is exactly the description of Tabor; but the meaning may be, that Jesus took his disciples to a place in which they would be in private, and freed from interruption. The country which lies between the two places mentioned in the next preceding and subsequent parts of this history, is mountainous; so that it is unimportant whether Tabor can be shown to have been the place alluded to or not.

The reasons of these transactions on the mount may not be fully known. The transfiguration could not have been very important to himself, who preferred spiritual things to sensible appearances. The conversation could not have been designed to communicate information, nor can we suppose it was necessary to Moses and Elias. But it is important to his church in every age, that they should have incontestable proofs of the divine cha-

racter of Christ; and it was particularly suitable that it should have taken place at that time. For Jesus had just before told them of his approaching sufferings, at which Peter was so struck, that he denied that they should happen; whereupon his master severely reprimanded him. The Saviour had been preparing their minds for them, by requiring them to take up their cross and follow him; assuring them that he who should save his animal life by denying him, would lose eternal life; and those who should lose their natural lives for his sake, should save or receive their immortal happiness. He had also told them that the Son of man should hereafter come in the glory of the Father, attended by angels, and should reward every man according to his works, and then distinctly asserted, that "there be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." This display of visible glory, and the audible divine approbation, were well suited to enforce what he had inculcated, and to prepare evidence against his removal from them, of the greatest advantage, and were the intended literal accomplishment of his promise, that some standing there should see him coming in his kingdom. The performance of this promise of coming in his glory to some who were standing by him, when both the promises were made, would produce the most satisfactory conviction that Jesus will yet come to the solemn work of the final judgment.

It appears, from the following parts of this narrative, that the three disciples were asleep, when the change of Christ's appearance began.

It was probably in the night time, and it was certainly whilst Jesus was in prayer that it commenced; nor was it unusual for Jesus to be occupied in prayer whilst his disciples were reposing. But as these appearances were designed for them, they were awakened; whether by the refulgence of the light, or by the voices of the persons in conversation, or in some other manner, we know not.

They probably knew the persons to be Moses and Elias, from the conversation, which might either name them, or discover them by the subject matter of it. Never having seen them before, they could have had no knowledge of their persons. That they did not receive the information afterwards, is plain from this, that Peter named them to his master whilst they were on the mountain, when he proposed to erect a lodge or booth for each of them.

Wherefore Moses and Elias should appear, rather than Abraham, Samuel, or others, we cannot assign, unless their bodies have been received and rendered spiritual and glorious, for they were not left at the disposal of the Israelites, as those of others have been. Or unless because as Moses was the giver of the law, and Elijah the restorer of it, they were presented in conversation with Christ, to show to the disciples his precedence, and that the gospel is not inconsistent with, but a more excellent display of the truths propounded in the law.

\* Whether the very bodies of Elias and Mo-



ses were seen, or vehicles resembling them, we know not; but we incline that there must have been present that which should authorize the denominating them Moses and Elias. They were glorious or shining, but Jesus more so, for his face shone as the sun, and the light beamed through or from his raiment. This was well calculated to give the apostles present a view of his superior excellency.

They conversed about his decease, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. How confirming it must have been to Peter, James, and John, after the death of Christ, to remember that this was the topic of the conversation of Moses and Elias, on that memorable occasion! But though of the like import with the discourse which Jesus had given them a week before, it was at total variance with the expectations of these disciples, at the time of this glorious manifestation.

When these things were testified by Peter, James, and John, after Christ's ascension, it must have been peculiarly satisfactory to the Jewish converts to know that Moses and Elijah had been heard holding discourse with Jesus about his death; it would thus appear to have been according to antecedent divine purposes, and consistent with the legal dispensation.

The heavenly companions remained but a little time after the disciples awoke; and as they were departing, Peter, unwilling to be deprived of these glorious appearances, uttered the rash and immatured proposition, that they would make booths for them respectively to reside in. He knew not what he was saying, that is, he had not weigh-

ed the consequences, for they were not to remain there. He knew not what to say, that should be an argument to detain them there, or that could effectuate his wishes of continuing the scene.

It is possible that Peter now thought the prophecy of the coming of Elias was beginning to be accomplished, and that Christ's kingdom, which they had been waiting for, was now to be erected. He was willing it should continue, and yet was intimidated, for we are authorized by Luke's gospel to assign this indigested effusion of Peter, who was a forward rash man, to his fear. No respect was paid to his indigested effusion; the heavenly guests retired, and immediately a bright cloud, the emblem of Divine Majesty, overspread and involved them; this was sent, no doubt, to receive Moses and Elias again into the heavenly society.

The lustre of Christ's appearance was an evidence of his divinity; the presence of Moses and Elias, less glorious, was a second; but a third and more important testimony is that of the Father himself, speaking from a bright cloud, an usual token of the Divine presence, in language such as was pronounced at his baptism. Neither Moses, nor Elias, nor any angel, nor other created being, durst have used such manner of address. It was the God of Israel, who had formerly commissioned Moses and Elias, and required his people to hear and respect them, and who now commands our obedience to his Son; according to a prophecy of Moses, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me—unto him shall ye hearken."

If they were before intimidated by the lustre of Christ; in the aspect of Moses and Elias. men dead long before, excited fears; still more were these disciples alarmed, when involved in the Shekinah, or emblem of God's presence; but when the voice of the Almighty assailed their ears, unable longer to sustain such sensible manifestations of Deity, they fell to the ground.

The temple worship, and other rites of the Mosaic dispensation, were as yet in force; the appearance of Moses and Elias, and the pronouncing those remarkable words, would not therefore be likely to be understood, nor even the subject of the sufferings of Christ, as appears by the debates of Peter, James, and John;\* but it was wise to provide such evidence against the time when the gospel should be published, and understood more fully; and it brings to our minds the most irresistible conviction, that every part of the life and transactions of the Redeemer were directed to the wisest ends.

These displays of Divine Majesty were not designed to overawe and greatly distress, much less to destroy these disciples. Their sleepiness at the first was probably ordered, to preserve them from too violent a shock; and afterwards, to allay their fears, the two heavenly companions passed away. Although they were in some degree prepared for the appearance of the bright cloud which came over them by the lustre of Jesus, and of Moses and Elias; yet their fears were considerably augmented; but when the thundering voice of the

\* Mark ix, 10.

Almighty broke forth from the cloud, if they were unavoidably cast to the earth, it is no more than might be expected; for it is fit that guilty mortals should be humbled before the visible tokens of the God of the universe.

How perfectly in character was it for our glorious Daysman and Mediator to support and comfort sinners trembling before the divine glory; "arise, and be not afraid." If the courageous Peter, and the loving John were thus intimidated, what would the unbelieving Thomas have experienced? and if the treacherous Judas had been there, he might have found the presence of God a consuming fire. It was wisely ordered, therefore, that no more were present on this, as well as on other, accounts.

We have, in the appearance of Moses, who had died ages before, certain proof that the soul survives the dissolution of the body, and that the saints who have gone before us are now alive and glorious. This transaction opens to our view also something of the heavenly world, gives us some faint idea of its splendour, and should excite us to aspire to its happiness. John declares, "we beheld his glory,"\* &c. Peter gives a full confirmation of the same thing.† But as the churches were in possession of the particulars in the other three gospels, the not detailing again the circumstances shows that the writer of this was satisfied with the correctness of the accounts already given.

We have here an evidence of the connexion of

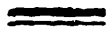
\* John i. 14.

† 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18.

the gospel with the Old Testament religion, and proof that the Jewish was to yield to the gospel dispensation.

These three apostles would never lose the recollection of this glorious sight; to us the narrative is equally certain, but less impressive: yet it should lead us to a course of thought and action suited to the important truth, that we shall not die, but our spirits shall pass into the society of other spirits, suited to their character. For different assemblies in the invisible world at this moment exist, and are waiting for our arrival.

## LECTURE XXIII.



JOHN, CHAPTER XVI, VERSE 1 TO 11.

THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues : yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me ; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not on me ; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

THE doctrines and promises of the gospel, and the grace which is given to Christians, greatly support them in times of distress ; but hu-

man affections and passions are not wholly removed, as long as we remain here. Jesus well knew that the tide of sorrow which was about to come upon his disciples, would overwhelm and sweep them away, unless he should prepare them for their troubles, by assuring them of future comforts, upon which they might fasten the anchor of hope. Their expectations were still set on an earthly kingdom, notwithstanding all that had been said to divest them of the prejudices of the age. They had no doubt but that he was the Messiah, of this they had satisfactory proofs. They had been educated in the belief of the temporal advantages of his reign, but such hopes were soon to be taken away for ever. Jesus therefore prepared them for the disappointment; he told them of his own, and of their sufferings; but mixes comforts with the detail of their trials, that when adversity should arrive, they might not stumble and fall from their profession. Nor does he only tell them beforehand of their approaching troubles, but declares that he does so, to prevent their future discouragement.

He shows them, that so fierce and cruel would be the persecutions which should be meditated against them, for his sake, by their own nation, that they should not only excommunicate them, and expose them to the ordinary consequences attendant on an ejection from the synagogue, but accounting them among the greatest enemies of God, they would esteem their blood a sacrifice \* acceptable to him. His predictions have been

\* *Δαίριαν προσέειπεν.*

verified ; yet as the Lord had often commissioned the Israelites to destroy his enemies, that they might be taught to abhor their crimes, avoid their temptations, and to trust in the Lord, persecution was probably a less crime in them, than in those who live under the gospel dispensation.

To strengthen their faith, Christ informs them that such mad zeal would originate from the people's ignorance of that God whom they profess to worship, of that Messiah for whom they are waiting, of the spiritual nature of their own religion, and of that kingdom of which they remain in expectation. Yet this ignorance was not for want of the light, and means of knowledge ; but their minds were so sensual and wilfully blind, as to be insensible under the greatest force of truth, and brightest lustre of evidence. If we allow it to be the best apology that persecution can obtain, that it flows from ignorance, which must always be the case, where those who afflict are sincere, yet wilful ignorance is a very feeble apology, and especially when conflicting with the light of the truth.

Such a timely warning of persecution, and the exposure of its true cause, would greatly tend to support his disciples under it, and its advent would not fail to become an additional proof of the foreknowledge, and so of the divinity of Christ ; the repeating the premonition is a proof that the minds of the disciples were slow to receive the things, which did not accord with their desires.

It was less necessary to have told the disciples their future trials at first, because Jesus was with



them, not only to stand in the front, and to bear the violence of persecution himself, but to comfort, and, if necessary, miraculously to protect them. If he had revealed all the crosses they were to bear, at a time when their faith was much weaker, it might have proved, humanly speaking, an insuperable barrier to their continuance with him; but his discoveries were proportioned to their strength, as their strength afterwards was to their conflicts.

Jesus had before declared that he was going away, and Peter had asked him, whither?\* But he did not mean by the question in that place to ask any thing about heaven, or a future state, so that they had not asked, "whither Jesus was going," in the sense of those terms here used by Christ. Yet their not having asked about the heavenly happiness, did not flow from their ignorance of his intentions to return to his heavenly Father,† but from their unwillingness that he should leave them. They were still hoping for such a kingdom to be set up by him in this world, as they had ever expected of the Messiah; their carnal views and aims prevented them from making inquiries about the place to which he was going, and therefore they were justly charged with a want of solicitude about heavenly things.

Had they possessed such a portion of grace at this time, as they received after the ascension of Jesus, they would most gladly have embraced so favourable an opportunity of learning the employment and happiness of the glorified saints.

\* Ch. xiii, 36.

† Ch. xiv, 5.

The disciples could not clearly understand, and therefore did not anticipate the great change which was shortly to take place in themselves. They knew their own ignorance and imbecility, and were conscious of their unfitness to encounter the struggles and difficulties to which Jesus told them they would soon be exposed, and this tended the more to awaken their fears. The notice of the absence of their master, who was about to leave them, not to return again, now explicitly given them, must have greatly aggravated their distress. They had seen enough of his wisdom and power to satisfy them he was the Son of God, and therefore they could not desert his cause, and return to their former occupations; and yet, according to his warnings, they were likely to be totally disappointed in all their fond expectations of worldly aggrandizement. These things all conspired to fill their hearts with sorrow.

Though a sense of their own unfitness to encounter such opposition, and the consequent sorrow and fear, or their sensual and selfish desire of worldly promotion, had prevented the inquiry, Christ nevertheless mercifully showed them that the things which grieved them in prospect would prove really advantageous to them in the end. It was better for them to have the presence of the Holy Spirit with them, than the personal presence of the Redeemer in his state of humility and suffering. The internal operations of the Divine Spirit would be more effectual than the external evidence which Christ had placed before their eyes, which was not understood till after-

wards. Whilst Christ was in the flesh, his human nature occupied but one place at a time; his protection of them, as a man, was therefore confined to his human presence; thus, whilst he was in the mount, their enemies were more powerful than they; but the Holy Spirit would be with each of them, wheresoever they should go. Their faith, hope, and comforts, would be much stronger when they should possess more grace.

There could have been no impossibility in the thing, which might prevent the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, whilst Christ was in the flesh, because he had influenced the minds of holy men under every dispensation. But it was ordered otherwise on several accounts. It would have been difficult to have discovered the superiority of Christ, if his disciples had possessed the powers which they afterwards exercised. It should appear that the grace of God is the purchase of Christ, by the Spirit's coming as an immediate consequence. Hereby the justice of God is shown to be satisfied with the Saviour's offering. The ignorance and carnality of the apostles remaining until Pentecost, when the Spirit came upon them, notwithstanding all the miracles, doctrines, and other evidences, which Christ had formerly laid before them, also demonstrates to the world the inefficacy of objective truth, and moral suasion, and the necessity of spiritual aid, to make us discern, as we should do, spiritual things.

The mediatorial character was derived, and though none but a divine person was either worthy or competent to bear it, yet it was inferior to

Deity; but the personal aids of the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption, are above the power and dignity of any created nature, yet because they are divinely given as the fruits of Christ's mediation, he is said to be "sent."

On another occasion, Christ had said that he "would pray unto the Father, and he would send the Comforter;" there was the greatest propriety, as well as love, in our Redeemer's interceding for those spiritual blessings, which he has purchased for his people with his blood. But here very different language is used. Here he adopts a mode of expression, such as none but God himself had a right to use; "I will send him unto you." This is therefore one, among many instances, which show that he claimed equality with the Father. Nor does the mission of the Spirit argue his personal inferiority, any more than the mediatorship of the Son, proves him personally subordinate to the Father, yet each effectuates the purposes of the one God in their respective offices in the economy of redemption.

The word "Comforter" is in some instances expressive of the just sense of the original word here used, and it may have been the sense here intended, for he would comfort the disciples; yet the following verses point us unto, and invite us to adopt another idea, for it is not so much the part of a comforter to reprove, convict, or convince, as of one who argues, pleads, or defends a cause. Christ promises to his timid desponding disciples the heavenly "Advocate," who should espouse and support the languishing cause of his gospel; which, instead of wholly sinking at his death,

should revive and flourish more after than before his departure from them.

It cannot be said that the Spirit of God has literally reprov'd the *world* of righteousness, nor that he has convinc'd the *world* of sin, righteousness, and judgment, for the major part do not believe. But though the world have not been convinc'd by his instructions concerning \* sin, righteousness, and judgment, yet has he discover'd, prepar'd, and arrang'd the evidence, and demonstrat'd the truths, here hinted at, in such a manner, as by solid arguments to condemn their unbelief, and leave them without excuse.

On the day of his descent, and on other occasions, he fair'y overpowered the enemies of the apostles by the brightness with which he caus'd these truths to shine. Accordingly, the *sin* here mentioned has been by some understood to extend only to the guilt of the Jews, in rejecting Christ; the *righteousness* to mean no more than the justice of his cause; and the *judgment* to designate the punishment of Christ's enemies, who were actuated by the prince of this world, † who by the wisdom and power of God was soon to be cast out, ‡ and his power destroy'd by the gospel.

The Spirit of God did indeed produce arguments competent to convince the world of these truths, if they would have attended to them. His miraculous gifts and extraordinary operations did dismay the enemies of the gospel, and proved their guilt, Christ's rectitude, and that

\* *Nov.*

† Ch. xiv, 30.

‡ Ch. xii, 31.

such murder of so righteous a person could not escape the divine judgment. But it is very probable, that as the Spirit was to abide with the church, his effects in after ages, also, are here intended, illuminating the minds of men mediately and immediately to discern their guilt, the righteousness of Christ, and an awful approaching judgment; and the term *world* may have been here used to embrace the other nations, who indeed have been more generally convinced than the Jews.

Jesus somewhat enlarged upon the last ideas. The Spirit of God would, when he came, convince the world of the sin of unbelief, which is combined with every species of iniquity of which men are guilty.

Men are by nature *dead* in sin. They discern it not, till the Spirit of God gives them life, and removes their natural blindness. When they see their guilt, sometimes alarm, and fear, bordering on despair, are the first proofs of the work of grace within them. When they discover that their past life has been in unbelief, they discern it has been consequently an uninterrupted series of crimes, and that their imagined good deeds have been only lesser sins. Their convictions are not the effects of the mere objective truth of religion; this was revealed before the day of pentecost; they are not produced by natural conscience alone; this light all men have had since man's ~~creation~~ *creation*; but they take place because he "opens the heart to attend to the word," spoken or written, or to some other instrumental cause of conviction.

If Christ has not arisen from the dead, and

ascended to glory, we are yet in our sins. But he arose for our justification, and by his resurrection has shown that his righteousness can satisfy the demands of the divine law, that God can be just, and yet justify us, the ungodly.

Those whom the Holy Spirit savingly convinces of sin, by means of the word of God, he convinces of their helplessness, and need of a Saviour. He opens to them so much of the scheme of salvation by a Redeemer, that they lay hold of this righteousness as their anchor of hope; and "Jesus Christ" becomes "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes."

Such a reception of Christ by the work of the Spirit, is very different from that theoretic or professional faith which rests only on moral suasion.

The believer would be in a very comfortless state, if, after his conviction of sin, and discernment of the righteousness provided for him, he must still be under bondage to the power of Satan. The Spirit of God therefore convinces him that the prince of this world is subdued, that "the seed of the woman has bruised the head of the serpent," and that the believer is freed from the law of sin and death; that there is no condemnation for him; that he has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has led captivity captive, having conquered him who had conquered us, and who has entered the heavenly rest, where he has prepared mansions for his people, and is hourly receiving them to himself, to dwell with him in perfect happiness for ever.

## LECTURE XXIV.

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MATTHEW, CHAPTER XXVI, VERSE 17 TO 30.

NOW the first *day* of the *feast* of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dipeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it



new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

SO fixed was the purpose of Jesus to fulfil all righteousness, that when the passover was approaching, his disciples knew he would keep it according to the law of Moses, notwithstanding the danger he would thereby incur from his enemies, who were determined to take his life. They do not ask him if he will eat the passover, but where. On this occasion he had something further in view, to give them the commencement of the gospel feast, and consequently possessed an additional incentive to perform the duty before them, of which the disciples were at that time ignorant.

To commemorate the deliverance from Egyptian slavery, were it not for the divine command, would appear far less important than the commemoration of the death of our great deliverer, by which the guilt and dominion of sin are removed, and believers brought into the standing and character of the children of God. But though in the first days the whole congregation of those who were old enough to understand the duty did partake in this ordinance, on every first day of the week,\* the declension is so great, that very few are found willing to follow the example, and attend the feast, though at protracted periods.

Christ is denominated our passover, sacrificed for us. The paschal lamb therefore was a type of him. It was to be without blemish, and so was he; it was slain, and so was he; the house

\* Vide Acts xx, 7. Just. Mart. 1 Apol. c. 96, 97.

on which its blood was sprinkled was passed over, and spared those who are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, are saved; it was slain on the same day that Christ was, according to the Jewish manner of accounting from the preceding sun-setting.\* The deliverance which was wrought for our sins, was on the same day, and the same month of the year, with that of the Israelites from Egypt.

Jesus answered the application of his disciples, by directing Peter and John to go into the city,† and they should meet a man with a pitcher of water; him they were to follow, and entering into the same house, they should speak to the good man of the house; “the master saith, where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?” “And he would show them a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there they were to make ready the feast. “And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them.” Who but that God, who governs by a particular providence all things, could have known that they would direct their way to the place where such a man was, or that the man with the pitcher should be then en-

\* The Jewish sabbath corresponded to our Saturday, except that their days began with the setting of the sun on the preceding day; Christ was taken down from the cross in the afternoon of the day whereon he was crucified, lest the corpse should be necessarily left on the cross during their sabbath, which proves that he was crucified on Friday. The passover was eaten on the evening before his crucifixion; the time, therefore, here intended is the day before that evening, and consequently on Thursday.

† Mark xiv. 14. Luke xxii. 9.

tering into such a house ; that this house should have such a chamber ; and that the chamber should be unoccupied ?

It would seem, from the message sent to him, that the man had been a follower of Jesus, or that Christ intended this request in mercy to him, that when he should be offered up, he might remember and know that Jesus foreknew that it was to be so ; and thus it would be calculated to strengthen his faith in the Saviour.

How strong must have been the confidence of these two disciples in the truth of the directions given them by their master ! they set out upon their errand, apprehensive of no difficulty, though neither the road was defined, nor the place pointed out, but only that they would meet a man in the city with a pitcher of water ; him they were to follow, though unknown ; they made no inquiry ; they offered no objections. He that had been directed to take the money for his tax out of a fish's mouth, could not hesitate in this case. "They did as Jesus had appointed them." So plain and simple is the gospel narrative, that no comment is made upon this extraordinary transaction.

"*They made ready the passover.*"\* They

\* The passover was prepared in the afternoon, and eaten after sun-set. The Jews began their years with the vernal equinox, and counted them by the sun ; their months by the moon. The passover was to be eaten on the fourteenth day of their first month. The first day of the first month was the first day on which the moon was seen after the change, which succeeded next after the vernal equinox. The passover consequently always happened about the full of the moon, which in this year seems to

purchased the lamb, had it killed in the court of the temple, had it roasted, provided the bitter herbs and vinegar, and the bread and wine.

Jesus *sat down* reclined \* *with the twelve*. The Jews, as well as the Romans, at that time leaned on couches, with their feet extended from the table; and John on this occasion was next to the Redeemer. They were, by the law, to eat the passover with their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands, that they might remember the occasion of its institution; these things are not here mentioned, yet no doubt they conformed to the then usual mode of receiving the passover.

They did not arise, except Judas, from the table, until after the sacramental ordinance was instituted; and they were consequently at the first supper of the Lord, in the usual reclining posture. A diversity as to the attitude has obtained in different churches; some receive the eucharist whilst upon their feet, others upon their knees, and others sitting; and thus all of these depart from the first mode. Possibly the position of the body, in this ordinance, like the mode of the application of water in the other, has not been the subject of a command, that our convenience may be suited, without guilt. Whilst eating the passover, it was usual to converse about the things which gave rise to that institu-

have been on a Friday. Hence we have two things, that the darkness was not an eclipse of the sun by the moon; and we have a datum by which to fix the year, a paschal full moon on a Friday.

\* *Anaxie.*

tion. It is very probable, that in this instance the usual inquiry and answers were made ; after which the conversation here recorded took place. As it was then to be changed into a gospel ordinance, that which the Redeemer said on the occasion was a proper introduction to the subject which the sacramental supper was to commemorate.

When Jesus said at the table, that one of his disciples would betray him, he could not have designed to prevent the occurrence; for then his own words would not have proved true in event ; on the other hand, to be able to use them without producing that effect, required more than human knowledge. They were spoken, to prepare the minds of the eleven for their approaching trials, and in righteous judgment to aggravate the guilt of the traitorous disciple. *One of you*—how severe the charge !—an approving conscience must have been the only relief ; nor was this sufficient to remove every disagreeable sensation ; each one would dread the mental accusations of the rest. How must Judas have felt ! This accusation must on the rest have produced a fear and jealousy of their own hearts ; but it would irritate and exasperate him, and drive him to greater resentment. *They were exceeding sorrowful*, because Christ should be delivered up ; they were distressed that one of their number should be the cause ; they were perhaps in affliction, lest their own hearts should deceive them, and each one dreaded to encounter the temptation. But Judas's sorrow must have been of a very different kind ; he would be sorrowful that his iniquity would not be concealed, that he

was in danger of being exposed, or lest he should not be able to accomplish his nefarious purposes, and should lose the price of his iniquity.

When they began respectively to inquire, *Lord, Is it I?* we are not to suppose that this interrogation was conducted in a tumultuous and disrespectful manner; but it was an appeal to him who knew their thoughts, for their innocence; and this would somewhat unburden the minds of those who were conscious of their integrity with respect to the indefinite charge.

Whilst the other disciples were preferring this appeal, there would be some necessity laid on Judas to crowd in the same question, at least, in some hurried, indistinct manner, otherwise his fear of the appeal would detect his guilt. He is expressly said to have been a thief; but whether his purloining of the common stock was known to any of the apostles, is not clear, nor do we hear them asking, *Is it Judas?* If his character had been better understood, their anxiety on this occasion, with respect to themselves, would have been less.

Judas could not have arrived by a single step at so high a crime. It was not merely the crime of deception, but betraying a friend; treachery, involving the life, and that of an innocent person; of a master, and immediately after the solemn ordinance of the passover. This fulfils the prophecy: "He that did eat bread with me, has lift up the heel against me." He must have been a deceiver from the first; and this appears to have been known to Jesus.

The Saviour then observed, *The Son of man goeth as it is written of him.* This was the work he came into the world to accomplish ; his birth, life, sufferings, and death, are expressed in prophecy with the precision of historical narrative. He was to be despised and rejected, a man of sorrows ; he was to be smitten, wounded, pierced in his hands and feet ; to drink vinegar and gall ; his garments were to be parted, and lots cast upon his vesture ; he was to be numbered with transgressors. These were written prophecies, and could not fail of accomplishment. But there was no necessity laid upon Judas and others concerned in this work, except that of their own evil hearts, leading them to yield to the temptation ; if there had been, they would have been innocent, or, at least, as far as their natural liberty had been restrained. A Sovereign God accomplishes his deep and mysterious purposes, even by the actions of the wicked, who can do no more than he permits ; and their most wicked deeds are sometimes productive of events which they least of all desired.

We may do things which shall produce much good, and yet the good consequences make nothing in our favour, as they depend on the wisdom and power of God, and are not what we purposed ; these very actions may bring us into condemnation.

We may attend on all the ordinances ; we may relieve the distressed, feed the poor, build churches, preach the gospel, lead other men to Christ, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works, and yet not be acknowledged by him who

weighs our motives, sees our designs, and appreciates our conduct accordingly.

Judas fulfilled an important part in these transactions, and accomplished the prediction: "they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver, and cast them unto the potter in the house of the Lord;" yet *it had been better for that man if he had not been born*; and so it would be good for every man who rejects Christ and his gospel, if such man had not been born. We are rational beings; but if we abuse our reason, neglect our talents, and despise the mercy and grace of God, who willeth not our destruction; if we will turn the rich privileges and blessings which God bestows, into curses, the crime lies at our own door, and it will not be practicable for us to throw up our existence, when we have turned it into a source of calamities.

How callous and insensible must Judas have been, whose conscience was not awakened by such an awful denunciation! He does not weigh the evidence of Christ's divine foreknowledge, in the discovery of his treachery; still an unbeliever, he does not feel intimidated at this pointed charge and denunciation; he seems desirous to outbrave it, in the presence of his fellow disciples, though he must have known it was he that was meant.

Silence would have been confession; and therefore, although guilt was fastened on him, he pretends ignorance of it; *Master, is it I?* Or, notwithstanding what had been said, his unbelief might have induced him to conceive that Christ could not see the whole work of his deception;



or at least that he would not discover the whole of it.

Christ answered him in terms equivalent unto, *it is as thou hast said.* Hereupon the traitor, whose enmity was no doubt greatly exasperated by the discovery which his master had made of his villainy, went out, and was probably absent at the time of the sacramental supper.

Before they had arisen \* from the passover table, Jesus and his disciples (except Judas †) being yet in the reclining posture at the table, whereon were unleavened bread and wine, a part of the provision which had been procured for the passover supper, and which had not been consumed, Jesus proceeds to introduce the sacramental supper in its room; the passover supper had been

\* Some think they did not eat the lamb; but Jesus would not have left any part of that prescribed duty unperformed.

† Luke introduces after his account of the sacramental supper the accusation of Judas, which Matthew and Mark place before it; the facts are the same, but some have plausibly inferred hence that Judas was present at both suppers. But Luke is not contradicted, if we follow Matthew and Mark's relations; but if we follow Luke's order, both Matthew and Mark would be contradicted, for they both expressly make it the passover supper at which this accusation took place, and introduce Judas no more after the guilt was fixed upon him. And John exactly agrees with this; John had asked the Redeemer, and he gave the sop to Judas on John's account, who therefore would well remember the circumstance, and he says, that immediately after the sop Judas went out. And the sop was no part of the sacramental, but of the passover supper which preceded. Judas went out whilst the rest were at the table; for when Jesus said, that which thou doest, do quickly, it is said, "no man *at the table* knew for what intent," &c. xiv, 28.

instituted as a memorial of the deliverance of the first born of Israel from the wrath of God, whose destroying angel passed over those for whom the paschal lamb was slain, and its blood sprinkled; this supper was to be a solemn commemoration and recognition of the deliverance from the destroying wrath of God, of all those for whom the Redeemer was offered, and who are sprinkled with his blood. As a type of Christ, who was to be crucified on the next day, the passover could be no longer necessary. As the church of God was soon to be removed from the exclusive possession of the Israelitish nation, and suited to the Gentiles, it was inexpedient that the whole christian world should be called to celebrate the anniversary of the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Besides, as the temple worship was to terminate the preparation of the paschal lamb, would be impracticable.

The Jews were accustomed to eat a part of their peace-offering, probably to intimate their participation in the blessing of peace with God; they also were to eat of the paschal lamb; a feast always being an index of peace and friendship. And so in the new institution of the sacramental supper, the eating and drinking imported their participation of the blessing of peace with God, through the sacrifice of Christ.

The use of bread and wine in the supper is in all respects agreeable to the plainness and simplicity of the gospel, which requires no costly offerings, nor bloody sacrifices. The bread that was used was that which was convenient, and, it is most probable, it was unleavened; but as there

is no express direction on this point, except that we should eat with the unleavened bread of sincerity, the contentions which have arisen on this head have been uncharitable, and unchristian.

We learn, that among the Jews, when the master of a family was about to ask a blessing on their food, he would take the bread into his hand, and after the blessing was craved, he broke it, and laid before each person a portion. It was extremely proper, when Jesus was about to commence another supper, before they had arisen from the first, to take the bread \* into his hands, as when beginning a meal, that he might call their attention to that which he was about to do, and that they might know his design in asking the blessing.

Their appetites had no need of this supper; they had been eating and drinking at the passover supper; it was introduced, therefore, purely for religious purposes. Afterwards, when the Corinthian church erred on this point, and ate and drank at this gospel feast intemperately, as they had formerly done in their idols' temples, they were severely rebuked: "What, have you not houses to eat and to drink in?" "If any man hunger, let him eat at home."

When a blessing is asked at common tables, or upon the ordinary comforts of life, it is that they may be useful to us in a natural way, and that we may be enabled the better to serve God in our lives; and herein is implied, and generally expressed also, our gratitude for the gifts of Di-

\* "The loaf." Vid. Campbell.

vine Providence, and our dependance upon him. In this case, as the supper now instituted was not for the supply of the animal wants, or the nourishment of the body, it must have been a supplication for spiritual blessings, and probably not merely upon those who were present, but that they might accompany this ordinance in the after ages of the gospel church, until Christ shall come again. Every communicating christian is under evident obligations, to give thanks on every such occasion for the mercy of God, who has provided a sacrifice for sin, for the love of Christ, who offered himself unto death on this account, for the privileges of, and grace accompanying the gospel, and for the outward tokens and symbols of this ordinance, calculated to bring up the remembrance of this important sacrifice, and draw forth our faith into exercise.

Although in the breaking the bread, the Redeemer conformed unto what is said to have been the practice of the Jews at that time, yet this was a very significant part of the institution, in as much as hereby the bread became a fit symbol of his body, broken for us; nor can we suppose this less important than any other of the parts of this solemn service; it was no doubt so considered in the early days, for it was not only denominated "the breaking of bread," a common phrase, but, in a letter to the Corinthians, we read,\* "This is my body, which was broken for you," which is obviously exegetical.

Are the words, "and gave it to the disciples."

to be understood of his giving a portion to every several disciple, or that he gave of it to those who were nearest him, and they to the rest? Perhaps it is a good rule, not to attempt to be wise above that which is written; this expression is satisfied either way; and if one of the modes had been exclusively intended, and the other unlawful, the direction would have been explicit. In those churches, therefore, where the minister delivers the bread to each communicant, they are near enough to the original example.

Although every part of this transaction, separately taken, was proper and significant, yet it could not have been designed that the communicant should, in participating, have his mind occupied on the reason of the parts distinctly; but that he should be occupied in a fiducial and affectionate remembrance of that transaction upon which his own everlasting happiness or misery depended.

As it had been usual to take and eat of a peace-offering, and particularly of the paschal lamb, which was a substitute for, and represented to the mind, the first lambs sacrificed in Egypt, on the occasion of the passing over of the angel, so they were hereafter to take and eat bread, to bring to their mind the body of their Redeemer, who was to be offered for them. The positive command, "*take, eat,*" was directed in the first instance to the disciples present; but it is also an injunction upon his followers in all ages; it was not to satisfy their hunger, for it was a feast immediately after eating; it was to be done in remembrance of him, which implied its repetition; it was practised by the churches in the

days of the apostles; given by revelation unto Paul, after Christ's ascension; and to be continued till he comes again, that is, to the final judgment. It is founded upon the authority of Christ; a neglect of the duty is therefore a denial of subjection to him, and evinces that the party neither loves nor fears him: this is not merely the crime of ingratitude, and of deliberate contumacy, but of avowed rebellion, and espousing the side of his enemies.

Taking and eating, being voluntary acts, are presumed to be the effects of faith in Christ; for why should any man take and eat, under the circumstances which accompany a sacramental ordinance, unless he does believe on and obey Christ? He takes the bread, and thinks of the body sacrificed for him; and believes, that is, puts confidence in the sufficiency of this satisfaction for sin, and the veracity of God for the acceptance of it. He eats, or partakes of it, for his nourishment; and has the token of the nourishing graces of the Divine Spirit given in Christ.

It was a very necessary piece of instruction to his disciples, when he said, "*this is my body;*" for otherwise they might have understood this supper as a change only of the mode in the paschal supper. He speaks in a manner to which they were accustomed at the passover; "this is the bread of affliction, which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt." And this similarity of expression explains his language, "this is the bread of affliction;" this represents the bread of affliction. "This is my body;" this represents my body offered for you. The paschal bread brought

to remembrance the afflictions of the Jews in Egypt, and the sacramental bread brings to mind the afflictions which Christ bore for us.

We see not the least necessity for a literal sense of these words ; upon such construction, we must suppose they actually ate the passing over of the angel, and drank the cup, not the wine ; and so Christ is a door, a vine, &c. Nor could it have been his body, which was then distinctly present, and holding the bread.

“ This is my body ;” the bread which you shall eat in future, in the celebration of this supper, which I now substitute in the room of the passover supper, shall bring up to your recollection, and associate with itself the idea of the sacrifice of my body. Luke and Paul add these words, as spoken at that time : “ *this do in remembrance of me,*” when my bodily presence shall be removed from you. Remember your sins, the cause of my sufferings ; remember the mercy of God, who provided and accepted this sacrifice ; remember its sufficiency ; remember my love ; and thus looking by faith upon me, whom you have pierced, you will receive the pardon of your sins, and be filled with gratitude love, peace, and joy.

He then *took the cup* which contained wine, the same which they had been using at the passover supper, but which was now to be used to a different end. The Jews called it in their feast the “ cup of grace,” or the cup of blessing, (and such it would seem after the bitter herbs) and in reference to this the apostle calls it “ the cup of blessing which we bless.”

His giving *thanks*, in this instance, was in allusion unto the Jewish custom, practised at the passover, of blessing the cup distinctly, thus; "Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, the King of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine:" but he probably used words suited to lead the minds of the disciples to the design of this part of the ordinance; surely the thanks were in behalf of his people, whose nature and law place he had taken.

The immediate propriety or necessity which, in the first instance, existed for blessing the bread and the wine *distinctly*, does not now exist; and therefore a blessing upon the elements is asked in the general, and thanks are often returned at the close of the supper; all the tables are considered as one table in this respect, and one sitting down, yet, if it could be avoided, it would be much better that the supper should be taken by all at the same time, and not by some before others, which the apostle \* condemned. Nothing can be more unreasonable or more absurd, than to suppose, that by virtue of such blessing, any virtue is communicated to the bread and wine; they are symbols representing important things, but not differing from other bread and wine.

It is recorded that the Saviour said, "*drink ye all of it.*" We have looked for a various reading or omission of the word *all*; and this word is not said to be wanting, or to have any substitute in any of the manuscripts and

\* 1 Cor. xi, 21, 33.



versions which have come down to our day, though they are very numerous. When we compare these words with the practice of so large a portion of the christian church in withholding the cup from the laity, we cannot resist the thought, that the word was designed against this error ; but we are not to judge others.

Without the cup, it could scarcely be called a supper, or a feast ; besides, the importance of this emblem is very observable, for “ without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin ;” and accordingly he added, “ *for this is my blood of the new testament.*” The word here rendered testament is so, in classical use chiefly, yet it also signifies a covenant, and probably does so in every instance in the new testament ;\* and it is strange that it should have been so often rendered testament, against the plain sense of the places where it occurs. This wine represents my blood, which ratifies the new covenant. If the new covenant mean here the gospel dispensation, then this wine represents his blood under the gospel, as the blood of lambs represented his

\* Heb. ix, 16, 17, has been thought an exception ; but *διαθηκῆς* seems to signify rather the victim than a testator. Where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the victim, by which the covenant is confirmed ; for a covenant over dead bodies is binding, but it is not in force as long as the victim is alive. Vid. Jer. xxxi, 31, xxxiv, 28. Gen. xv, 7—18.

† There is much difficulty in the residue of the words, *but I say unto you, I will not drink, &c.* Some think the meaning is no more than that the passover supper shall cease, and the sacramental supper take its place ; but this does not satisfy all the terms ; besides, this was already suffi-

blood under the former dispensation. But if it mean the covenant of grace, then the sense is, that the wine received in this ordinance should be a memorial in future ages, of the blood which on the next day was shed in the performance of that covenant of grace, which may be called new, because it is accomplished after the first covenant which was made with man.

When Jesus, speaking of his blood of the new covenant, adds, "*which is shed for many for the remission of sins,*"† it seems as if his blood had been already shed; so the Lord spake of circumcision before it had taken place; "*this is my covenant;*" and it was spoken of the passover, before it had taken place, "*it is the Lord's passover.*"

But the speaking here as if his blood was shed already, was proper, on another account; for as our help was laid upon one who is mighty to save, there was no danger of a failure of the performance of that which had been covenanted. Jesus is therefore termed a Mediator of a better covenant, founded upon better promises; promises which were considered as absolute and binding from the first.

ciently obvious. (Others refer it to his eating and drinking with his disciples (Acts x. 41) after his resurrection; we do not know that it was wine he then drank; and if it was, we see in such case no importance attached to the epithet "new" here given. It seems most probable, that his drinking it new in his Father's kingdom, is a figurative representation of heavenly happiness, as a feast at which they shall partake together; and this declaration, that he should drink no more with them wine on earth, when fulfilled, would strengthen their hopes of the fulfilment of the residue of his promise.

If it had been otherwise, it would have been necessary that Christ should have suffered before any of his people died, even before Abel was slain, otherwise he would have been lost; but Abel by faith offered a more acceptable sacrifice than his brother, and this faith was in Christ, the promised seed, the Lamb slain in the view of God from the foundation of the world.

What language could we desire more plainly expressive of the design of Christ's sufferings? He says that his blood is shed for many, for the remission of sins; not as an example of patience and magnanimity only; not merely as a testimony of the truth, but for the remission of sins, not his own, he had none, but for the sins of many. But why is it not said, it was shed for all men? This would have been true in a certain sense, but not in the sense here intended; the many here intended includes those only who shall be actually saved by his merits.

This feast, having been instituted at the time of Christ's death, and continued ever since, shows forth or declares the fact of his death unto this day, and will remain a constant proof of it till he comes to judgment.

It is important that there should be some visible mark and test, whereby those who profess to be christians should be distinguished from the rest of the world; those who refuse to comply with this positive injunction, renounce obedience to Christ, and show that their obedience in other instances flows neither from the love nor fear of God.

Perhaps the principal design of this ordinance

was to bring men back from time to time to the re-examination of themselves, and from a view of their errors to fly by faith to the only sacrifice for sin.

By partaking, every believing communicant openly declares his thankful remembrance of Christ's sacrifice, his dependance upon it alone for salvation, his love of his Redeemer, and his affectionate communion with his brethren.

## LECTURE XXV.

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MATTHEW, CHAPTER XXVII, VERSE 24 TO 46.

WHEN Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye *to it*. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them : and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band *of soldiers*. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand : and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews ! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify *him*. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name : him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall : and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did

they cast lots. And sitting down, they watched him there; and set up over his head his accusation written, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? ~~that~~ is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

THE judicial authority had been given to Pilate, undoubtedly that he might see that justice should be administered according to the laws of the Roman empire. It has been often observed, that every capital sentence should be the conclusion of a syllogism, whereof one of the premises is the law, the other the fact. The judgment of this officer should have been the voice of those laws upon the facts proved before him; but Jesus had not broken any law of the Romans, of the Jews, or of God; nor was there any evidence of guilt; Pilate's condemnation was therefore unauthorized; and the washing of his hands could in no manner remove from him the guilt of murder; it could only show the timidity and inconsistency of the man who could pronounce him to be innocent, whom he condemned to die.

As the innocence of Jesus was necessary to be known to us, so Providence has taken care to make his unworthy judge the witness of it. Judas also, who betrayed him, testified the same thing, and gave a terrible proof of his convictions on that point, by taking his own life. The centurion who executed the sentence pronounced the same important truth, and even the conduct of some of the members of the Jewish council, in asking for, and taking care of the body, showed their convictions at least of his innocence. But the particulars of his trial, preserved to this day, are the regular proofs to the world in every age of this essential point. The supernatural darkness, the rent veil of the temple, the earthquake, his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit, the testimony of his disciples supported by miraculous powers, and the fulfilment of his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, are respectively so many proofs of the divine approbation of this lamb of God.

In popular tumults, the voice of conscience is generally forgotten; his blood-thirsty enemies, regardless of his innocence, out-braved every such consideration, and with one voice exclaimed, in presence of the pusillanimous judge, "His blood be on us, and on our children." They were taken at their word; and who can read the account of their sufferings, which their own historian gives, without the most painful emotions?

But this blood will be found also on every one of us, in one sense or the other; if it be not on us to wash us from our sins, we shall be found

among the murderers of Christ; those who are not for him, are against him; and those who bear his name, and despise his cross, do crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

As the judgments of God overtook that guilty populace, so did they this officer, who was so much afraid lest they should complain of him to Cæsar. They did afterwards complain, and the emperor heard their accusation, and banished Pilate, who is said to have murdered himself.

He was scourged at Pilate's command; whether this was the mere effect of malice, or inflicted to mitigate the rage of his enemies, or because it was usual with the Romans to scourge those whom they crucified, or whether he was twice scourged, we cannot say; but it seems to have been necessary to the fulfilment of prophecies; "I gave my back to the smiters;" "the ploughers ploughed upon my back, they made long their furrows;" "by his stripes we are healed."

Being unjustly condemned, and cruelly scourged, he was committed to the savage barbarity of idolatrous soldiers, to be mocked and insulted. It does not appear that the two others, who were crucified at the same time, were so treated; but it was done, we suppose, with the view to occupy the soldiers with him; to intimidate his friends, and prevent his rescue; or that he should, if the Christ according to the Jewish ideas, deliver himself; their sarcasms and cruelty seem to imply so much; or it might have been done, that a spirit of impotent resent-



ment might be discovered by him, which would argue weakness. But he was silent, according to the prophecy; "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

As they had in the high priest's hall buffeted him, and smitten him with the palms of their hands, fulfilling the prophecy, "he was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him;" so now, again they smite him with a reed, and repeat the undefinable insult of spitting in his face. But this was also necessary to the fulfilment of an express prophecy relative to the Saviour: "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." What an awful work will be the final judgment, when these men must be placed in the presence of Christ! His appearance must be to them unsufferable torture. Yet, great as their crime seems to have been, ours of unbelief may be still greater, because we enjoy greater light, and possess higher advantages.

They then led him out to Golgotha, Calvary, or the place of a skull, terms of the same import; a place so denominated from the bones of malefactors executed there.

Luke tells us that a great company of people followed them, and of women, who bewailed and lamented \* him. No doubt many of them

\* *Ἐκοπῶντο καὶ θρηνοῦν αὐτὸν.* They struck their breasts, and lamented him aloud.

had received kindnesses from him, for he had for some time been chiefly occupied in healing diseases; restoring sight, hearing, speech, and the use of their limbs, to the people of Israel. But he “turning unto them, said, daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; weep for yourselves, and for your children.” My troubles will soon be over; yours will continue long; reserve your tears for distresses which will shortly overtake yourselves and your families. He himself had wept over Jerusalem, for the troubles which justice would bring on her.

A part of the wood to be used as a cross was put upon him, to be carried to the place of execution. Rendered faint by the agonies in the garden, his spirits were also wasted with fatigue, for he had been arrested, hurried from judge to judge, arraigned, tried, condemned, scourged, twice beaten without favour, harassed with the thorns and refined cruelty of the Jews and Gentiles, and led to the place of execution, all within the space of twelve hours; it is not wonderful, therefore, that he should be ready to sink under the burden.

It was usual, and still is, to give to a person about to be executed drink, warming and exhilarating; but their refined malice had prepared for Jesus vinegar mingled with gall. So extraordinary as this circumstance was, yet was it necessary to fulfil a prophecy.\* “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

\* Psal. lxxix, 21.

They divided his garments among them, and cast lots for his coat. In this circumstance, which would appear to be as perfectly accidental as any could be, the hand of God is seen; singular as it was, it exactly completed the prediction of his prophet: "They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots."

The circumstantial accomplishment of those minute prophecies, of which Gentiles as well as Jews had been possessed for centuries before, forms a species of proof the most certain, infallible, and satisfactory; and these prophecies, with the proofs of their antiquity, and the history of their fulfilment, have been preserved in mercy to us in after ages, that we may see, in every circumstance, a proof that Jesus was the very Christ so long before promised of God.

They crucified him. Had they put him to death in any manner, without nailing him through the hands and the feet, how could that prophecy have been accomplished in him, "They pierced my hands and my feet?"

He was crucified between two thieves; and thus was verified the prophecy, "he poured out his soul unto death; he was numbered with transgressors, and he bare the sins of many."

When any of us have been called to present, convict, or pass sentence of death upon a fellow-creature, we may have had no difficulty in the case; the man had forfeited his life, and to act the part we did, we saw was a duty we owed to our fellow-citizens, to the laws, and to common justice; and yet we commiserated the prisoner;

and if we should have seen him standing on the scaffold, or languishing in the pains of death, we could not have reviled, mocked, or wagged the head at him. How cruel to insult the dying! what savage barbarity to heap misery upon the wretched! but our Redeemer was mocked, and insulted when in the agonies of death.

He was indeed, throughout his life, “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” well might it be said of him, when hanging on the cross for six painful hours, “Behold, all ye that pass by, and see, was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?”

When ungodly priests and hypocritical Pharisees, when the deluded multitude, notorious infidels, and Gentile idolators, and even a reprobate thief on the cross, should conspire to malign and maltreat him, in whom no fault could be found, it adds to the presumption of his innocence. They said, “he trusted in God; let him deliver now, if he will have him;” and the prophecy was, “they shoot out the lip, they shake the head; he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”

The darkness continued about six hours, whilst he was lingering in death, not an eclipse, by the intervention of the moon; it was at the time of full moon, for the next day was the pass-over sabbath; this was from nine till three, and the moon was on the opposite side of the earth.

After six hours languishing, he called out, in great anguish of soul, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” These are the first

words of the twenty-second Psalm, and his speaking them accomplishes the prophecy they contain.

He suffered in soul and in body; the sufferings of his body were nothing to those of the soul. Of the latter kind were the agonies in the garden; "my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour."

To what shall we ascribe these sorrows? When conscience awakens as a lion; when the worm that never dieth begins to gnaw; when the sins of the guilty man begin to tear him like vultures, he may well complain. But it could not be remorse of conscience; Christ had never sinned. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners; "there was no guile found in his mouth." Conscience could have no claims upon him. Though he bore our sins, yet he died the "just for the unjust;" and so far from being liable to the reproaches of conscience for bearing our sins, it was doing his Father's will.

He could not be afraid of death, whose own arm could bring him salvation. The infidel who is about to be launched into eternity, and dreads the thought of annihilation, or the more fearful consequences of a judgment bar, may well complain of overwhelming sorrows, when his race of iniquity has been run, when he has wasted his life, without ever having taken the pains to make a full examination of the evidences of a future state. But Jesus came from the bosom of the Father, and well knew he was immediately to re-

turn thither ; the prospects beyond death were to him certain and transporting.

Shall we ascribe this bitter complaint to the pains of his body ? We hear not a word proceeding from his lips, whilst they were driving the nails through his hands, and his feet ; not a syllable is uttered by him, when they lift up the cross, and suspend the weight of his body by the nails. To the insults and reproaches of his enemies he makes no reply, except it be, " Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do." Bodily pains surely did not occasion this bitter lamentation. The cup of suffering was indeed a bitter one ; but here we discern the anguish of *soul* which constituted the most terrible part of the potion. Martyrs have found the bed of flames a bed of roses, and would not exchange their dying conflict for the pleasures of a banquet or coronation ; they had indeed that which Christ did not enjoy ; they had the smiles of their heavenly Father ; and whilst man was tormenting, God was comforting, who was more powerful than men. In the sufferings of Christ, men were tormenting with all the refinements of malice, and whilst his blood was wasting, his animal spirits decaying, and death hovering at a distance, till he should linger out those tedious hours, his blood-thirsty enemies not satisfied with the spectacle, were insulting, mocking, and deriding him. But their insults could not have produced this complaint ; nor could his bodily sufferings have done it, for they were nearly at that moment accomplished ; sensation was blunted ; the remains of life were probably confined

to the chest, and the extremities torpid. There is no reason to suppose, that when the conflict of bodily sufferings was over, he who had borne the whole without a word, would then have uttered this soul-rending exclamation.

There is no way to account for it, but by taking his own expressions as declarative of the cause; "*why hast thou forsaken me?*" A dark cloud of indignation covered his Father's countenance; the life-destroying wrath of Almighty God was poured into his soul; "sorrow hath broken my heart;" of these suffering mortals can form no idea, and make no calculation. The agonies of Gethsemane, which seized his soul before his bodily anguish commenced, again returned with excruciating tortures in the last paroxysms of expiring life. *My God! my God!* Is mercy clean gone? has the Lord forgotten to be gracious?

But how could justice admit, much less demand, such sufferings of one who never sinned? This very circumstance of his innocency, is an eternal proof that his sufferings were vicarious. "He bore *our* sins, he carried *our* sorrows." This is the key which unlocks the mystery; this is the thread which will wind us out of the labyrinth. Justice accepted this sacrifice before the guilt was contracted, or even the law was made; she has her stipulated demands; if she is not satisfied, she is herself unjust.

Such was the conflict which our Redeemer went through for us. He waded in "*deep waters*;" he trode the wine-press of God's wrath alone; he was mighty to save. "Who is this

that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I who speak, in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me.”

But if he died for our sins, he rose for our justification; yes, he arose; let every heart bound with joy.

- “ He rose ! he rose ! he burst the bars of death.
- “ Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates,
- “ And give the King of glory to come in !”\*

But to praise Him will be the delightful work of eternity.

• Young.



## LECTURE XXVI.

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MATTHEW, CHAPTER XXVII, VERSE 57 TO 66, AND  
CHAPTER XXVIII, VERSE 11 TO 15.

WHEN the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple : he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock : and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : go your way, make *it* as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the sol-

diers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

**AS** the resurrection of Christ is one of the most important facts recorded in sacred history, so the evidence of it has been left to us in such manner, as that the rules, which reason will prescribe for the weighing of proofs in other instances, will, when applied to the testimony in this, always lead to the conclusion, that Jesus Christ really arose from the dead.

This important inquiry may be narrowed down to a single point, by separating the question agitated from the undisputed facts. The apprehension of Jesus, his condemnation, his crucifixion, his death, his being laid in Joseph's tomb, his having been committed to the custody of his enemies, and their loss of the possession of his body, were facts admitted at the first, and have not at any time since been denied by the principal enemies of the gospel. The only question therefore is, what became of the body? On the side of christianity, it is affirmed that he arose from the dead; and this ought to be proved to the satisfaction of the unprejudiced mind. The witnesses to whom Jesus committed the knowledge of the fact, he also instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, that they might at the same time show to the world the design and importance of his resurrection. But the priests and elders allege, that whilst the guard whom they had set to watch

the body were remiss and sleeping, the disciples of Jesus came and stole away the body. If this charge can be made good, the disciples are thereby impeached; and whether Christ arose from the dead or not, they would be, in the estimation of every candid inquirer, incredible, and incompetent to prove the fact.

The disciples are not parties, but witnesses, in the principal question; the parties are the God of truth, and the enemies of christianity; but these pretend not to oppose *him* in this matter; they direct their resentments against his servants, and charge the disciples with opposition to him, and particularly with stealing the body of Jesus. The disciples deny the accusation, and must first be tried themselves, before their testimony can be received; if they should be exculpated, we may next hear their evidence, which will prove that he actually arose from the dead, according to the predictions which he uttered in the presence of his enemies, whereby they were induced to obtain and watch the body.

In the previous inquiry, the burden of proving lies upon the enemies of the gospel. The circumstances of the case make strongly against them. They had the body, and knew the importance of keeping it. They had what guards and watchmen they would, without restriction; they did not lack wisdom, power, or malice, to make the sepulchre as secure as it could be. The situation of the body in a new tomb, cut out of a rock, and having but one door, was an advantageous one. The disciples were few, without power, without friends, and intimidated; they all had fled at first; John return-

ed to his master, led by affection; Peter afterwards came near, but though more courageous than the rest, thrice denied his master. They were wholly disappointed by the death of their leader, for they still, unto the last, expected a temporal kingdom, notwithstanding all that he had said to the contrary. Their scheme therefore was at an end, and they could have had no desire to possess the dead body. Until encouraged by their arisen Lord, and the influences of his Spirit, they would not have had fortitude enough, had they been so evil, to have ventured the enterprise, of taking from the possession of a band of Roman soldiers, the body, shut up in a tomb, closed with a masonry stone.

The priests and elders pretended to rest their allegation of the stealing the body upon the declarations of the soldiers, that whilst they slept the disciples stole him away. If they were sleeping, they could not know, whether he arose, or was taken out of the tomb; much less could they know, that his disciples were guilty of doing it. But it is wholly unworthy of belief, that the soldiers were all asleep at the time, or that they would have confessed it, if they had been; or that the priests and elders would have suffered such remissness in duty to have passed with impunity; especially seeing, as they must have done, that such punishment, or even the attempt to inflict it, would have excluded the presumption of a combination between them and the soldiers, and would have made their representations of the matter much more credible.

If the body had been stolen, is it credible that

would not have been a thorough search made for it? that the disciples would not have been ferretted out of their hiding places, into which their fears had driven them? That no effort was made to regain the body, affords some presumption that they believed the body had not been secreted. Some of the disciples were very soon seized, and brought before the Jewish council, because they preached the resurrection of Jesus; yet not a word was then said of their having stolen the body; no imputation of the kind was so much as insinuated; the silence of the priests and elders on the subject, and the confidence with which the apostles, though in the power of their adversaries, asserted that he had arisen, furnish strong presumptions that the enemies of the gospel were conscious of the falsehood of their story, and that the disciples were emboldened by the truth of their account of the matter.

The charge of stealing the body, so far as it depends upon the statement of the priests and elders, deserves no respect; if they had been credible, they profess to have no personal knowledge of the matter; with regard to the testimony of the soldiers, it is wholly without support, for sleeping men know not what passes whilst they sleep; and this being the foundation of the charge brought by the priests, it fails. Also the conduct of the priests and elders at, and immediately after the time, evinces that they did not believe the body had been stolen by the disciples, and that their attempted crimination of them was known to themselves to be groundless.

If every man ought to be deemed innocent of

a charge until it is supported, or rendered credible by evidence of some kind; the disciples are, according to this rule, clear, and their characters unimpeached. The charge brought against them, not being sustained, it seems but just to hear their representation of the matter, that our minds may be wholly free from prejudice, before we take up and examine their testimony in the principal case.

The knowledge which they had of the conduct of the soldiers, and of the priests and elders, was derived, but how they obtained it, is not shown; it is probable that the safety of their informants required the concealment of their names. They assert that an angel removed the stone; that the guards were awake, but became, through fear, like dead men; that when the Saviour had arisen, the guards went to the priests, and their other employers, and related the facts as they were; but were induced to adopt the story of the body's being stolen whilst they were sleeping, and to charge upon it the disciples, by the priests; who gave them money, and ensured their safety from punishment for negligence.

It was probable that the truth should transpire; those who could be bribed could lose sight of their promises of concealment; and if any of them should become christians, or even conscientious men, they would disclose it. Or Joseph, Nicodemus, or some other member of the council, becoming a convert, could have given the true account.

That the soldiers should for money consent to be blamed for remissness, is not incredible, be-

cause the truth of the case could and would defend them, if brought in jeopardy of punishment; in the same manner also they could, and perhaps did, exonerate themselves, when likely to be brought into contempt for their assumed fault. If they were gentiles, the matter would appear to them of little importance; and if Jews, they sided with the priests, who were ready enough to do evil, under the pretext that good might spring from it.

The Jewish council could not but discern that the testimony of the soldiers, as to the opening the sepulchre by an angel, would have ruined their cause, made them to be abhorred by the better part of the community, and might even have brought their lives in danger;\* their case was an urgent one, and the fact of their having bribed Judas, and false witnesses, shows they were not too scrupulous to offer a bribe.

Their neglect to charge Peter and John with taking the body, when they were in their power soon after; their blaming them with an attempt to bring the blood of Jesus on them; and their ready compliance with the sage advice of Gamaliel, to press the thing no farther, accord with the representation given by the disciples, that they knew the body had arisen, but desired to smother the fact.

When all these defensive circumstances are compared with the want of support to the direct charge, brought by the priests against the disciples, of having taken away the body, the scale is

\* Acts v, 28.

turned, in the view of every unprejudiced mind, against the enemies of Christ; they have not only failed in their attempt to impeach the witnesses of the resurrection, but the evidence leaves a very strong impression, that they themselves were guilty of concealing the truth.

The disciples, except Judas, are not charged by their enemies with any other crime; and they were manifestly not supported in this.

But though innocent, yet, if interested, they would not be credible; but if they spoke the truth, their reward was independent of their success; if Christ had not arisen from the dead, they rendered themselves the objects of hatred, subjected themselves to persecution in various forms, and finally to death, for no gain, either here, or hereafter.

They were concurrent, and persevered in their testimony; of all the apostles and disciples, of whom there were more than five hundred, who saw him at one time, not one of them ever swerved from, or denied the fact of his resurrection. Judas was not a witness of it; but his repentance, confession, melancholy,\* and suicide, prove the integrity of Jesus, and consequently tend to establish his miracles and divinity.

Their testimony was not delayed until all opportunity of investigation was cut off, but whilst Christ's enemies were not only alive, but yet burning with rage; whilst his blood was still fresh on the cross, and every circumstance sus-

\* This seems to be the force of ἀπηνύξατο. Vid. Hammond's annotations, p. 150, a.



ceptible of the strictest scrutiny ; and whilst the people were convened at a feast, did the disciples publickly assert the fact of his resurrection.

They did not begin to publish the evidence of their Master's resuscitation in the skirts of the kingdom, or in places still more remote, but in Jerusalem, where the scene had been transacted, and where their enemies resided.

That believers in Christ were alone intrusted with the testimony, has been a matter of complaint ; but if they had not believed their own evidence, they would have been incredible witnesses ; and if they did truly believe that Christ arose from the dead, they must necessarily be christians. Yet these witnesses belonged to the Jews, and had been educated in their prejudices.

The disciples were plain, honest men, of singular integrity, and never so combined as to be unwilling to correct each other, and expose their defects ; but their characters have not been assailed, except in the groundless instance which has been examined, and therefore they ought to be presumed credible.

There are some minds which no possible evidence could satisfy, that Jesus had arisen from the dead : but to demand evidence, which the order of nature and the circumstances of the case prevent ; and to refuse to believe, because these do not bend to our wishes, betrays folly and depravity. Things which are past cannot be given to us by the evidence of sense ; they must be received by testimony ; to refuse moral, be-

cause we cannot have physical certainty, argues ignorance and fastidiousness. Different subjects of knowledge must be discovered by the different kinds of evidence which their respective natures admit. A just God requires only that the assent should be proportioned to the evidence, and he has mercifully afforded us evidence enough, in the things which belong to our salvation, to produce the strongest conviction. Unbelief, under such circumstances, is, as the scriptures often declare, guilt. But even when men profess a willingness fairly to weigh the evidence, that unperceived inclination of the mind to evil, which the undue influence of corrupt motives, and preponderancy of bad examples, evince to belong to the natural man, constitutes a secret, but prevailing prejudice, and prevents the reception or due effect of the strongest evidence. And it is a fact, though not generally believed, that the truths of religion can never, without a miracle of grace, make their way unto, so as truly to convince the understanding, till this barrier is removed. Under such difficulties do a fallen race of intelligent creatures labour; and the best advice that can be given, or taken, under such deplorable circumstances, is to ask the God of our spirits to remove the obstructions, and to cause his truth to shine into our minds; and he will not withhold his Spirit from those who ask him.

## LECTURE XXVII.

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JOHN, CHAPTER XX, VERSE 11 TO 18.

**BUT** Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping : and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and *to* my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her.

**THE** single question which presents itself for investigation, upon the subject of the resurrection of Jesus, is, what became of the body?

It was committed to his enemies, and over it they had set a guard of their own choosing, both as to men and numbers, professing to prevent even so much as the pretence of the fulfilment of his prophecy, that he would arise on the third day. On that day it was not in their custody; they ought to show, therefore, how they lost the possession. But on the side of christianity it is asserted, that Jesus arose from the dead. The affirmative of a question alone being capable of proof, the fact of his rising, or, which amounts to the same thing, that he was seen alive after his death, ought to be shown by satisfactory evidence.

No person could be a credible witness that he saw Jesus living after his crucifixion, but he who should believe his own testimony on the subject; we cannot therefore expect to hear it from any except those whom we may denominate believers; and such are not on that account unworthy of credit; for witnesses are never deemed incompetent, because they believe the things they testify. The apostles were intended to be the principal witnesses; were best acquainted with his person; they had heard, and were at length instructed to preach the doctrines which were connected with the resurrection of Christ, and to show the importance of the fact; but they were neither the first, nor the only witnesses. Besides the testimony of the soldiers, who, for the sake of money, refused to bear witness to the truth before the world, but whose apology was no doubt calculated to confound and intimidate the priests and elders; and the declarations of the

angels, who, being in the appearance of men, were probably not known in this instance to be heavenly attendants at the time of their appearance, but whose testimony prepared the minds of those who were to be the witnesses of the fact to the world; there were certain women, who were favoured with his first conversations.

That the female friends and followers of Jesus should procure spices, and visit the tomb in the manner described, was perfectly agreeable to the customs of the day, and of the nation in which they lived: for it was usual for the Jews to bury without coffins, wrapping the body in linen, and laying it in a sepulchre, where it was visited by the friends occasionally for about three days, or until it became offensive. It was also customary to anoint the body with spiced ointment; and this was usually performed by females. That he should appear to them who showed such marked attention to him, was quite in character for our kind and affectionate Redeemer.

The disciples had entertained expectations of temporal preferment, of which it is presumed these women were destitute; the latter therefore possessed minds, in the first instance, better prepared for receiving the evidence of his resurrection. This seems clear, because the disciples deemed the accounts of the women who declared they had seen Jesus, unworthy of belief; because two of the disciples, going to Emmaus, appear to have had no expectation of his rising from the dead, their hopes having been buried with him; "*we trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel;*" because the ve-

ry circumstantial evidence of Cleopas and his companion did not convince the “residue, neither believed they them:” because Thomas would not believe the concurrent testimony of all the other disciples, after they had been favoured with the most familiar and satisfactory interview with the risen Saviour; and because he “reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.” The testimony of the woman, though not fully accredited, could not fail nevertheless to prepare their minds in some degree, and put them upon recollecting his repeated promises to arise, and perhaps upon searching the prophecies on that subject.

Mary Magdalene had been the subject of a miraculous deliverance by Jesus from an inveterate possession, and turned from sin to holiness; her obligations to the Redeemer were by no means inferiour to her attachment, strong as her affection for him evidently was. She was one of those who had followed him from Galilee; witnessed his crucifixion, beholding it afar off; and who sat over against the sepulchre of Joseph, when he put the body in and closed it with a stone. But it is not probable that either she, or any of the disciples, knew there was a guard placed over the body, until after the resurrection of the Saviour. She was one of those who had prepared the spices after the sabbath was over, and had come early in the morning of the third day to the tomb to anoint the body.

She had already witnessed enough to fill her heart with sorrow. That his enemies should not

only put to an ignominious and cruel death her best friend, her kindest benefactor, and that without fixing on him so much as the semblance of guilt; but also persecute the dead, or at least remove him from the tomb, as a place too good for him, for so it appeared to her;\* this was heaping sorrow upon sorrow. However indefensible it may be, yet we do retain an attachment to the dust of our departed friends, and should especially excuse it in this affectionate and grateful female. Mary remained at the sepulchre after Peter and John had returned from it; it being now fully day, she stood without the tomb, weeping, in silence, and, as she thought, alone, under the disappointment in performing her last act of kindness to her murdered friend. Who ever dropped a tear for Jesus, and missed a reward? Her compassionate Saviour saw, and was moved at her distress. He ever delights to wipe away the tear from the eye of his disciples, and to turn their sorrows into joy.

Standing at the door, she stooped down to look once more at the place where the beloved Jesus had lain, before she should depart from the sepulchre; when she saw, as they appeared to her to be, two young men in the vault; these seem to have been merely spiritual beings, as they did not discover themselves to Peter and John, who had been there immediately before. They ask her for the cause of her weeping, and she tells them, "because they have taken away my

\* It is possible that Mary thought they had removed the body, that it might be buried, as was usual for malefactors, in one of the places assigned for them.

Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She possibly heard some person behind her at that moment, for, without waiting for their reply, she turned herself away from the door of the tomb, and saw Jesus, but did not know him. His dress might have been different; her eyes were full of tears; her mind being inattentive to the objects which presented themselves, and having no expectation of seeing the Redeemer, she took him to be the gardener, to whose care the tomb, which was in a garden, was deemed by her to have been confided. He repeated the question that had been just before asked of her, about the cause of her affliction. She answered in such manner as supposed him the gardener, who not only knew that Jesus had been laid there and removed, but was the person who had removed the body, the place being presumed to be under his care; and she at the same time proposed to relieve him of the trouble of taking care of the body, if he would tell her where he had laid him. In thus speaking she had turned away from him, conforming naturally and undesignedly to the attitude of a mourner, when obliged to hold conversation.

The question which the Redeemer had proposed to her, was evidently intended to invite her attention, that she might recognize him, without his claiming to be Jesus, but her tears and dejection had prevented the discovery: he therefore directed himself to her, no doubt in his usual tone of voice, but somewhat elevated, and said, Mary? presenting himself probably at the same time fully to her view. The effect was instant-



neous and decisive. He had no need to say, I am your crucified and arisen Lord. She turned herself, looked upon him, and exclaiming (Rabboni) my Master ! flew at him, to embrace him by the feet.\* Her conviction was by her senses, in open day, and when neither in any manner intimidated, nor expecting such an interview.

How long she held him, subjected as she was to the violent conflicts of sorrow, joy, and astonishment, is not related. Jesus, designing to send a message by her to his disciples, said, "touch me not," embrace me not by the feet, delay or detain me not, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father;" you will have other opportunities of seeing me, before I withdraw my bodily presence and ascend to Heaven.

By his ascending must be meant the ascension at the expiration of forty days, and as Thomas before that time was directed to thrust his hand in his side, and others to handle him, there is not the least reason to suppose he was intangible, but rather that his ankles were at that moment actually holden by Mary. The very body which was crucified was raised; whether the properties of the risen body were the same in all respects within the forty days that they have been ever since, is questionable, but not made known to us.

He sends by her a message of love, which was incapable of being counterfeited, and which ought to have convinced his disciples that he had arisen ;

\* This seems to be fairly implied, in his desiring not to be holden, detained, or embraced.

“ *Go tell my brethren,*” such he was not ashamed to call his disciples, “ *I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*” He had in his last affectionate conversation with his disciples told them, he had come from the Father, and was going to the Father. This message, spoken in reference unto what had passed privately between them, and being so perfectly in unison with his former instructions, and peculiar to himself, might have been sufficient to have satisfied them that Jesus had arisen, and that no other person in the kingdom would have used such language.

When she afterwards told them that he was not yet ascended, expectations of seeing him should have been awakened in their minds; and his renewal of the promise of going to the Father, should have excited and enlivened their hopes of his sending the Comforter, and performing his other gracious promises.

The circumstances here narrated appear to be such as would naturally succeed each other, and could not easily have been fabricated, had there been an intention to deceive. Her disappointment, her consequent sorrow, her looking again into the sepulchre, Jesus’s presenting himself to the lonely mourner, her mistake of him for the gardener, her speech to him as such, his calling her name emphatically, the conviction of her senses, his avoiding a delay in the open garden in the day time, his message to his disciples, and the peculiar nature of it, are all such as, admitting the resurrection of Christ, might have been expected.

That the disciples did not accredit the accounts given by the different women, is no argument against their credibility, because they afterwards did fully believe them. This evidence is placed under different circumstances, with respect to us, from those under which it was offered to them. We have it accompanied by the concurrent testimony of many others, but to them it appeared naked and alone. They had not time to weigh it, before Jesus also appeared to them, which happened on the evening of the same day; we may deliberate upon it. They might also have reasonably expected, that if Christ had arisen, he would have appeared to them in preference to others. But notwithstanding these and other causes of hesitation, there is no reason to suppose that the disciples doubted the veracity of this witness, because she was supported by the testimony of the other females, who also had seen him. They must in their hurry have discredited them all, on the ground of supposed mistake, a ground which is removed in the mind of every man who takes a view of the whole evidence given of the resurrection of Christ.

The assuring his disciples by the message that he was to ascend to his Father, was not only calculated to convince them that it came from Christ, but to comfort them with a further confirmation of his gracious promises, of sending the Holy Spirit, and of preparing a rest for them, and then coming and receiving them unto himself.

The words and "*your Father,*" was an additional testimony of their interest in that covenant, which he had entered into and performed.

for his people. It would have been unimportant to have told them they were the creatures of God; the word must mean more in this place than a parent by creation; it imports that they were adopted as children by union unto Christ; it was his intimation to them, that their state was changed from guilt and condemnation to pardon and acceptance, by their legal union to him. We are not presumptuously to wait for such extraordinary assurance, but to strive to ascertain the truth of our change of state, by our change of nature and disposition.

When he calls him *his* God, it is in reference to his own mediatorial character; and his assuring them that he was *their* God, which must also be meant in a covenant relation, was at once to announce to them every thing necessary to them here, and hereafter.

## LECTURE XXVIII.

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MATTHEW, CHAPTER XXVIII, VERSE 9, 10.

AND as they went to tell the disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

“SMITE the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” When Jesus the shepherd was slain, his disciples were scattered; when he would collect his little flock again, after the resurrection, they must be sought for in different coverts; he appears to Peter, in what place is not told us; he finds two of his disciples going to Emmaus, and associates himself on the road; and when they had been collected in the evening, we presume, by Peter, Thomas was still absent. The several manifestations are accordingly parcelled out to us by the several evangelists, according to the portions of the evidence with which they were respectively best acquainted. This circumstance may make different inquirers adopt different ideas of the order, or succession of

the various interviews holden with Christ. But it confirms, rather than weakens the proofs; for the several relations fortify each other, because their want of precise order or arrangement shows that the accounts were not written in concert.

That the women who attended at the sepulchre, and went to give information to the disciples, did not continue in the same company, if they even were together at the first, is clear. It is most probable they went to different places to deliver the messages to different disciples. Mary Magdalene seems to have hurried away, leaving some of the women at the sepulchre; and to have gone to Peter and John, with whom the two disciples were, who went to Emmaus, after their return from the tomb. Cleopas showed, in his conversation with Jesus, that they had not heard of the appearance of Christ to the Magdalen, though they were acquainted with the report of Peter and John; and this accords with the account which we have, that it took place at the sepulchre after these disciples had left it. The other women who were directing their course to other brethren, who were at a greater distance, we presume, were favoured with a distinct interview also with their Redeemer. Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene, to comfort her in her sorrows which were on his account; he appeared to the other women to allay their fears; and to all of them to confirm their faith, to prepare the minds of his disciples, and also to afford to us additional proofs of his resurrection. These women were satisfied that they had seen angels, whercof one had spoken to

them; his countenance, his white appearance, his manner of address, and his message, probably all conduced to such conviction; a fact, which, notwithstanding the joyful news that Christ was arisen, would not fail to affect them with extreme fear. The circumstances were peculiarly terrifying; to be the messengers of an inhabitant of the other world, upon an errand relative to the resurrection of a dead person, and this received at a lonely sepulchre, in the early clouds of the morning, were sufficient to make them leave the tomb immediately; in their retreat, though rapid, silence afforded them time for some reflection; but reflections augmented their fears, and the more they realized the facts, the greater must have been their perturbation and dismay.

The distressing fears of these trembling females,\* whose regard for their crucified friend had brought them into such terrifying circumstances, could not escape the mild and sympathizing Redeemer; to calm their minds, as well as to give them the joyful assurance of his being again alive by the most irresistible conviction of their senses, among other motives, must have produced this memorable and heart-cheering interview with him.

As he met them, he no doubt adopted the most familiar mode of address, and in the language usual in that day for salutations, he says to them, "*all hail;*" literally, *rejoice*, or be of good cheer; words not merely of peace, but of

\* Mark xvi, 8.

friendship and confidence. Their minds, though intimidated, had been in some measure prepared for this meeting with Jesus, by the pleasing intelligence of which they were made the bearers, that Jesus had arisen.

There was not the least necessity for his declaring who he was, or asserting that he was the same Jesus; proofs of identity are superfluous among familiar friends; they were well acquainted with his person, had been separated from him but about three days, and were of the number of his followers. They did not, could not, scruple the testimony of their senses; but immediately embraced him by his ankles, and either paid that reverence or homage which is sometimes given to men, or they worshipped him as a divine person.\*

The first sight of Jesus, associating with him, as they must have done, the idea of his death, would by no means tend to mitigate the consternation with which they were already affected; but the joy springing from the certainty of his resurrection, the mildness and condescension of his speech and demeanour in his familiar salutation, must have inspired some confidence; yet still they appear to have been oppressed with their remaining fears, and not to have uttered so much as a word.

Jesus, discerning their distress, in the kindest accents says to them, "*be not afraid.*" He then renews the charge given by the angels, that

\* *Προσκύνησις* Prostration at his feet, is probably the force of the term.



they should tell his disciples to retire to Galilee, and there they should see him.\* This message was designed also to season the minds of his disciples for his appearing unto them.

Jesus shortened the time of his presence with the Magdalen, but not with these women; the former was not afraid, these were distressed with fears; he permitted them to hold his feet, and treated them in the most gentle manner; every word which he spoke to them was calculated to sooth and quiet their minds.

The facts here recorded are perfectly natural, supposing Jesus to have arisen; his kindness and compassion, so characteristick of him, are here eminently displayed; his reward of these faithful friends was according to his manner; never could these females have forgotten this occurrence in the residue of their days, and never more could they have doubted of the resurrection of their Redeemer, nor consequently of his divinity, and the truth and importance of his mission.

The testimony of these witnesses has not been impeached; but suppose they had intended to deceive, what should they have gained by it? they would have undertaken to support a thing in

\* The disciples were most numerous in Galilee; the five hundred brethren who saw him at one time, had, we presume, that interview there, and were his adherents in his life time. As it was their duty to attend at the passover, his disciples who were at Jerusalem, and to whom this message would come, must have been numerous. Intimidated as they certainly were, they could not conveniently have assembled in Jerusalem, among their enemies. The promise to meet with them in Galilee, must therefore have been suitable and encouraging.

its very nature incredible to all the world, and of which no instance could have been produced, that a man should arise from the dead by his own power ; they had no right even to expect that the disciples themselves would receive their report, for they were expecting no such thing. They were also to tell the disciples, by the direction both of the angel and of Jesus himself, to go into Galilee, and they should there meet with him. If they had not seen Jesus, but were speaking falsely, then they knew that the disciples would not see him in Galilee ; is it then imaginable that they could have been so simple as to have suspended the whole truth of their relation, and their own characters, upon an occurrence which they knew would never take place ? If they had had disingenuity and art enough to have attempted such an imposition, they would not thus have ensured their detection, and planned the discovery of their falsehood from the first conception of it. If Jesus had not appeared to his disciples in Galilee, the testimony of the women would have been incredible ; if he has appeared according to their message, this renders additional weight to their evidence ; it proves that they were not deceived : with respect to intentions of imposition, none but a prejudiced mind would groundlessly impute to these female witnesses of the resurrection want of integrity.

Let us inquire more strictly, whether they were deceived. Those who were friendly to the priests, scribes, and elders, or who classed themselves either with the Pharisees or Sadducees, being opposed to the gospel, would have done

nothing knowingly, conducive to the accomplishment of the predictions of Jesus. The friends of Jesus, on the other hand, could have had no interest in deceiving mankind; if Christ was not risen, they could expect nothing from his cause in this world, but persecution and affliction; and nothing in the next but the just vengeance of God. But they had actually given the cause up, had lost sight of Christ's prediction, and were not disposed to do any thing offensive to the priests and elders, who presided over their religion, which as yet was that of the Jews. No one, therefore, of the then late followers of Christ, would have been likely to have practised such deceptions. If we suppose there were evil men, neither friendly to the priests and elders, nor to the disciples of Christ, who, from motives purely mischievous, would have attempted thus to deceive both parties, we see not how they could have accomplished it. It is not in the least probable, that any man could have so exactly assimilated himself to the looks and appearance of Jesus, as that he should be immediately in open day discerned and acknowledged as Jesus, without saying a word, or doing one act calculated to induce such a persuasion, by persons familiarly acquainted with him, and who had been separated from his company only about three days. His salutation contained nothing extraordinary; it was the sight of his person which brought the conviction, and that in every one of them. An impostor would have done every thing in his power to have increased their fears; but the language used in this in-

stance was the reverse ; “ be not afraid.” Besides, how came this person to send the same message that the angel had done ? To solve this difficulty, combination must be also presumed ; and that whilst one would assume the countenance and features of Jesus, another’s part should be to intimidate the soldiers, remove the body, and impose upon the women who were preparing their spices. But it is wholly incredible that any man should have so sported with his life, as to have deliberately attempted to roll away the stone from the sepulchre, in defiance of a company of armed men set to guard it ; and equally so, that they could have been so intimidated by any appearance which one man could assume. Suppose a double deception ; and if one was a deception, the other must have been, for they each sent the same message by the women to the disciples, that they should see Jesus in Galilee. What could they intend by this message ? If Jesus had actually arisen, it was natural thus to encourage and prepare the minds of his desponding disciples ; but if these appearances were fraudulent, such an appointment was putting the cause of deceit at hazard upon the most doubtful event, even if further deceptions had been intended to be practised there.

So great was the disappointment of the followers of Christ, by his unexpected death, for such it was to them, by reason of their carnal hopes, notwithstanding all the plain and direct warnings he had given them of it, that they abandoned all the expectations they had founded on him, and gave themselves up to sorrow and

dejection in the extreme. Though they could charge upon him no immorality, nor the least deception on any point, yet they could have said, for they certainly thought, that he was not that person whom they expected him to be. Under such circumstances, how difficult must it have been for them, again to have espoused that cause, stripped as it then was of all the imaginary inducements of worldly advantage, which they had fondly associated with it, though without any authority from Christ.

But how adverse soever their minds were to the first intimations of his having actually arisen from the dead; how stubbornly soever they persisted in the rejection of every evidence of the fact, except that of their senses,\* they were forced, without a single exception, to yield; and

\* John xx, 8. "And he (John) saw and believed," presents the semblance of an exception to this opinion. The modern "*Improved Version*" has it, "and he saw and believed *not*:" for this they have the support of the Cambridge manuscript *alone*; but to prefer one witness to an hundred, is neither evidence of extraordinary *rationality*, nor of any more than *characteristick* respect for the word of God.

Calvin, Doddridge, Guyse, and others, understood this as a modest intimation of John's early belief of the resurrection. But this is contradicted by the next expressions; "for as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise again from the dead;" Campbell, and Mac Knight suppose that John believed the report of Mary, which had occasioned their visit to the sepulchre. To this the old objection is, that John must have already believed the body to be missing upon his first looking into the sepulchre. But it is very clear, from the preceding account, that John had only a partial knowledge of the fact, until he went down after Peter into the vault. Not thinking of the resurrection of Christ, these two disciples ran to the sepulchre, to see whether Mary was correct in

the testimony of these females, which they at first rejected, they found afterwards to be true; and were reproached a week after this manifestation by the Saviour himself, for not receiving the report of others, whose veracity they could not controvert. Jesus arose; he therefore fulfilled his word, that he would take up his life again: he arose; therefore he was the Son of God, and in all respects the person whom he had affirmed himself to be: he arose; therefore he has satisfied for the sins of his people, and they are justified in him: he arose; therefore we also shall arise: he arose; therefore he will come to judgment: he arose; therefore we shall stand at his bar: he arose; therefore we shall either enjoy his blissful society for ever, or sink into despair and torments where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Such are the consequences of his resurrection; how important therefore is the investigation in which we are engaged!

affirming that the body was not there; and John "saw and believed." This agrees with the representation given by Cleopas (Luke xxiv, 24.) "and certain of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said."

This was the ancient opinion on the passage. Theophylact says, "επιστευον, ουχ οτι ανωτη ο κυριος, αλλ' οτι ελαβη πη' επιστευσε γαρ τω της Μαρίας λεγω, ειπουσιν, οτι ηραν τον κυριον." Augustin, "Et credidit, quod dixerat mulier; nam sequitur, nondum enim sciebant scripturam." Nonnus indeed thought that John believed that Christ had ascended to heaven:

"Ουρανην επι πιζαν υπηνημιος νεκυσ επη."

But this his translator censures, and says, "Ita accipiunt veteres, credidisse eum quod ex fœminis audierat." Such also is the opinion of Cartwright and several other learned commentators.

# LECTURE XXIX.



LUKE, CHAPTER XXIV, VERSE 13 TO 35.

AND behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* three-score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but

him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken : ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went : and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him ; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

THE disciple or adherent of Christ, who is in this scripture called Cleopas, is supposed to have been the same who is also denominated Alpheus, the husband of that Mary, who is distinguished as the mother of James the less ; the name of the other is not mentioned ; some have supposed Luke himself to have been the person ; but he does not account himself an eye-witness,\* and probably would have used in this passage the first person,† if he had been present, such being his manner. The opinion that it was Peter, on the account of those who have entertained it, is

\* Luke i, 2.

† Vid. Acts xx, 6.



highly respectable. It is the supposition that Peter sat off for Galilee, taking Cleopas with him, that he might meet Jesus there, according to the message sent by the women; and that the Saviour joined himself to them on the way, before they arrived at Emmaus. That they therefore returned to Jerusalem, to inform the other disciples of the resurrection of Christ; but their return being unexpected to the other disciples, these pronounced by anticipation that Simon \* had seen Jesus, before they knew the fact. In further support of this opinion, the words of Paul; "he appeared first to Cephas, then † to the twelve," have been resorted to. But these words would not exclude an intervening appearance, and are not conclusive. The manner of accounting for the words which they heard the other disciples speaking, "the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon," is forced and unsatisfactory. They most naturally, as they stand, import, that the two disciples, who had hurried from Emmaus in the night to bring intelligence to their brethren that Christ had arisen and appeared to them, were struck with a conversation, which showed that they were not the first of the disciples to whom he had manifested himself.

The relation given to Jesus by Cleopas, that "certain of them who were with us, went to the sepulchre," excludes these two disciples from having thus gone; but Peter was one of those

\* Acts xx, 4.

† 1 Cor. xv, 5. ἕτα τοῖς δώδεκα, afterwards to the twelve.

who ran thus to the sepulchre, and so could have been neither of the two disciples who went to Emmaus.

There is no intimation that they were on their way to Galilee; their excursion is expressly defined; they were going to *Emmaus*; there is no certainty that the direction of the Saviour to go into Galilee, required a departure from the temple worship, before the feast was over, much less that they then were complying with it, or even that they had heard of it; for they mention no such thing; nor is there the least probability that they would have relinquished the duty, if they had undertaken it, without a special command from Christ, of which there is no intimation.

Cleopas and his companion had heard that the body was missing from the sepulchre, and that angels had been seen by the women, as they thought, who asserted that Jesus was alive. That he was alive, they did not believe; but when they had seen Christ, they hastened to impart that information to their brethren. When they arrived, instead of being able to communicate the first appearance of Christ that had been made to any of the disciples, as they thought, they found them, and others with them, saying, \* “the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.” If Peter had been present, he would no doubt have given or confirmed his testimony himself; if not present, they who spoke thus, must have derived their information from him. It seems most probable that the Saviour’s ap-

\* Τους οτι αυτου λεγοντας.

pearance to Peter, caused this meeting, which was in the night, and private; and the discovery of the risen Saviour to those who were going to Emmaus, brought them back to Jerusalem. This assembly was composed of others, besides the disciples, who for distinction sake were called the eleven,\* though Thomas was absent; and whilst some believed that Jesus had appeared to Simon, others did not believe even the circumstantial account brought from Emmaus.†

Jesus chose to conceal himself from these two disciples, when walking with them, for a considerable time, for very obvious reasons. If they had at first known it was the Saviour, they might have either been too much embarrassed with fear to have weighed his arguments, or their former expectations might have recurred; “wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” They were *sad*; disappointment calms the mind, and disposes it for reflection; their hopes of temporal preferment were blasted by his death; their condition was therefore favourable for receiving instructions. To afford them was his chief design; and his discovery of himself to them, before he should leave their company, would give effect to his words, and make the recollection of them always a delightful work through the residue of their lives.

But how he concealed himself from them, has been variously conjectured. Their eyes are said to have been *holden* or restrained, terms which perhaps were designed to express the effect, rather than the cause, and do not warrant the con-

\* So the twelve. 1 Cor. xv, 5.

† Mark xvi, 13.

clusion, that some miraculous operation was wrought upon them. It is possible that the different external appearance of Christ,\* on this occasion, who overtook them, together with their unbelief, and consequent unwariness, might have prevented the immediate discovery. If to those circumstances it be also added, that it was near night, and the day had gone down,† it will not seem extraordinary, that they who knew him as soon as they drew near to a supper table, the lights on which would discover his countenance, might not know him, when walking together, as a stranger, in the twilight, and deeply engaged in conversation.

That he might communicate the instructions he intended, it was proper that Jesus should cause them to bring up the subject of his death; this they had been privately conversing on, and it was also the cause of their dejection; both of which circumstances he shows them he had noticed, and inquires their cause, as he well might, though already not unknown to him. Cleopas, who was probably a man advanced in life, answered him, by expressing his astonishment that he should, though a stranger, be unacquainted, coming from Jerusalem, as he was, with the subject he was inquiring for. How exceedingly natural was this detection of colour in the cause of the Redeemer's interrogation!

When he opened to them the scriptures, their heart burned within them, their consciences smote them for the carnality of their former

\* Mark xvi, 12. "εν ἑτέρα μορφῇ"

† "Προς ἑσπεραν ἔσσι, και κικλικεν η ημερα."

views, and their ignorance of the meaning of the scriptures, which he explained ; or they discerned such authority and decision in his manner, so characteristick of Jesus, that though it did not enter at that moment into their minds that it was he, because before consigned to the mansions of the dead, yet the very feelings which they had often experienced under his preaching and private instructions, were awakened in their minds ; and these sensations were such as, after the discovery of himself, to confirm irresistibly their convictions that Jesus was arisen, and had thus appeared to them.

The principal objection advanced against the reality of the appearance of the risen Saviour to Cleopas and his companion, seems to be, that they discovered him at so late a period. But the answer is much less difficult, than if there had been the smallest ground for the objection of credulity. They were at last satisfied ; and their brethren, who at first believed not their relation, at length also, after they had seen Jesus, acquiesced, that there was no deception in this matter, and none of them all, at any time after seeing their Master, doubted the representation here given.

If it was not Jesus ; who of all the men in the world at that time understood, or would have been competent to have explained, the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament prophecies ? Who could have expounded from Moses, and all the prophets, all the things which related to the Messiah ? No one but Christ himself would have said that Christ "*ought,*" by the prophecies,

“ *to have suffered these things.*” None knew, much less taught, such doctrines.

The instructions which were given never flowed from an evil man, and no good one could have been an impostor. If the latter was his character, how came he to understand the word of God better than the disciples did? How came he to ask the blessing when they sat down to eat? If he intended to impose himself upon the disciples for Christ, why did he not say something, when walking in the shades of the evening, that might have tended to convince them of this? He asserted no such thing; but when his manner of asking the blessing, and assuming his wonted dignity, had called their attention to his person, and occasioned the discovery, he disappeared,\* that is, he retreated from their company. If he had been an impostor who thus conversed with these disciples, would he have gone with them into the house, and sitten down with them at the light? If it be said he did it reluctantly, and was about to have passed away from them at their first arrival at the village; we answer, if he really intended this, then he would have left them, without having dropped an insinuation, and without their having received the least impression that it was Jesus; this circumstance would equally show he intended no deception.

This narrative is descriptive, natural, and reasonable in all respects; it gives a just representation of the character and doctrines of Christ; it shows the then condition and views of his dis-

\* *Agarles.* Vid. Parkhurst.

ciples, and appears wholly credible. The instructions were important, and given in an impressive manner; "O fools,\* and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." His asking a blessing was exemplary; and his thus taking the honours of the table, according to their customs and views, was acting with ingenuousness, and according to the dignity of his character. His not discovering himself till a little space before he left them, conduced both to the communication of instruction to them, and the impressing it upon their minds. His leaving them at an early period was necessary, both for his and their meeting with the disciples the same evening: and this might have been also necessary, according to his purpose of withholding himself from his enemies, to whom he had bidden a final adieu,† until he should come to judgment. The immediate return of these two disciples to their friends at Jerusalem, perfectly accords with their being at that time ignorant of any other appearance of Christ; and their going in quest of them to the place particularly where they were beginning to assemble, for the two had expected to have remained that night at Emmaus, also shows the strength of their own convictions, and their expectations of the ignorance of the other disciples that Jesus had arisen.

The evidence of the resurrection of Christ consists of many distinct parts; they are numerous, that there might be no defect of proof of that important fact. This is one only, and is corroborated by all the rest. Every advantage for

\* *Ανοήτοι*, not *μαθηταί*.

† Luke xiii. 35.

information we possess creates a correspondent obligation to improve it; the book of nature has been opened before us, that we may read it; and the book of revelation, that we might search into it, and reason has been conferred upon us, that we might exercise it on both. There is no subject more interesting or more important than this of the resurrection of Christ.

To search and impartially weigh the evidences of the truth, are not the only duties; to believe them is a duty. The mere assent of the understanding, so far as it is an involuntary act, is scarcely to be numbered among the obligations to which we are subjected; nor is faith required without evidence; but religious truths are not believed, neither from a defect of understanding, nor proofs, but because they are unpleasant to depraved minds; and so far as this aversation of heart operates to prevent our believing, we are not innocent. When neither the defect of evidence nor of the intellectual faculties prevent a man's believing religious truth, his unbelief being the effect of his enmity of heart against God, it is, if it continue till death, a soul-destroying sin.

If all men are by nature inimical to holiness, faith can only exist where a moral change has been produced; and if it is the Spirit of God who effects this change, and so prepares the mind for the reception of the truth, then faith, though our act, may be denominated God's gift; and that, not merely because in the course of his providence he gives us understandings, furnishes the evidence, and presents it to us, but because he opens our hearts to attend unto the testimonies of the truth.



## LECTURE XXX.

LUKE, CHAPTER XXIV, VERSE 36 TO 48.

AND as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish and an honeycomb. And he took *it*, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

AN apostle, in a letter directed to a christian church, observed, that if Christ had not

been raised from the dead, their faith was vain; they were still in their sins. And it must be conceded, that if he did not arise, we have no certainty of the acceptance of his righteousness in satisfaction for our guilt; his own predictions of his resurrection have failed; his character has become consequently imperfect; the proofs of his divinity are destroyed; and with them have fallen his mediatorial office, and our hopes.

But we have no reason for despondency; he arose the first fruits of them that slept; his soul was not left in the state of the dead, neither was this holy one suffered to see corruption. He has prolonged his days, and the pleasure of the Lord has prospered in his hands. And that his people might have grounds of confidence and joy, he “showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.”

On the first day of the week, a day ever since solemnized by christians, a fact itself which is in perpetual corroboration of the evidences of his resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalen, to other females going from the sepulchre, to Peter, to Cleopas and another disciple, and in the evening to the disciples and others, Thomas being absent. On this occasion, Jesus came into the place where they were assembled, before the two disciples had done speaking of his appearance unto and conversation with them on the way, and at Emmaus. He came in in time to conquer the remaining unbelief of some of the disciples, who were then present, but who had not seen him since he arose. The doors

had been shut,\* for fear of the Jews, who were consequently not present, as he had shown them that they should not be favoured with his presence again;† but there was no necessity that he should have forced the bolts, or come through the walls; he came in, we presume, as others had done, with an usual salutation, and stood conspicuously in the midst of the disciples.

Notwithstanding the care Jesus had taken to prepare their minds for this interview, they were so terrified at the sight of him, that their first conclusion was, that it was not really the body of Christ, which had arisen from the tomb, and was then before them, but his Spirit, which had assumed such an appearance as the fears of men in those days, as well as in the present, lead them frequently to imagine. It is not probable that Jesus presented any frightful appearance, either in his dress, since he had left his grave clothes at the sepulchre, or in his countenance, which should have excited such fears; if any other man had entered, it can scarcely be supposed that the whole company should have been thus immediately filled with terror, nor would they have apprehended, we presume, that they were beholding a spectre. The reasonable construction is, that they discerned in him the features of their crucified Master, and associating with this idea that of his death, their distressful fears of apparitions took possession of their minds at the first, and occasioned this disquietude; and thus their very fears become a strong proof of the resurrection of the Saviour.

\* *Κεκλεισμένων.* John xx, 10.

† Luke xiii, 35.

Jesus, discerning the expressions of fear, either in their countenances, or by their gestures, and desiring to allay it, addressed them with the mildness and compassion which were peculiar to himself, and which must have afforded them the strongest assurance of his continued affection for them: "*Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your minds?*" You shun me as an enemy; you treat me as a frightful apparition; you erroneously imagine I am imposing upon your senses, and am not what I appear to be: "*Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.*" He does not, for it was not necessary he should say; I am Jesus, who was crucified. His appearance brought into their minds irresistibly the idea of their Master, who had been slain; but the proofs of his corporeal, they strangely converted into evidences of his spiritual nature only; his chief labour therefore was to remove their *thoughts* that he was the bodiless spirit of Jesus. That it was no other than Jesus they were satisfied, without his affirming it: but the mere circumstances of his uttering sounds, and holding conversation, as well as of presenting an appearance, might all comport with their ideas of a ghost or separate spirit assuming a vehicle for the purpose of discovering itself to the living. He gives them an opportunity of making trial deliberately, and offers for their examination his hands and his feet; "*handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*"

Whether happy spirits leave the abodes of bliss to converse with men, and whether evil spi-

rits are permitted to leave their prison to do so, and whether God miraculously clothes them with the semblance of bodies and dress, though possible, is by no means probable; nor has it been here decided, because the expressions used by Christ were such as the prejudices of his disciples required. His asserting that separate spirits have neither flesh nor bones, is indeed strictly true, but was designed merely as an appeal to their own opinions about spectres. Such fears he had formerly allayed in his disciples, when he came to them on a certain occasion, walking upon the waters; they then thought they were beholding a spirit, until he convinced them of their error by more fully discovering himself to them. So now "*he shewed them his hands and his feet.*" He gives them the most satisfactory sensible evidence of the reality of his person; their hearing, their sight, and the sense of feeling, are all appealed unto in the most deliberate and condescending manner. We ought not to consider what is here said merely as an invitation to them to examine his hands and his feet; but the distinct assertion, that he showed them to them, after he had already invited their attention to them, fairly implies that the disciples did examine them.

The credibility of the disciples has been already decided as a previous and distinct question; the only possible way of escaping the force of this evidence is to imagine they were themselves deceived by some cunning impostor. But would any man have been able so perfectly to imitate the person of Jesus, as to have thus affrighted so large a company of men, of full age, and ad-

vanced life, and who were intimately acquainted with him? Would an impostor have made efforts to allay the fears, of those whom he was deceiving, or to excite them? Would he have pressed upon them the most deliberate and familiar examination of himself, or would he not rather have shunned the light, and avoided inspection?

The expressions; “ *they believed not for joy, and wondered,*” are very singular, but quite intelligible. Upon his first appearing in the midst of them, they had no doubt but they were beholding the apparition of Jesus, otherwise the fears of every individual would not have been so much excited as to have required the gentle and soothing language which is here recorded to have been spoken, and the pains which were taken to convince them by their senses that it was a real body. When their fears were removed by his familiarity, their joy upon the recovery of their master and friend became excessive; they experienced a sudden transition from one extreme to another of opposite passions. When these animal commotions are violent, they discolour the evidence, and bias the judgment, or even suspend from its proper exercise the understanding. This was their effect in the case before us; they prevented the duly weighing the evidences which Christ was giving them of his resurrection; their fears indeed yielded, but it was to excessive joy and amazement; one extreme was succeeded by another, so that the assent of their rational understandings was neither demanded by themselves, nor waited for, in the hurry of inflamed

passions ; nor did they at the first realize the resurrection of Jesus, although it was the very thing which occasioned their joy and wonder.

After Jesus had caused his disciples to exercise every sense which is ordinarily used to ascertain the identity of men, and had endeavoured to calm their minds, not only by his gentle and endearing language, but had given them all the time that they desired to perfect their examination of his person, and to discern the reality of his presence, he proceeded to give them another proof, that it was his body which was before them, and not an appearance of it only ; he asked for food, in terms which submitted the kind of it to their choice or convenience ; and upon its being presented to him, he ate of a fish and of an honeycomb before their eyes ; they must have seen, by this last test of his bodily presence, that the victuals which they furnished, and knew to be material substances, could be consumed only by a real body ; if he had been a mere shadow or spectre, the substances given to him to be eaten must have remained entire. What further test could they have required of the reality of his having arisen from the dead, and of his being actually alive, and subjected to the trial of their senses ?

Their fears having subsided, and their astonishment so far abated as to leave them capable of receiving instruction, he proceeded to put them in mind of the doctrines and discourses he had given them before his death, and to enforce again on them those old testament-prophecies, which he had formerly endeavoured to convince

them related to his kingdom, and were to be fulfilled by him. He reasoned with them out of the scriptures; “*thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day;*” on the evening of which he was then speaking to them, and then showing them the truth of the fact; which they all saw, all believed, and all persevered in the belief of, through the rest of their lives; a truth which they published every where; communicated to the churches; perpetuated by changing the weekly stated worship to the same day, we suppose, by his command; and a truth which many of them sealed with their blood.

The effects of this doctrine form also a strong proof of its truth; they were first discoverable in the confidence and courage of the witnesses themselves: and from them the knowledge of the resurrection and its consequences has been spread, until it has counteracted and often prevailed against interest, pride, policy, false religion, false philosophy, and even the very laws which were enacted for its extirpation. The evidence of Christ’s resurrection from the dead has silenced his most clamorous enemies, discharged bands of persecutors, destroyed their instruments of torture and death; it has made its way into the palaces of kings, into the cottages of the poor, and into the solitary cell of the hermit in the wilderness; and has in every place afforded solace to the afflicted, a sure foundation of faith to the doubting, a basis of hope to the disconsolate, and the joyful prospect of an heavenly rest to the weary pilgrim.



The unregenerate world cavil at the doctrines of the gospel, evidently because they are not accommodated to the reasonings of their carnal and prejudiced minds ; a circumstance to be expected, if they came from a perfectly pure and holy God. But these objections must be idle and vain, so long as the fact of the resurrection stands unshaken. If Jesus arose from the dead, as he declared he should, and has rendered the numerous and infallible proofs of his being alive after his passion, of which we are to this day in possession, and which were immediately investigated, seen, and believed, and then written and committed to the keeping of numerous churches, upon whom it would have been at all times since impossible to have palmed any other scriptures ; then it is certain he came from God, and revealed the truths of God ; and the opposition of unbelievers to one and another of the doctrines which he taught, deserves but little respect, so long as the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ remains unshaken. If Jesus has arisen for our justification, “ he was delivered for our offences,” according to the purposes of God ; our faith may safely rest upon this sacrifice : if it is God who declares himself satisfied, and accordingly accepts us as righteous, who can or dare bring us into condemnation ? If God be on our side, who can be against us ? There is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus.

How dark and gloomy must be their prospects, who deny that Christ has arisen ! they live without hope, as well as without God, in the world. Death must appear to them a dark cloud, hover-

ing at a distance, but which will sooner or later infallibly overtake them. Against the storm, as they have made no provision; so they believe they can make none. When it shall arrive, they know it will blast for ever all their possessions, and all their expectations; and whether they shall fall into an eternal sleep, lost and forgotten by every being, as if they had never existed; or shall be doomed to an endless state of despair and misery, they know not. If such reflections are staved off, either by business or follies, they are only postponed to return again with redoubled violence, aggravated by the additional calamity of the irreparable loss of that time which had been afforded for a preparation for death.

But how comfortable the hopes and prospects of believers! for them "to live is Christ, and to die gain;" for Christ has arisen, to die no more, and his resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of his followers. As Jesus "died, and rose and revived, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel; and "God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us."

# LECTURE XXXI.



JOHN, CHAPTER XX, VERSE 24 TO 29.

BUT Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.

WHEN we have discovered the prevailing sentiments of the Jewish nation relative to their expected Messiah, in the age in which the Saviour lived, we have learned also the first views and expectations of his disciples. As long as their ignorance of the spiritual instructions, which their Master repeatedly inculcated upon them

in vain, continued; so long did their mistaken opinions and hopes of worldly preferment still remain. They were imperfectly religious men, and temporal views were incorporated with their piety: they saw the integrity and holiness of Jesus, and therefore knew he spoke the truth: they discovered his knowledge and power to be more than human; they accordingly believed him to be the Son of God, the true Messiah, and followed him at his command. But they obeyed him, because they believed him to be such a Messiah as they erroneously expected, and not because he was the spiritual King of Zion. It was the same error that both made them his disciples in life, and confounded them by his death. Their disappointment, which sprang from their carnality, and remaining ignorance of his true character, made them slow to believe that Christ had arisen; and their integrity, except perhaps in the case of Thomas, who was vain, made them discover their unbelief. All things are ordered in wisdom; the just imputation of excessive credulity would have been a charge we could not have parried; whilst the unbelief of their hearts, though wholly indefensible, has elicited proofs of the resurrection, in which our minds cheerfully acquiesce.

Jesus had given various manifestations of himself on the day of his resurrection, whereby ten of his chosen disciples, and others who were with them, were convinced. They were again assembled on the evening of the eighth day after, and were at supper.\* Their timidity still conti-

\* Mark xvi, 14.

ning, for they well knew the hatred of the Jews, and their power, the doors were shut; the occasion was suitable for the appearance of Jesus, who did not intend to show himself to his enemies, as he had told them they should not see him.\* He came in, making the usual salutation, "Peace be unto you," and stood in some conspicuous place of the apartment, in which they were assembled.

As these were to be witnesses of his resurrection, his purpose seems to have been to furnish them with all the sensible proofs of his being alive after the resurrection, that they had enjoyed of him before his death; and indeed the disciples, in every instance, still appear to have been incapable of being satisfied on that point by any other evidence than that of their own senses, and even this sometimes at the first sight with hesitation. Jesus, discerning Thomas and others associated with the eleven present, who had unreasonably rejected the evidence of their brethren,† he reproached ‡ them for such obstinate and unreasonable conduct.

This reproof amounted not only to the most positive affirmation that he had arisen from the dead, but confirmed the respective testimonies of those who had declared that they had seen him on the preceding first day of the week.

\* Luke xiii, 35. Vide John vii, 34—36, vii, 22—24.

† The reproof mentioned Mark xvi, 14, could embrace only Thomas of the eleven, unless it related to their past incredulity, for the rest had seen Christ, and therefore it implied, being in the plural, that others were present.

‡ *Quidam.*

There is not the least reason to imagine, that this incredulity was accompanied, either by the imputation, or supposition of the want of veracity in those, who had affirmed that they had seen, heard, and conversed with Christ; there was indeed a presumption, arising from the usual order and laws of nature, against the alleged fact; but the extent of those laws is not clearly defined to us, and things may be perfectly natural, when to us they may appear to be contrary to the course of nature, and we may err in the denial of them; consequently direct and positive testimony, and that concurrent, of his being alive, ought to have been received; especially when it was well known that Jesus had himself raised the dead to life, and exercised a controul over the course of nature. If Thomas, who was certainly aimed at in this reproof, had been disappointed in his expectations from Christ, it had been his own folly to entertain such groundless hopes of worldly emolument. He seems to have relinquished the society of the disciples, and to have been absent at every former appearance of his master; when informed by them, that they had seen the Lord, and probably of the circumstances also, he seems to have piqued himself upon the strength of his own understanding; before he would believe, he must see the most infallible marks of identity in the person of Jesus: to discern his features, to see him eat, to hear his voice, to be subjected to his instructions; these should not convince him; he must see the marks of the violence which had been inflicted at his crucifixion; the print of the nails in his hands; nor would he even then trust

the sight of his eyes ; he must also put his finger into the print of the nails, and must thrust his hand into his side, and be satisfied that it was the same which was pierced by the spear on Calvary.

How shameful the incredulity of this disciple, after all the miracles which he had seen Christ perform ! no wonder he was reproached for it by his Master, upon his first entering the room where he was. If Thomas had expressed the real sentiments of his mind, how astonishing was his ignorance of the true character of the Saviour ! But some men, on certain occasions, excited by the most contemptible vanity, boast themselves to be more incredulous than they really are. It is most likely that Thomas knew the Saviour, and lost his doubts before he showed him his wounds. When the enemy of souls has gained some advantage over a backsliding christian, he delights to push him by his temptations into the extremes of folly and sin.

Jesus knew what Thomas had said ; how strong an evidence did he give of his Deity, in this reproof of a disciple for his foolish expressions spoken in private, and in his absence ! He knows our words and thoughts, and takes an account of them all ; we ought at all times to remember, that our private conversations must be tried, and consequently told, in the presence of the angels.

Having given the reproof in generals, he directs himself personally to Thomas, uses his own words, and affords him all that evidence that he had unreasonably asserted he must have, as the con-

dition of his believing. “ *Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.*”

Little did this unbelieving disciple expect, when he uttered such language, that it was heard, and would be accomplished by his crucified Master. But he had been chosen for a witness of the resurrection, and such he must be made, how strong and how strange soever his demands of evidence should be. The church of Christ was interested in his convictions; had he not been convinced, the cause of the gospel would have been reproached in every age with the exception.

Thomas, overpowered by the evidence, conscious of shame, and the guilt of his former unbelief, filled with amazement, and sensible of the justice of the reproof, offered no excuse for his obduracy; but exclaimed, “ My Lord and my God.”\* Thou art my Master, whom I have followed, and more, my God. To denominate this not an address to Christ as God, but the appeal of surprise to the Father, is to make this disciple guilty of profanity, and worthy of further reproof; but Jesus declared it an expression of faith in him; “ because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.”

Thomas deserved no credit for his confession; his obdurate mind had resisted as long as it could. His grace is in the highest degree, whose faith is

\* “ ὁ κυριος μου, και ο θεος μου.” The nominative, not the vocative, συνη being understood.



strong upon the weakest evidence. The Saviour accordingly administers an wholesome admonition to that effect. Thomas had valued himself above his brethren for his incredulity ; but Christ declares the blessing belongs to such as “ *have not seen, and yet have believed.*”

The testimony of Thomas ought not to be considered as the voice of one witness only ; the other ten disciples, besides certain brethren not named, were present, and concurring. The record which is before us, was written by John, an eye-witness of the transaction ; nor would it have been in his power, even if so disposed, to have brought the first christian churches to have acknowledged his relation as authentick, and as the testimony of the other disciples, if it had not been so.

Notwithstanding the hardness of heart, and indisposition of the disciples to believe the resurrection of Christ, in every instance, until their senses were overpowered, yet does Jesus still maintain his characteristic mildness ; “ Peace be unto you,” was his salutation ; and though he designed to reprove Thomas, yet he gave him the evidence he had required. Such was his kindness and condescension in every interview. He said to the Magdalen, “ tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” He calmed the trepidation of the women returning from the sepulchre ; “ Be not afraid.” He avoided the discovery of himself to Cleopas and his companion, lest he should alarm their fears, till they were in a house, and he was about to leave them. To the ten

disciples he rendered himself familiar ; “ Why are you troubled ? behold my hands and my feet.” Such uniformity of character and conduct ; such kindness, and love for his disciples, appearing in all his manifestations of himself to them, furnish a strong argument, that it was still the same person that showed himself to them, the same loving shepherd of Israel, who laid down his life for his sheep.

In every conference which Jesus held with his followers, the particulars whereof are recorded, except to the women returning from the sepulchre, he imparted some instruction, and in that instance their perturbation would have rendered it improper and unavailing. He expounded the scriptures at considerable length to the disciples who were going to Emmaus ; his discourse to the ten, the same evening, contains the essentials of christianity. The message by Mary exhibited the comforts of the covenant of grace to his disciples. What the conversation was on this occasion is not given at length ; but his words to Thomas, “ Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed,” imply the importance of faith in him, and the happy consequences of it in them that believe.

Though the testimony of the disciples may command the assent of the understanding to the truth of the fact, that Christ arose from the dead, yet, if this be all, but little advantage redounds to us. This fact is known to the infernal spirits ; yet it neither removes their guilt, mitigates their sorrows, nor alleviates their pains. Except we have been quickened together with Christ, we

are still dead in sin ; and our guilt and miseries will be discovered to be aggravated, by the tenders of mercy made to us in him ; he arose not for our justification, but condemnation.

When the enemies of Jesus had accomplished their plans for his destruction ; when they saw him dead ; when they knew that he was buried, the sepulchre sealed, and a guard in whom they could confide fixed over the body, they must have deemed their victory complete, and supposed the wonder-working Nazarene,\* who had graced their triumph, would now sink for ever into silence. Yet they only did the things which God had before appointed to be done ; their malice and wickedness had accomplished literally the prophecies long before published relative to the Messiah. They stumbled by opposing Jesus. We stumble by claiming to be his friends ; we all receive him ; we all believe his resurrection ; we are all christians ; we all entertain hopes of salvation ; our very profession of christianity renders us secure, and prevents the knowledge of ourselves, the discernment of the need of a Saviour, and our striving to obtain a saving union unto and interest in him. It would be much better, in some instances, to be notorious unbelievers, like Thomas, than thus to deceive ourselves with the name of life, if we be still dead in trespasses and sins.

\* How remarkably attached the Jews still are to this term of contempt, sufficiently appears in the reply to Lord Crawford by Bennett, a modest Polish Jew, who calls his noble antagonist his *Nazarene* ; and frequently speaks of the *Nazarene* era, *Nazarene* commentators, *Nazarene* interpreters, &c. because, we presume, no good ever came out of Nazareth.

## LECTURE XXXII.



JOHN, CHAPTER XXI, VERSE 1 TO 22.

AFTER these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias ; and on this wise shewed he *himself*. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately ; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore : but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat ? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship ; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and

three : and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas. lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas. lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me.

THIS was the first interview which the disciples had with Christ in Galilee, after his resurrection, but the third time of his appearing to his disciples; that is, to a majority of those whom he had chosen as special witnesses. This account is given us by John, who was present, be-

ing one of the two sons of Zebedee, who were of the seven here mentioned. Peter, who was also present, confirms this representation, by mentioning the prophecy of his death,\* which does not appear to have been given by the Saviour on any other occasion.

It was more convenient to make and receive these manifestations in Galilee, where the disciples were neither intimidated nor thronged by their enemies, nor obliged to shut themselves up in private rooms; but being at home and safe, they could reflect more calmly upon the things which they should see. Jesus had directed them to return to the place of their residence, whereby they were assured, that they should not thereby leave him at Jerusalem; for he would go before and meet with them in Galilee; this message was suited not only to prepare their minds for seeing him, but to comfort his other followers, who chiefly resided there, to more than five hundred of whom, at one time, he accomplished this promise. Thus also he fulfilled his threatening to his enemies, that they should not again see him. This was a wise resolution; for we know by the conduct of the soldiers, that it would have been in vain to have attempted to perpetuate the evidence of his resurrection by unwilling witnesses. His strict attention at every interview to the performance of his word, that his enemies should not see him, is a proof that it was Jesus, who discovered himself, and corroborates the accounts given us. Mary was alone when he ap-

\* 2 Pet. i, 14, 15.

peared to her ; so were the other women also ; he retired from the company of the two disciples at Emmaus, as soon as he was known to be Jesus ; the brethren to whom he came, and with whom he ate on the evening of the day of the resurrection, were in an apartment by themselves ; and so were they alone on the evening of the eighth day after, when he again discovered himself, and reprovèd Thomas.

The first appearance in Galilee is the only one which is recorded at length, of the many which were given there ; “ being seen of them ” for \* “ forty days.” After Jesus had become again familiar with his disciples, the circumstances attending his appearances to them were, in their view, less important than those instructions he imparted, “ pertaining to the kingdom of God ; ” which they at last heard with attention, and were thereby enabled to understand what they had before heard, and to communicate the truths, he had taught them, to the world.

When the feast of the passover was ended, his master crucified, and the disciples directed to return to Galilee, it was of course for Peter to return to his family, and his former occupation of fishing ; and perfectly natural for his six fellow disciples, who were present, to offer to go with him, when he signified his intention of thus employing himself.

These disciples had forsaken all, and followed Christ ; they were now shepherdless ; they were toiling for the temporary supply of food, which ;

\* Acts i, 5. Δι ημερων τεσσαρακοντα πλειστοντων αυτων.

in a common course of things, would have been already provided, if they had not obeyed his call; they had laboured with their seine through the night, and had caught nothing. In every part of the life of Christ, of which we have knowledge, we discover compassion, kindness, or love; in every manifestation of himself, after his resurrection, we have discerned the same trait of character. Now the circumstances of his disciples call for pity; his intervention was therefore to be expected; for when was our Redeemer found inattentive to the wants of his people? He appears on the shore about an hundred yards from them, where, supposing the weather calm, and the morning silent, his situation was favourable for his being heard, without much elevation of voice. He addresses them in the language of a father, whose bowels yearned over his hungry offspring; children, have you nothing to eat? \* He who made the fishes, and upon whom the creatures wait, that they may receive their food in due season, would not let his children suffer. He asked them not for information, but to call their attention; he knew they had toiled through the night, and had caught nothing; he knew they were hungry, tired, and dispirited; he had collected from the deep waters a shoal of large fish, and had directed their way to the other side of the boat, that they might take them, and have enough for many days beyond the present consumption. That their hunger might not only be relieved, but speedily, the same almighty power

\* " Παιδ.α, μή τι ψεύσεσθε;" εχ' α."



had provided, whether by natural means, or in an extraordinary manner, is not shown us, bread and other fish broiling on fire for their use.

That it was Jesus, he designed they should determine for themselves. He in each manifestation made them the witnesses, convincing them by their senses, that their testimony should not rest upon the assertion of another. He did not even tell Mary, who mistook him for the gardener, that it was Jesus; she must decide for herself. He gave his disciples respectively every advantage for a satisfactory discovery of his person; and so convinced each of them, that they never afterwards lost their convictions.

Their success, when by his direction they cast upon the other side of the boat, awakened John's attention to him, who had spoken from the shore. This was the loving disciple, and for him first to discriminate the object of his affection, was perfectly in character; nor was it less so for Peter, the forward and rash disciple, to draw his upper coat \* around him, and wade to his master.

These disciples had all been before convinced that Jesus was arisen from the dead; he had given them every proof that they had desired, that it was his real body; they did not on this occasion shun him as a spectre; nor did the, till lately, unbelieving Thomas again require the evidence of his wounds; neither did they venture the just imputation of unbelief, by asking who it was, nor entertain a scruple, for they all knew that it was Jesus.

\* Vid. Campbeli in loc.

When they had eaten, Jesus, perceiving that any evidence either of his identity, or of the reality of his bodily presence, would have been superfluous, directed himself to Peter, in a pointed interrogation: "Lovest thou me more than these?" If he had meant by the word "these," the other disciples present, it would have been a just but severe reproof for Peter's fall, after having declared that he would not, though all others should be offended, or should stumble at him. But the following words of Jesus do not accord with this sense. Peter had returned to his former occupation, and drawn these six brethren after him; possibly the question was, therefore, whether he still loved Christ more than worldly pursuits? The reply of Christ, in every instance to feed or provide for his sheep, suits this construction better than the former, being a direction again to abandon his secular concerns, and preach the gospel. His proposing it three times, either showed the importance of the injunction, which was replied on each occasion, or it might have been an implied reprimand for his having lately three times denied him.

This could not have been a dream, for there was the concurrent testimony of the senses of seven men. There could have been no imposition, for these disciples well knew their master; they were neither so overawed by fear, nor so elated with joy, as to prevent the exercise of their understandings. Their senses could not have deceived them, for it was in open day; they knew they were eating in his presence the bread and the fish which Jesus had furnished. They heard,

understood, felt the force of, and have communicated to others the conversation which took place at that time.

Some of the proofs which Jesus has afforded us of his identity, on this occasion, were incapable of being counterfeited. Who could have known of, or directed them to the place where they might catch those fishes? Who could have foretold Peter's violent death, and John's old age, but he? Nor is it probable either that any one knew their hunger but themselves, or would have been so much their friend, as to have taken the pains to have provided for them thus at the shore, unless he had been known to them.

The prophecies of the Old Testament, which the Jewish commentators themselves referred to a Messiah, the antiquity whereof is established sufficiently by the Septuagint alone, to have been written centuries before the christian era, are accomplished in the character and works of Jesus. The promised seed, the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the *Son of Man*, the *great Shepherd*. *Emmanuel*, the *Lord our righteousness*, the *Prince of peace*, has been born of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, of a virgin, when the sceptre had departed from Judah, and in the village of Bethlehem. He became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, was despised, rejected of men, crucified, and buried. But the burning bush has not been consumed; the dry rod has budded and blossomed; the bird dipped in blood has flown away into heaven; he has escaped from the hand of man, bearing the sins of the people;

he arose from the dead, and has ascended into heaven.

The fact of his resurrection, if established, proves the truth of his mission; and the testimonies of this fact leave men inexcusable; the conduct of the soldiers; the state of the sepulchre, containing the clothes, but not the body; the escape of the body from the hands of his enemies, who had every advantage, and the strongest inclinations for keeping it; their subsequent conduct, in neither searching for the body, nor punishing the guards; and in not so much as charging the disciples with blame, when soon after confronted with them; all these circumstances conspire to show that Christ did arise from the dead.

But Jesus had chosen witnesses, who were at the same time to offer their direct testimony of the fact to the world, and to preach its consequences. These were qualified to identify his person, because most intimately acquainted with him; they were poor men, but of the strictest integrity; pious, but confessedly imperfect, yet never sparing each other's faults. Their testimony was the more credible, because, whether true or false, it could not fail to make them universally contemned and persecuted; and it even terminated, as their master showed, generally in their premature deaths. If they were false, then they also knowingly, though holy men, and fearing God, exposed themselves to his eternal wrath in the future state. Their testimony also had the fairest opportunity for detection, if false; their enemies were wise and powerful; it was

published before their faces, and in their hearing, without delay, whilst the matter was fresh ; and at the very place where the transactions had happened.

These men have testified this fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead to the world, and sealed it with their blood. They have left their testimony in writing ; in the hands of different churches, in distant places, of various languages and manners, but without any concealment from their enemies ; by which records, made by different witnesses, and without concert, the same evidence has been handed down to us in an hundred distinct channels. They declare that Jesus, after his death and resurrection, was with them on many occasions, both in Judea and Galilee, for the space of about forty days. That they saw him, heard him, held conversation with him, were invited familiarly to handle him, saw him eat, and ate in his presence themselves ; they inspected the vestiges of the wounds in his hands and feet, and also the wound in his side. That they every one enjoyed and acquiesced in many infallible proofs of his resurrection. That he reproved them for their errors ; inculcated the same spiritual doctrines which he had preached before his death ; instructed them where to go, and how to conduct themselves ; warned them of the dangers they would encounter ; promised to send them the Comforter ; gave them their commission, and ascended from, as he was pronouncing his valedictory blessing upon them.

## LECTURE XXXIII.



ACTS, CHAPTER III, VERSE 1 TO 9, AND CHAPTER IV,  
VERSE 1 TO 11.

**NOW** Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ancle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day; for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of *them* which heard the word believed; and the

number of the men was about five thousand. And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

**THE** precise day on which this notable miracle was performed, is not given; but it must have taken place at some publick festival; and it is probable that it occurred on the same feast of Pentecost, mentioned in the preceding chapter.

The Jews counted from sun-rise, and making always twelve hours to the sun-setting, whether the days were long or short; so that this cure took place at, or soon after, what we would denominate three o'clock in the afternoon.

The subject of the miracle was a man lame from his birth, and so helpless, that he could not place himself at the gate of the temple, but was carried by others. He was also at that time more than forty years of age. His condition was therefore deemed, with respect to ordinary means, without remedy. Such also were his own views of his case; for when he looked upon Peter, by

his direction, it was with a view to an aim, not a restoration.

As this man had been born before our Saviour, and had at least for some time occupied a place at the gate of the temple, it is probable he must have often seen him; why was he not, therefore, healed by him? After the same manner, it might be asked, why are not all men, who attend in temples, where others receive blessings from Jesus, in like manner restored? It is because they will not apply for the mercy they need: yet sometimes the sovereign grace of God sends them the blessing unasked, or when, as in this case, they are in quest only of some temporal advantages.

There seems to have been usually required a faith, called the faith of miracles, in those upon whom they were wrought; it might be this that caused Peter to say, "look on us." But the man seems neither to have expected a miracle, nor to have given any sign of faith, till he was commanded to rise; yet Peter was not discouraged. It is usually thought, these apostles might have had some sudden, strong, and extraordinary impression upon their minds, which induced them to attempt the cure. Certainly such powers had been promised them by their Master;\* and they having now received the Holy Ghost, and the power of speaking with tongues, and having lately also had such abundant evidence of the truth of the resurrection of Christ, and witnessed his ascension, must have

\* Matt. x. Mark xvi.



possessed, and been under favourable circumstances for the exercise of a strong faith.

The apostle uses a name which had been applied to Christ sometimes reproachfully; but it was a name not likely to be misunderstood; and when so extraordinary and undeniable a miracle should accompany the use of it, the very name would render the miracle the more striking. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." How simple! how grand! I have no power to heal you, but my Master has. And I am authorized by him who is the God of nature, how much soever despised among men, to say unto you, rise up and walk.

When Jesus performed miracles, he used only the first person; because, though he acted as Mediator, always in the name and by the authority of his Father, a term expressive of a personal distinction, but used in such case for Deity; yet when he exercised his divine power, which he always did, in the performance of a miracle, because thus he had no superior, he never mentions the name of the Father; though he never, even in such instance, acted without him, for God is one. How strong an argument does this difference of the modes of working miracles pursued by Christ, and by his disciples, furnish against those who blasphemously detract from the divine character of the second person! But the disciples depended on Christ to perform the cure; so that here is Jesus of Nazareth performing miracles after the ascension of his human nature to Heaven.

Peter, whilst using these words for the encou-

agement of the lame man, aids him to rise ; the man, making a violent effort, or springing from the ground, which evidences an act of faith, stood erect, and then walked. This was done in the court of the gentiles, on the outside of the gate which divided it from the court of the Jews. As John and Peter still conformed in some respects to the Jewish worship, and were going in for that purpose, this man, being a Jew, entered with them.

Though the sacrifice of Christ rendered the Jewish sacrifices unnecessary, and the types and shadows of the former dispensation were now accomplished ; yet because Christ, who came to fulfil all righteousness, must with that view have attended punctually unto the ceremonial duties, together with his disciples, it was necessary that some allowance should be made for the customs and consciences of the first christians. Yet we know of no instance of their offering a sacrifice after his death. These disciples were therefore instructed as they could bear it. And long after this, the Jewish meats and days were regarded by many christians, who, if their consciences had not been affected, might have enjoyed the gospel liberty on these points with perfect safety.

The subject of the cure, never having before balanced himself on his feet, would scarcely walk so steadily as others ; this, and a desire to exercise his limbs, might have produced that effort of body, which our translators have denominated leaping. Being thoroughly satisfied that he was healed by no human means, his heart must have been filled with joy, and gratitude to God ; he

accordingly might have leaped in his expressions of gratitude to God.

The people noticed his gestures and his praises, and discerned that this was their old pensioner, to whom they had for many years contributed at the gate, and were filled both with astonishment and joy. As the apostles were retiring from the inner court, and whilst the lame man was still with his benefactors in the porch or court of the gentiles, and detaining them, the people from all directions ran together to see and be satisfied of the extraordinary occurrence.

These circumstances gave the apostles a favourable opportunity not only of speaking to a large company of people the important truths of the gospel, but of being carefully and patiently heard. They embraced it, and addressed the people most sincerely and affectionately.

The two apostles could not fail, by such a miracle, and such preaching, to incur the resentment of the enemies of their Master. The priests and Pharisees, who had persecuted Christ unto death, would be very apprehensive, when they discovered his followers so soon performing the like miracles, and teaching the same doctrines boldly in the temple itself. The Sadducees, a species of mortal deists, whose sentiments were directly oppugned by the doctrines of the gospel, would find themselves also interested to countervail and suppress a class of people who could never make terms with them.

These two discordant sects unite in procuring the aid of some of the guards which belonged to

the temple, take the two apostles into custody, and keep them to be tried on the next day. But though they thus silenced for the present the preachers, the effects of the discourse and miracle, applied by the Spirit of God, had been such, as that no earthly power could undo or counteract them; the number of disciples appear to have been increased hereby from three thousand to about the number of five thousand persons. The harvest was ripe, and the sheaves were numerous.

So rapid an increase, as far as it depended upon visible causes, proved at the same time the publicity of the miracle, the satisfactoriness of the evidence of it, and also the credibility of the testimonies of the resurrection of Jesus; a fact upon which the miracle and doctrines were all suspended.

The great council of the Jews was convened the next day *at Jerusalem*; but whether the words, at Jerusalem, are in contradistinction unto the temple, or the country, it is neither easy to determine, nor is it material. Their object was less to investigate the truth, than to extinguish it. John and Peter were brought from their place of confinement, and placed in the midst of the judges, about seventy, we presume, in number, sitting circularly. They were immediately arraigned, and put to answer this question: "By what power, or by what name," they had done this? Was their power natural or supernatural? or, if the power was not their own, by whose aid or authority was it, that they had effected the cure of the lame man?

The condition of these two apostles was a very critical and trying one. This council had lately condemned Christ, and effected his crucifixion. They could expect, therefore, no favour from men, who would now be moved by still more powerful inducements to crush christianity than before ; because, having cut off Christ, they not only waged war with his followers, but were concerned to defend their own conduct. The Sadducees would see that every step which the disciples of Christ should advance, must be by establishing his resurrection in diametrical opposition unto, and subversion of their doctrine. The Roman power, having been exercised against Jesus, was also pledged against his followers.

John was young, of a mild temper, and less fitted to endure persecution ; Peter had, though usually a forward man, discovered lately but little stability : he had denied his master, and fled from him. But now the power of the Holy Spirit supported them ; and directed them, as had been promised, what they should say.

If this had been but a pretended miracle ; if they had practised deception, they had good reason to fear : from Heaven they could have expected no aid ; and if detected by men, which would have been very probable, they would certainly not escape punishment. The confidence they exhibited in such trying circumstances, was a strong proof of their integrity, and their conviction of the truth of the things they taught.

If they had designed to have consulted their own safety, by addressing themselves to the fa-

vour of their judges ; they might have said, We were going into the court of the Jews, for we are the circumcised children of Abraham, at the hour of prayer, that we might worship the God of Israel, and seeing an Israelite at the door, helpless, we healed him by the power of the God of our fathers, whom we all worship. Thus they would have spoken the truth ; and by refusing to testify of the power and majesty of Christ, they would, we presume, according to human views, have appeased the resentment of their enemies, and have avoided danger. But, on the contrary, they adopted a defence which was the most pointed accusation of their judges. They declared the cure which had been effected, to have been a "*good deed*;" not an ostentatious display of power, but an act of kindness and mercy. They say not that they had done it, but that it was done "*by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*"—"even by him." In the same manner they had before denied to the people, that it had been done either by their "*own power or holiness*. Nor did they conceive it their only duty to attribute the cure wholly to Christ ; but charged their judges with his death : "*Whom ye crucified*," and showed them to have done it sinfully, in opposition to God ; "*whom God raised from the dead*."

The time of this trial of Peter and John was about fifty days after the crucifixion of Christ. These same judges had known that he said he should rise on the third day ; and to prevent it, had obtained from Pilate the custody of the dead body, lest, as they pretended, his disciples should

steal him away, and then say he had arisen. They had sealed it up in Joseph's new tomb, cut out of a rock; a fit place, both because there was no other corpse there, and because it was accessible but in one way. They had rolled a large stone to the door, and placed soldiers to guard it; yet, after all their pains, they could not prevent his resurrection. They had also, instead of punishing the soldiers for losing the body, which would have been done, if their excuse had not been a valid one; bribed them to say, that the disciples stole away the body whilst they slept.

This trial of Peter and John taking place whilst these things were fresh, the council had an opportunity of settling the question of Christ's resurrection, if they had had any evidence which could have done it. If they could have produced his body, or proved by the soldiers that the body was missing after they had slept, or that it was still in a state of death, thus would they have silenced this bold defence of the apostles, and turned the minds of all who were present against them.

If they knew that the disciples had stolen him away, they certainly would have asserted it, for they had nothing to fear from them but the truth. If they had even believed that the disciples had done so, why did they not venture on this occasion, the first which presented itself, to challenge them with it?

Not two months before this time, Jesus had spoken in the temple to the priests, elders, scribes, and Pharisees, the parable of the vine-

yard; and had told them that they would lead out and slay the son or heir of the inheritance, and quoted to them that prophecy, in which it had been predicted, that the stone which the builders should reject, the same should become the head of the corner. Now Peter tells them the same thing, and expressly calls his judges "*the builders,*" who had set at nought the rock of salvation; and declares to them that they could be saved by no other.

How disagreeable must have been the situation of these judges, who were unable to say there was any deception in the miracle! for the man who had been lame, and was healed, was standing in their presence. To have restored an Israelite, who had been lame from his birth, was certainly not a crime, but a good deed. It had been effected by pronouncing the name of Jesus upon him. The cure was from God, and he would not perform it to support an imposture. This miracle therefore either proved Jesus to be still living, and consequently that he had arisen from the dead, and so was a divine person, or that the God of nature espoused his cause; and in whatever way taken, it proved them guilty who had slain him.

Great as their secret resentment must have been, they durst go no farther than to charge Peter and John to teach no more in that name, who referred it back to their own consciences, whether they ought to obey them rather than God.

This transaction was of a publick nature; and the relation of it given in the Acts of the Apos-



bles, supposed the full knowledge of it by the Jews in that day ; at the early period, therefore, of the writing and publication of this portion of sacred scripture, this narrative would have condemned the book, if it had not been conformed to the publick ideas on that subject. The circumstances, here given, must have obtained within a few days after the resurrection and ascension of Christ ; whence it undeniably follows, that the resurrection of Christ, and the miracles which confirmed it, are not cunningly devised fables ; they are not of modern invention ; but the honest relation of truths, made publick at the time, and handed down to our day as the ground of our faith.

# LECTURE XXXIV.



ON THE TENTH CHAPTER OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

OUR Redeemer had, during his human life, still viewed and conducted himself as a minister of the circumcision, sent more immediately, and in the first instance, to the lost sheep of Israel; he attended regularly upon the temple worship, and celebrated their passover feasts; he was baptized of John, which was a Jewish purification preparatory to the gospel, and which did neither unchurch the Jew, nor make any to be christians; and when he sent out his disciples to preach, they were to confine their instructions to the Jews, and not to go in the way of the gentiles. He knew the Old Testament prophecies, and that the gentiles, according to them, should seek unto, and be enlightened and saved by him; he knew that when he should be lifted up, he should draw all men unto him, and that he had other sheep which were not of the flock of the natural Israel; but he designed to give no offence, and to furnish not so much as a plausible ground of accusation against himself to his ene-

mies. That the gospel was intended for the gentiles, appeared not only from the prophetick language, but from the types, shadows, and emblems of the Old Testament, and from the preparation plainly made for it by Providence; for the Jews were scattered every where among the nations, and carried with them their scriptures, which gave the knowledge of the true God. These had been translated into the Greek, the most publick language, by Jews, for a library of the gentiles, and were thus given to the world. Their expectation of a Messiah had gone with them abroad, and had excited the attention of the nations; so that the civilized world were held in suspense. But as the minds of the Jews, so the expectations of others were directed towards some mighty conqueror, not to a meek and lowly crucified Redeemer.

After the resurrection of Christ, he commanded his apostles, to go, teach, and baptize, or make disciples of, by receiving into his church, all nations; that is, persons of every nation. But the apostles as yet worshipped both with the Jews, and in assemblies peculiar to the gospel; the example of their Master was fresh on their minds; and their prejudices, springing from a Jewish education, were not yet laid aside. If they had received Gentiles into their community, they would have exasperated their Jewish enemies to an alarming degree, and become obnoxious even to the christians; who took it very ill that Peter, on this occasion, went to Cornelius, until the extraordinary and visible hand of God in it was declared.

An Ethiopian nobleman had been baptized by Philip the deacon; but he was either a Jew or a proselyte, who had attended at the temple to worship, and was one who read their scriptures. There had been also in that case a special direction of the Holy Spirit; but he was an uncircumcised gentile, it would seem, of Italy; a Roman officer, in Cesarea, the residence of their chief authority in that country. Philip seems to have been residing in this city at the time; but was not called to this work, perhaps, because it was fit that so publick a transaction as the bringing the gospel unto the gentiles, and receiving this man by baptism into the church, should be performed by an apostle. Nor would even Peter's single authority have been sufficient to have supported the propriety of such a work, against the prejudices of the Jewish converts.

None of the apostles, it is probable, would have ventured to have baptized this gentile, without the most certain and infallible divine direction. This transaction was to become a warrant for the reception of the gentiles into the church, and was therefore designedly left defective in no circumstance. If Peter had been sent to Cornelius, without any antier preparation, the centurion might have been persuaded; but he would have been destitute of that extraordinary proof of Peter's commission from God, which was designed to be to him evidence irresistible, and to all others undeniable.

If Cornelius had received the only extraordinary vouchers, and sent as he did for Peter, how could Peter have waved the law of Moses, con-

quered his own prejudices, departed from his Master's example, opposed the general opinion of Jews and Jewish christians, and yielded to the uncorroborated testimony of an uncircumcised Roman soldier? It was highly necessary also that Peter should receive an extraordinary direction. The revelations made on this important occasion were suited to their respective characters. The officer saw, in open day, when fully awake, a visible messenger,\* and received his message; and so sure was he that it was supernatural, that he had his friends collected to hear Peter, before he knew what would be the issue of the embassy he had sent to Joppa; and finding it prosperous, he would have worshipped Peter, as the favourite of God; but this he declined. Peter had a vision of the mental kind; a mere representation to his imagination, in the first instance. And afterwards, whilst reflecting on this, another irresistible impression was made on his mind of the arrival of the men, and of his duty to go with them, before he had seen or heard them. It is mentioned that they had called at the gate, but this only proves the integrity of the writer, Luke, who mentions a circumstance which he would have concealed, if any thing but truth had been his object. Their calling without, instead of entering into the house of a Jew, was proper for those who were uncircumcised. But, the fact of the presence of the messengers, corresponding with the Spirit's direction, no room was left for hesitation; and the representation of unclean meats, pronounced

\* Vide *οραμα*, in Matt. xvii, 9, and Acts vii, 31.

to be clean by that God himself who had given this ceremonial distinction, to separate his people from the gentiles, and this thrice repeated, when compared with the facts stated by the messengers, was an undeniable direction, to wave the objection arising from Cornelius's uncircumcision. Peter therefore could not but be satisfied of his authority to receive Cornelius; but took with him six persons, to witness what should pass, and to save him, we presume, from the charge of impropriety.

The coincidence of these revelations must have been very confirmatory; yet they would not have been sufficient to have removed the prejudices of the unbelieving Jews. The enemies of the gospel would have alleged, that they had only the word of the centurion for what he saw, and the word of Peter for his ideal representations; and though the facts seemed to correspond, yet Peter and Cornelius, notwithstanding at so great a distance asunder, might have effected some combination. To obviate this, the Holy Spirit descended upon the gentiles present at this interview, in an extraordinary manner, and enabled them to speak in different tongues, as he had the Jewish converts on the day of pentecost. Their knowledge of the centurion's probity; their being informed by him of what he saw; his sending messengers for the apostle; their success; and Peter's declaring his vision, prepared their minds for the doctrines which he taught. The companions of Peter were competent witnesses of their extraordinary gifts, and of the evidence of their change by grace in their magnifying the true God: Peter's inference was

therefore just; if they have received the thing signified, why should they be debarred from the sign? \* if they had the internal purification, why not the external? Thus were the first gentiles received into the church. This narrative contains the important information of the breaking down the partition wall which divided the gentiles from the church of God; here is the repeal of the ceremonial law, and authority from God himself to receive us gentiles into his covenant.

The expression, who shall “*forbid water,*” or, who can withhold or keep back † water, strongly expresses that the water to be used was presumed to be of small quantity; and we cannot, without doing violence to the language, suppose that an immersion was contemplated. If it had been, the language must at least have been, who shall forbid or withhold *them* from the water. ‡ The ceremony was, no doubt, immedi-

\* It would be an unfair inference from hence to say, that regeneration must necessarily precede, to render baptism valid. The legitimate deduction is, that the regenerate may be baptized, not that the unregenerate cannot; or, if extraordinary gifts only are here intended, that those whom the Lord has thus made witnesses in his cause, may have a place in his church. But antipedobaptists themselves do not suspend the validity of baptism upon the truth of the party's grace.

† “*Μητι το υδωρ κωλυσαι δυναται τις.*”

‡ That the word βαπτίζω signifies to baptize, is admitted by all; but to anglicize an original word from the scriptures, is not to explain it. If it signifies to *immerse*, and nothing more, this term, substituted for it, should make good sense in every passage of the New Testament where the word *baptize* is used. But if we take a Greek concordance into our hand, and attempt such substitution, we

ately performed by some of the six ministering brethren who came with Peter.

The words of Peter, "stand up, I myself also am a man," are a candid acknowledgment

are immediately interrupted in the experiment; for in the third instance in which the word βαπτίζω occurs, the substituted word *immerse*, *dip*, or *plunge*, would destroy the sense. When we read it, "he shall *immerse*, *dip*, or *plunge* you in or with the Holy Ghost," our ears are offended; we can discern no propriety in the phrase. Our disappointment must spring from this cause; that the word *baptize* is in the language of the New Testament, which is the safest interpreter of itself, of more extensive signification, or, at least, embraces other ideas than the words *immerse*, *dip*, or *plunge*; that is, *baptize* is a generic, whilst *immerse* is a specific term. Reflection will show us that no word can be at all times correctly substituted for *baptize*, but one which is of an equally general signification. The word *purify* has been selected for this purpose, and substituted in every passage in the New Testament where *baptize* occurs, and is thought in all cases to make good sense. In the first instance, "and they were *purified* in the Jordan by him," we discern baptism is represented as an external purification: and such it certainly is, and is thus an emblem of the inward purification from moral defilements. If it be objected that this is too general, for they were immersed: we answer, that may or may not have been the case; but whether they were *immersed*, or the water lifted and *poured*, or *sprinkled* upon them, can never be proved from the word βαπτίζω, because we have already clearly seen, that the word *baptize* is a term of more extensive signification than *immerse*, and sometimes is used to signify some act, which the word *immerse* never imports.

The second instance, in which βαπτίζω is found in the gospel of Matthew, being in all respects like the first, we may proceed to the third passage, which is the same that defeated us, whilst substituting the word *immerse*. But in reading it, "he shall *purify* them with, or by the Holy Ghost," we find nothing harsh or unmeaning. The rea-



which comported with his condition as a servant of Christ: and so Paul and Barnabas, when about to be worshipped, were alarmed, and declared themselves of like passions with other men: the angel forbade John to worship him; “see thou do it not.” Jesus was not less humble, and more holy, yet he accepted it, for a reason obvious to the unprejudiced. His disciples worshipped him; also the angels in vision: “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power,

son of the difference is obvious; for whilst the word *immerse* expresses but one idea, and that such as we cannot affirm of the Holy Spirit, there are many ways of *purifying* from various kinds of defilements; and though we cannot tell how the grace of God *purifies* the soul from its moral pollutions, yet we readily acquiesce in this important truth promised in the passage.

Another argument presents itself on the same page of the concordance, in favour of this distinction between *baptize* and *immerse*. The word βαπτω, to dip, is only thrice used in the New Testament, and not once for *baptize*, though this last word occurs seventy-one times; and in each of those three instances, if the word *immerse* were substituted, the sense would not be changed; but if the word *purify* be used, the meaning of those passages is destroyed. Thus it appears that *immerse* answers in every passage for βαπτω, *purify* in every instance for βαπτίζω; *purify* in no case for βαπτω, and *immerse* sometimes would destroy the sense when βαπτίζω occurs.

We hereby discover that our kind Redeemer, who loves mercy better than sacrifice, and esteems the sanctification of the soul more than arduous rites and troublesome forms, has in every instance used the generic, and always avoided the specific term, with respect to the ordinance of baptism, and this neither ignorantly nor unintentionally; and thereby has carefully prescribed this positive duty in language which allows the application of water religiously in any mode, that may best suit the inclinations or convenience of his followers.

be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."\*

But why all this caution? what need was there of so many extraordinary revelations? what occasion for Peter's fears? If Christ was a mere man, it could neither be perilous on the one hand to pronounce him a prophet, nor so advantageous on the other to believe him to be such. This just and honest man, Cornelius, was well enough informed already, if the gospel be a mere system of morality. But Peter taught him the remission of sins by faith in Christ. It would be strange if a man's sins should be pardoned merely by believing a prophet to be such. Besides, Cornelius, notwithstanding his probity, had still sins which needed to be pardoned. These are

\* Upon Rev. xx, 9. "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant," &c. "the society for promoting christian knowledge, &c." in their "New Testament in an improved version," have this note: "Observe, that if Jesus is the speaker in verse 7, he is also the speaker here."

The seventh verse is, "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

Their observation is not merely incorrect; it is obviously not true; for in verse 8, it is said, "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel, which shewed me these things." (V. 9.) "Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant," &c. So that "if Jesus is the speaker in verse 7, he is" not "the speaker here;" it can be only the angel.

That Jesus is the speaker in ver. 7, seems evident from its similarity to ver. 12. "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me," &c. And this is the language of Jesus, either mediately or immediately; for the first person is still used unto ver. 16, which is, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things," &c.

difficulties insurmountable by those who deny the sacrifice of Christ for our sins.

It will be a weak defence, to allege Peter's words, that "in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him;" for Peter uses them in a different sense, otherwise he need not have come to Cornelius; he meant that individuals of all other nations, as well as of the Jews, may be saved. But it does not follow, that they could be saved without an interest in Christ. If we admit they knew him not, and so could not believe, yet, if they were sanctified by his grace, they must be justified by his righteousness; but in this case Peter was sent to bring him the knowledge, and declare his testimony of the resurrection of Christ. This passage of scripture therefore establishes conclusively the divine warrant of the gentiles to hear the gospel, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

## LECTURE XXXV.



ACTS, CHAPTER XXII, VERSE 6 TO 14.

AND it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked upon him. And he said, The God of our Fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

IT has been said, "that the conversion and the apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, are of themselves a demonstration sufficient

to prove christianity to be a divine revelation.”\*  
 That a man of the best education that the state of Jewish learning in that day could afford, having been sent by parents in opulent circumstances, at an early age, from Tarsus to Jerusalem, to be brought up at the feet of the eminent Gamaliel; a man honourably descended, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, not from a proselyted family, but of the original stock of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; not of the idolatrous ten tribes, but of the tribe of Benjamin; who was also by birth entitled to the then every where respected rank of a Roman citizen; that such a man, of irreproachable character in the eyes of the world, and universally conscientious, should at once renounce the prejudices of his education, the power of habit, the authority of example, and the influence of honour and interest; should depreciate as of small comparative estimation human learning, and the wisdom of the world; embrace a sect every where held in the utmost contempt; and account all things that the world could bestow upon him, as advantageously exchanged for the knowledge of Christ Jesus, whom he called his Lord; whom he must have often seen, and despised; and who had been condemned as a criminal, and crucified between two thieves, is a phenomenon inexplicable upon the principles of reasoning in common use in the world.

The time and circumstances of the change also greatly increase the difficulty of accounting for it.

\* “ Observations upon the conversion of St. Paul.”  
 Lyttleton’s letter to West.

That this learned and respected, but proud, self-righteous Pharisee, who had been enlisted by his prejudices, education, a carnal mind, honour, and interest, on the side of the enemies of Christ; who had gained some experience in the horrid work of persecution, and gotten a taste of the blood of the saints;\* and who was then actually on his road unto, and near Damascus, accompanied by a gang of persecutors, whom he was conducting thither, commissioned for the purpose of apprehending, and bringing to Jerusalem for punishment, the fugitive and proscribed disciples of the despised Jesus, should himself be arrested, at mid-day, in the presence of his companions, by the dead man whose followers he was afflicting, and compelled to preach in the face of contempt, poverty, persecution, and death itself, him whom he had blasphemed, can be justly understood only by those who have been taught by the same Saviour, and drunk of the same Spirit.

His cheerful submission to poverty, shame, bodily sufferings, and death, in the cause he professed, show him to have been no impostor. Because he did not sport away his life, nor unnecessarily court persecution, but carefully and judiciously used the proper means to preserve himself from harm, it is manifest he was not addicted to fanaticism; he was neither ignorant, credulous, nor melancholy; but, guided by truth and propriety, he became all things to all men, that he might win them to Christ for their own good; he pos-

\* Acts xxvi.

essed too much integrity to deceive, and too much wisdom to be deceived by others.

That he should have succeeded in planting churches, in defiance of the persecution which worldly wisdom and power would maintain against him, he could neither have foreseen, nor reasonably expected; this was therefore not the moving cause of his change of conduct. He claimed no civil authority at any time, but every where inculcated submission to the existing rulers of the country. The ecclesiastical authority which belonged to his office, was esteemed by him to be merely for edification, not for destruction, nor even coercive, but to lay its appeal to the conscience in the sight of God; he accordingly preached not himself, but Christ. It was not power, therefore, he was in quest of. The good sense, prudence, solid reasoning, and sound judgment, discovered by this apostle in his long and arduous ministry, repel the charge of enthusiasm, and leave his conversion still a miracle.

The account of it here prefixed is a part of Saul's discourse spoken from the stairs of the temple, in the Hebrew tongue, to a numerous concourse of the enemies of Christ, where his assertions ought to have been disproved, if they had not been founded in fact. Nor had Saul concealed these extraordinary truths till after his arrestation, for he began to bear his publick testimony of them immediately in the synagogues at Damascus, in the presence of those Jews to whom his letters had been directed; but the enemies of Christ in that place, instead of confronting with him the men who had accompanied him to Da-

mascus, or offering to disprove the things which he alleged, determined to smother his testimony by cutting him off; and accordingly made efforts to apprehend him, and watched the gates day and night, that they might kill him. That the things asserted in this portion of scripture were "not done in a corner," but publickly known, appears from his appeal to king Agrippa's knowledge of them,\* in open court; who, instead of denying them, did, in the presence of his officers, and the principal men of Cesarea, declare; "almost thou persuadest me to be a christian;" to which this prisoner for Jesus Christ, standing in his chains,† generously and handsomely replied, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

Those parts of this strange occurrence which were discerned by his coadjutors, were of themselves sufficient vouchers for the truth of the residue of the relation. These men were neither the subjects of the reproof, nor the objects of the mercy, and remained, most probably, enemies of the gospel, as they had been; they would therefore unquestionably have denied the representation published by Saul, if they had not been sensible of the truth of the account, so far as it affected them. They were witnesses of the journey, its object, their near approach to Damascus; that a light fell on them at the noon of the day brighter than the sun; that they all fell at the first to the ground;‡ that they heard a

\* Acts xxvi, 26. † Acts xxvi, 27. ‡ Ch. xxvi, 14.



voice,\* though they did not hear the articulation, or the words which were directed immediately to Saul, who was probably at some small distance from them; that he was rendered blind; and that they led him by the hand the rest of the way into Damascus. The publick assertion of these facts, in the face of his enemies, and probably in the presence of these same companions, and the repetition of them at Cesarea, before the tribunal of Festus, render them equally credible, even to the enemies of the gospel, as if the co-persecutors had acknowledged, or deposed to their truth.

The blindness of Saul proved the intenseness of the light; that it was brighter than that of the sun,† appears from its effects at noon; that it was supernatural is plain, because no impostor possessed the means of thus eclipsing the sun by superior lustre. If the light was such, it determines for us the cause of the sound; if the one was supernatural, so was the other. He who struck this furious and blood-thirsty persecutor to the ground, must have been one who could as easily have stricken him dead, and cast him into hell. But divine mercy sent at the same instant a ray of heavenly light into his soul, to give effect to the words, “why persecutest thou me?” to seal the admonition, that it was “Jesus of Nazareth,” whom he was persecuting in his members, and against whom he might not think to prosper.

\* “*Ἀκούοντες μὲν τῆς φωνῆς.*” ch. ix, 7. “*Τὴν δὲ φωνὴν οὐκ ἔκκουσαν τοῦ λαλήθους μετῆ.*” ch. xxii, 9.

† Acts xxvi, 13.

What but Almighty power could thus in an instant have turned a lion into a lamb, a furious persecutor into a saint, and finally a martyr? The victory was complete; the submission implicit; the weapons were flung away; “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”\* How entire the change wrought in his mind must have been, appears also from the immediate annunciation to him, that he must become a minister, and a witness † for the very gospel, which he was aiming to destroy by the journey in which he was at that moment engaged.

That the christians of Damascus had received private information from their brethren at Jerusalem, both of the character and errand of Saul, appears by the answer of Ananias, in the vision, which was given to him; ‡ consequently Saul, though referred by a subsequent vision for further instructions to this holy teacher in Damascus, would probably have found no access to him, and had no communion with the christians in that place, unless the same great Head of the church had given the extraordinary information to Ananias, which the evangelist has recorded. §

\* Ch. ix, 6.      † Ch. xxvi, 16.      ‡ Acts ix, 10.

§ He was informed by the way, that he should be told in the city what he must do. It is probable that particular information of the person, who should heal, instruct, and baptize him, was not given him at the first; that he might be afflicted, and fast for three days; such a bitter work was, we presume, not only proper, but necessary for him: that he might have time not only to reflect upon the visitation, but to test his Pharisaic obedience by the law of God; which had never till now assumed the office of a schoolmaster, shown him his guilt and impotency, nor pointed him to the great sacrifice for sin.

But the effect of these two visions in bringing together Saul and Ananias, and causing the “wolf to dwell with the lamb,” must have been confirming to them respectively in the highest degree. The light, the voice, the blindness, the salutation pronounced by Ananias, the miraculous cure, and the instructions, were all powerful proofs of undeniable realities.

As it appears that the christians at Damascus were expecting the execution of this commission to persecute, duly apprized of Saul’s talents in that nefarious business, the church at that place must be supposed to have made this matter a subject of prayer; and it seems a reasonable conclusion, that it might have been in answer to their prayers, that at this time Jesus interposed for their deliverance in this extraordinary manner; and called the man effectually by his grace,\* whom he had separated in his purposes from his birth to be a chosen vessel, to carry his gospel to the gentiles.

It is certain that Paul saw Jesus before he was rendered blind; † but he did not know the appearance; for he otherwise would not have inquired who he was. He received at this time the commission of an apostle; “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness:” he was instructed by Jesus Christ, partly whilst in the way; ‡ partly during the three days of blindness in Damascus; but more fully on other occasions. His gospel was

\* Gal. i, 15.  
xxii, 14, ix, 27.

† 1 Cor. xi, 1, xv, 8. Acts xxvi, 17.  
‡ Acts xxvi, 17, 18.

no fabrication of his own, because it was the same which the other apostles taught. He could not have learned it from evangelical writings, for as yet there were none; he had neither the opportunity, nor inclination, whilst a persecutor, to hear it preached. He could not have acquired it by study, without evidence. Ananias spoke to him of faith and duty, but nothing sufficient to enable him to preach as he afterwards did. He did not receive it from the disciples after his conversion; though he prudently compared the gospel doctrines, which had been revealed to him, with those which were preached by others. His doctrines, therefore, as well as his relation of facts, and the miracles which he wrought, proved the truth of his conversion, and the justness of his claim to the apostleship. These were also confirmed by his success; though opposed by the power of men in authority; the malicious artifices, as well as the open persecution of Jewish and idolatrous priests; the prejudices of the people; and the pride, and wisdom of the philosophers.

The conversion, and subsequent life of Saul of Tarsus, present to the wisdom of the world an inexplicable mystery, and become a bulwark of christianity, which equally bids defiance to unsanctified philosophy, and baffles the speculations of boasters of rationality. The extraordinary light at noon, the submission of this furious persecutor, his blindness, the commission given him in prophetick language, the singular approach of, and relief from one whom Saul had come to persecute, the cure, the witnesses to these facts, the

publicity at Damascus, and then at Jerusalem, his knowledge of the doctrines and facts of the gospel, his miracles, success, sufferings and death, form a chain of proofs for the truth of the gospel, which at the same time that they strengthen the confidence and enliven the hopes of the Christian, also fill his heart with gratitude and love to God for the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.

The pure and holy doctrines which this apostle taught, the exemplary course of life which he pursued, and his confidence in death are perhaps the strongest arguments, which he produced of the truth of Christianity. He gave it as the characteristick of a disciple of Christ, that he had taken up the cross; "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts;" if any professor consequently have not done this, then he is not Christ's. He prescribed the same rule to himself; "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." When the enemies of the gospel attacked it by calumniating him, he did not value himself on his learning, talents, or authority, but gloried in his infirmities: "In labours I am more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often:" "Troubled on every side yet not distressed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed:" "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in

distress for Christ's sake : for when I am weak then am I strong. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

He had the comfortable evidence of the exercise of grace, which preserved him from fear : "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." How much more happy was he to have had God for his Father, and Friend, than he could have been, if he had pursued his worldly advantages ! for him "to live was Christ and to die was gain." "We know," said he, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." Who would not rejoice at the close of life to be able to say with him? "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." To whom be glory for ever and ever.