

## THE CHRIST

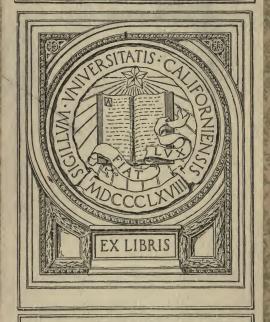
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## FORTY DAYS.

BY REV. A. B. SIMPSON.

GIFT OF

George B. Allen







# THE CHRIST OF

THE FORTY DAYS.

. BY ..

REV. A. B. SIMPSON.



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GIFT

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## THE CHRIST OF THE FORTY DAYS.

#### CHAPTER I.

#### GENERAL VIEW.

"He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts i: 3

ASTER morning is the beginning of a unique and most tenderly interesting portion of our blessed Saviour's life. It is the transition period between His earthly ministry and His heavenly exaltation. Like the Indian summer of the year, there

is a tender veil of loveliness and mystery about it which links it with both worlds, and makes it a peculiarly appropriate pattern of life hid with Christ in God, in which we may walk with Him all our days, with our heads in heaven while our feet still tread the earth below. May the Holy Spirit vividly reveal to us such glimpses of this blessed life as will enable us to reproduce it in our own experience and walk with Him with a new sense of His abiding presence and glorious reality!

## I. THE CHRIST OF THE FORTY DAYS IS A LIVING CHRIST.

This glad Resurrection morning dispels from the religion of Jesus all the shadows of the sepulchre and all the morbid atmosphere of sorrow, depression and death. The Christ of true Christianity is not a bleeding, thorn-crowned "Ecce Homo," but a glad and radiant face, bright as the spring-tide morning and radiant with immortal life. "I am He that liveth and was dead" is His message, and "Lo! I am alive for evermore." Oh, may this day impress upon our hearts the reality of a Risen and Living Christ, until He shall be more actual to us than any other personality and we shall know what it means, not only to be "reconciled to God by the death of His Son" but "much more to be saved by His life!"

II. HE IS A VICTORIOUS CHRIST.

What a picture of easy and utter-

most triumph is that resurrection scene! Satan had done his worst and men had done their best to hold the Captive of the tomb. But without an effort the Mighty Sleeper calmly rose before the Easter dawn; deliberately laying off the grave clothes and wrapping up the napkin, and putting all in place as naturally as any of us this morning arranged our toilet; and then through that colossal stone that closed His tomb, He passed without even rolling it aside or breaking the seal, and ere the guards could know that He was risen, He was standing calmly in the garden, talking with Mary as though nothing had happened. This is, perhaps, the most overwhelming impression we have received from all the incidents of His Resurrection, the infinite facility with which He put His feet on every foe and rose above every obstacle.

So too, we see the same victorious power expressed in the attitude of the angel who followed Him, and with a single touch rolled away the stone from the supulchre and coolly sat down upon it, and then looked in the faces of the keepers till they grew pale with terror and fled in horror and dismay, without a struggle.

Such is our Risen Christ still, the Mighty Victor over all His foes and ours. Could we see Him now we would behold Him sitting on His Father's throne, undismayed by all the powers of darkness, and "from henceforth expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool." Oh, how it cheers our timid hearts to behold our glorious and victorious Captain, and hear Him say of every adversary and over every difficulty, "I have overcome for you." God help us to see the Captain as Joshua beheld Him, and before Him the walls of every Jericho will fall and the legions of every opposing force shall melt away!

III. HE IS A SIMPLE CHRIST.

How natural, how easy, how artless His manifestations were through those blessed forty days! How quietly He dropped down among them, unheralded, unassuming, unattended by angelic guards and sometimes undistinguished from themselves, in His simple presence! Look at Him as He meets with Mary in that first morning interview; standing like an ordinary stranger in the garden, speaking to her in easy conversation, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" and then, when the moment for recognition comes, speaking to her heart in the one artless word of personal and unutterable love which disarmed all her amazement and fear, and brought back all the old recollections and affections of her throbbing heart! See Him again on the way to Emmaus! How naturally He drops in

upon the little company as they walk! How unaffectedly He talks with them! How easily He turns the conversation to heavenly themes, and yet how free from strain His every attitude and word! All they are conscious of, is a strange burning in their hearts and a kindling warmth of love. At length they constrain Him and He allows Himself to be pressed to enter in. He sits down by their table. He eats bread, as if He had been another disciple like themselves; and only when, as He vanishes quietly from their sight, do they realize that "It is the Lord!"

And yet again on the shores of Tiberias, how exquisite is His approach! How natural His greeting, how easy the mighty miracle of the draught of fishes, how calm and unaffected the meeting as they reach the shore, the simple breakfast in which He Himself takes part, and the exquisite interview with Simon Peter, whose delicacy of discrimination and tenderness no word can ever express! Oh, what a picture of that Blessed One who still lives to be our constant Visitor, our ceaseless Companion and Friend; to meet us like Mary in our hours of sorrow, and to walk with us, as with them, often unrecognized at first, or to greet us in the cold, sad morning after our

long hours of waiting and toil and failure, with His marvellous deliverance and yet more gracious words of love and instruction. So near, that not even our nearest friends can come so close! So simple, that His messages come as the intuition of our own hearts; and yet the wonderful Counsellor and the mighty God for all our perplexities and all our hard places. Blessed Christ of the Forty Days, oh, help us, with a faith more simple and a love more child-like to walk with Thee!

#### IV. THE MIGHTY CHRIST.

It is hard for us to realize the Presence that comes with such gentle footsteps and undemonstrative simplicity; but back of that gentle form

and those noiseless steps is the Omnipotence that could say, "All power is given unto Me, in heaven and in earth." All power is His in heaven. He is the Lamb in the midst of the Throne, that holds in His Hand the seven seals and unrolls the scroll of destiny and providence for all worlds, and beings, and events. All the mighty acts of God recorded in the Old Testament were but manifestations of His power. All the mighty movements which began with His Ascension are the workings of His Hands. All the movements of Divine providence are subject to His command. All the mighty angels of heaven's myriad hosts are subject to His bidding. All the powers of hell

tremble at His name! All the promises of God are fulfilled with His endorsement. All the laws of nature are subject to His mandates.

And all power on earth is subordinate to His power. Not a wind can blow without His permission, not a disease can strike but as He allows; not a human hand can hurt us while He shields us with His presence. The circumstances of life, the enemies of our souls and the infirmities of our bodies are subject to His word: the very thrones of earth are subordinate to His authority. He can make a Cyrus send back the tribes of Israel by a national decree. He can make a Constantine behold the flaming Cross upon the sky and become a follower of the Heavenly Standard. He can open nations and kingdoms to the Gospel, and so He bids us go forth and disciple all the nations because of His Almighty power in our behalf!

How mighty the power of the Resurrection! It surmounted the power of death and the grave; it passed through the solid stone; it defied the stamp of the Roman government and the sentinels of the Roman army. It could pass through the closed doors without rending them asunder. It could bring the miraculous draught of fishes to the Apostle's net with a single word of command. It could rise without an effort in the Chariot of His Ascension. It could anoint those weak and timid men with the

power that shook the world and laid the foundations of the Church.

Oh, that our eyes were but opened that we might behold the riches of the glory of our inheritance and the exceeding greatness of His power wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church which is His body. Why is it that we do not receive and realize more of this Almighty Christ? Alas! because we cannot understand or stand the fullness of His power. God is ready to work through us the triumphs of His omnipotence, but we must be fitted vessels, open to His touch and able to stand His power. The ordinance that has to bear a mighty charge of powder must be heavy enough to stand the charge without explosion. And so the heart that is to know His power, who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think, must be "strengthened with might, by His Spirit in the inner man," so that "Christ can dwell in the heart by faith." To think of what Christ is ready and willing to do in us and for us would frighten some of us into apoplexy, and actually to realize it would snap the frail thread of life itself. Christ's heart is bursting with

resources that the world needs, and that He is ready to use if only He could find vessels ready and willing to use them.

Oh, for the courage to see the power which He is waiting to place at the service of all who are consecrated enough to use it for His glory, and close enough to receive the heavenly baptism! He has for us the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, the power that will conquer circumstances and control all events for His will, and the power that will make us ourselves the trophies of His grace and the monuments of His indwelling presence and victory.

We shall find this power as we go forth to use it according to His own

commission, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." Nothing but a work as wide as the world can ever make room for the power which Christ is waiting to bestow.

#### V. A LOVING CHRIST.

How unavailing all His power would be if we were not sure that it is available for us, and that His heart as tenderly loves us as His mighty hand can help us. How tender and loving the Christ of the forty days! See Him in the garden as He speaks to Mary with tender sympathy: "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" and then calls her by her name in tones which must have expressed more than words could tell.

What mourner can doubt henceforth His sympathy and love? What heart can hesitate to accept His friendship which still speaks to each of us with as direct and personal a call, and gives to each a name of special and affectionate regard. Or look at Him again as He meets with Thomas, the doubting one, the willful disciple that petulantly demanded that the Lord should meet him with an evidence that He had given to none other, and that no human heart had a right imperiously to claim. But how tenderly the Lord concedes even his demand, until Thomas is ashamed to accept it; and, more amazed at his Lord's magnanimity and omniscience than the evidence of His wounds, he cries, "My Lord and my God." Who that is harrassed with doubts and difficulties need fear again to bring them to His presence, who with such condescending love is ready to meet them all, and to make our hearts know by the deeper evidence of His own great love and the revealing of Himself that He is indeed the Son of God?

And look at his interview with Simon Peter! What backslider need ever doubt again the Saviour's forgiving love, or fear to come and know that he will be welcomed to a nearer place in His heart and a higher service in His kingdom if only he can say as Simon said, "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

So tender, so forgiving, so full of love He comes to us, to dry our tears, to satisfy our doubts, to forgive our failures, to restore our souls, and then to use us for a higher service, just because we have learned through our own infirmities the depths of His great love. The secret of walking closely with Christ and working successfully for Him, is to fully realize that we are His beloved. Let us but feel that He has set His heart upon us, that He is watching us from those heavens with the same tender interest that He felt for Simon and Mary, that He is working out the mystery of our lives with the same solicitude and fondness, that He is following us day by day as any mother followed

her babe in his first attempt to walk alone, that He has set His love upon us, and, in spite of ourselves, is working out for us His highest will and blessing, as far as we will let Him, and then nothing can discourage us. Our hearts will glow with responsive love. Our faith will spring to meet His mighty promises, and our sacrifices shall become the very luxuries of love for one so dear. This was the secret of John's spirit. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." And the heart that has fully learned this has found the secret of unbounded faith and enthusiastic service.

#### VI. THE PHYSICAL CHRIST.

For He that came forth from Joseph's tomb came forth in the flesh, with a material body and the same form that He had laid down in death and the grave. He made this most emphatic in His interview with His disciples after His resurrection. He wished them to be thoroughly assured that there was no illusion about His body. "Handle me and see" was His emphatic words, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."

Indeed, His spiritual consciousness had not died; it was only His body that tasted death, and it was His body therefore that was raised from death. The Resurrection of Christ, then, is a physical fact, and the physical meaning of the resurrection must be of surpassing importance. It means no less than this, that He has come forth to be the physical life of His people now, and in a little while the Fountain of their immortality and the Head of their resurrection bodies.

What a source of strength and inspiration it is for us to know that our blessed Lord has still the same physical organization that we possess, and is willing and able to share with these mortal frames His infinite and quickening life! He is our living Bread, and as He lived by the Father, so we may live by Him, and not only is He the source of health and strength to our material life, but He cares for the

wants of the body. Hungry and cold with their fruitless fishing that Galilean morning, He saw their need and tenderly asked them, "Children, have ye any meat?" and then, filling their empty nets and spreading the table on the shore, He said "Come and dine." So still He thinks of the poor and the struggling, the hungry and the helpless ones, and stands beside us in our need, ready and able, by a word, to provide immediate and abundant supply.

Are we to-day in any place of need? The Christ of the forty days is nearer than we think, able to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and ready to give us the greatest help in time of need. Like the fishers of

vonder sea, our empty nets can be filled at His bidding; the perplexed workman can be directed to the very thing to do: the wretched failure can be all corrected. There is no need that He cannot supply, no counsel that He is not able to give, no regions where His power does not penetrate, no disciple that He does not love to help in every time of need. Oh, let us trust Him more with all our circumstances and sorrows, and our utmost need will only prove the more the infinite resources of His love and grace.

VII. THE EVER PRESENT CHRIST.

For the Christ of the Forty Days is not a transient vision that has

passed away forever, but the Christ of all the ages. Standing at the close of those blessed days midway between earth and heaven, we hear Him say, "Lo! I am with you all the days even unto the end of the world." That blessed present tense has bridged the past and the present. and has prolonged those heavenly days after the resurrection, through all the days since then. It is not "I will be," as one who has to go away and come back again; but "I am," as a presence that is never to be withdrawn; unseen, it is true, but as real in my absence as now in my presence, I am to remain among you." For in the spiritual world distance and time are eliminated; and just as

the telescope can bring the distant object near to the eye, and the telephone can present the voice hundreds of miles away to the listening and attentive ear, so there is a spiritual mechanism that can make Christ as immediate to the heart as though He was still visibly by our side. Had we but another sense, all heavenly beings and realities would be directly present to our perception.

The promise of this beautiful passage is not only fulfilled in the presence of Christ, in the heart of the believer, which is a literal and glorious truth, but it is a presence WITH US. It is more than the spiritual consciousness of the Lord's indwelling. It is His direct personality and

constant companionship with all our life, and His omnipotent co-operation in all our needs. It is the presence of One who has all power in heaven and in earth, and whose presence means the defeat of every adversary, the solution of every difficulty, the supply of every need. Oh, it does seem, in these days, as though we could almost see Him moving in the midst of His people, here and there, in His mighty working, on the mission field with the lone worker, in the midst of dangers and foes, in the busy streets of the crowded city, in the mingled incidents of business life, in the whirl and confusion of our intense life to-day, in every department of human society; touching with His hands all the chords of influence and power, moving the wheels of Providence, and working out His purpose for His people and the redemption of the world. Oh, that we might see Him as Joshua saw the Captain when He entered Canaan and camped around Jericho; as Stephen saw Him when he faced the crowd of wolfish foes that thirsted for His blood; as Paul saw Him amid the tempests of the Adriatic and the lions of the Coliseum; as John saw Him in the midst of the Throne, holding in His hand the seven stars and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and then standing before the Throne with all the seals of human destiny in His own right hand! Then, indeed, no trial could discourage us, no foe intimidate us, no fear dismay us, no work overwhelm us; for above every voice of peril or of hostile power, we would hear His gentle whisper, "Lo! I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age."

It is "all the days," not "always." He comes to you each day with a new blessing. Every morning, day by day, He walks with us, with a love that never tires, and a blessing that never grows old. And He is with us "all the days;" it is a cease-less abiding. There is no day so dark, so common-place, so uninteresting, but you find Him there. Often, no doubt, He is unrecognized, as He

was on the way to Emmaus, until you realize how your heart has been warmed, your love stirred and your Bible so strangely vivified, that every promise seems to speak to you with heavenly reality and power. It was the Lord! God grant that His living presence may be made more real to us all henceforth, and whether we have the consciousness and evidence, . as they had a few glorious times in those forty days, or whether we go forth into the coming days, as they did most of their days, to walk by simple faith and in simple duty, let us know, at least, that the fact is true for evermore, THAT HE IS WITH US, a presence all unseen but real, and ready if we needed Him any

moment to manifest Himself for our relief.

There is a beautiful incident related of the mother of an English schoolboy, that when he was a lad she sent him to a boarding school, some distance from her home, where the rules of the school only permitted her to visit once a fortnight. But this was more than her mother heart could stand, and so, all unknown to her boy, or his teachers, she rented a little attic overlooking the school, and often, when he little dreamed, she would sit in that upper room with her eyes on her darling boy as he played in the yard below or studied in the school-room. He could not see her, nor did he dream that she

was there, but had he cried, or called her name, or needed her for a moment he was within her reach.

This is a little parable of the sleepless love and the ceaseless oversight which our Saviour exercises towards His beloved ones, for He has His eve upon us by day and by night; and although we do not see His face and hands and form as He moves through our pathway, dissipating our foes and clearing our way, yet He is there, ever there "all the days even unto the end." Let us believe His promise, let us assume the reality of His presence, let us recognize Him as ever near, let us speak to Him as one ever by our side, and He shall ever answer us, either by the whispers of His love or by the workings of His hand.

Thus shall we never be alone, thus shall we never be defenceless, thus shall we never be defeated, thus need we never fear. And even should the lonely vale itself open to us, it shall be but the opening vista of a larger vision and a closer and nearer presence, as we find 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 our Lord."

#### CHAPTER II.

### THE FIRST WEEK.

and daily fellowship with Him, upon the scenes and incidents of the forty days. We will look this morning at the three most prominent incidents of the first week after the resurrection. They all occurred upon the first day of the week, the resurrection Sabbath. The first was the interview with Mary Magdalene in the garden in the early morning; the second, the walk with the two disciples in the afternoon; and the third, the appear-

ing to the eleven as they waited in the upper room in the evening. Each has its own special lessons,—lessons that will help us to realize more vividly the presence of Him who is still with us "all the days, even unto the end of the age."

# I. THE MORNING MEETING WITH MARY MAGDALENE.

We have elsewhere spoken of this incident as it illustrates her character. Let us now refer to it as it reveals to us her Blessed Lord and ours.

1. It reveals to us a Christ who knows each one of us by name. The most marked feature of all this interview is the individuality of His recognition. There are two persons very

distinctly present. There is no doubt about the personality of Christ, and there is no more doubt about His personal love for Mary Madgalene. It is true she was not prepared at once to recognize Him and receive His greeting, but the moment she was ready, His heart was overflowing with the one all-comprehending word, "Mary!" Such a Christ we still have. He calleth us each by name, and amid the myriads of the universe and of His own, He knows us apart and loves us for ourselves. May the Lord help us to fully realize this soul-inspiring consciousness, that each one of us is something to Jesus, everything that we will let Him make us! His heart to us to-day is only waiting for the "Amen" of responsive trust. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Let us go forth to write our name, "THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED."

2. The Christ who is henceforth to be revealed to her as a spiritual rather than a fleshly presence. This is the meaning of the caution, "Touch me not for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." This seems to be intended as a gentle hint to her that she is not to recognize Him and embrace Him too eagerly in the earthly way, but to learn to know Him as a spiritual pres-

ence and as the Ascended One, by a touch that can reach Him through all the intervening spaces and in the absence of His visible form.

There were two touches, even when He walked the earth, by which men came in contact with Him. There was the touch of mere physical approach. To this Peter referred when the multitude thronged Him and Christ asked, "Who touched me?" "Why," Peter answered, "the multitude all touch you and throng you.' "But," said Christ, "Somebody TOUCHED me." Christ meant another sort of touch, the touch of faith and spiritual recognition. And this was the touch to which He was educating Mary now, because it was to be the

way of contact in the coming ages between Him and His people; the contact which we all may have with Him now.

It is very doubtful if Jesus Christ appeared after His resurrection to any one who did not know Him spiritually, and were He to come to us to-day in His mere natural, physical presence, it is doubtless if it would be a real help to our spiritual communion. It would rather distract us from that deeper inner union and fellowship which we have with Him in spirit, and awaken merely our outward senses to recognize Him; and were He to be perpetually with us in this external aspect, the inner senses. which recognize Him, would become

enervated and paralyzed for lack of exercise and we would really, in our present state, be separated from the Lord in His highest character and attributes. Therefore it was expedient for them that He should go away, in order that the Comforter might come and lead them into the higher spiritual capacity and communion.

This was what He was unfolding to Mary, and this is what we need to understand if we would have deep and ceaseless communion with our Lord. When we have been made perfect in this spiritual relationship then we shall pass into a higher physical communion, corresponding to His own resurrection body, and with all the senses of our inner and outer be-

ing, we shall apprehend and enjoy Him forever. It is the lack of this higher touch which makes it so difficult for many to receive the healing of the Lord, but it is as true as ever that as many as touch Him are made perfectly whole.

3. This incident reveals a Christ who is identified with us in the most perfect unity and brotherhood, and receives us into partnership with all His rights and relationships to the Father. "Go and tell my brethren," He says, "that I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." These are wonderful words; higher, perhaps, than we have dreamed. It is a great thing to know that we are the sons of God,

but it is a greater thing to know that we are the sons of God even as Jesus. It is not simply that we are created and born into a sonship in the Father's house, but, by union with Him, we are received into His Sonship with the Father, and looking in the face of God can say, "My Father and His Father, His God and my God." Let us fully realize and not shrink from the stupendous meaning of these words. The very relationship which Jesus sustains to His Father He has given to us along with Himself; and to make it good, He has given to us His own nature. His Divine nature. in the measure in which we can receiveit; and so, with the very nature and love of God Himself within us, it is true of us, "that both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call us brethren." He is the Son of God as no angel or other created being ever can be, the Only Begotten Son of God, but it is this sonship which He shares with us. And so we are called, in that wonderful passage in Hebrews, "the firstborn ones." We are all recognized. not as younger sons, sustaining a lower relation to the Father; but as First-born ones, because our sonship is inherited from the First-born and Only-Begotten.

Let no one be startled as though this was claiming equality with God. No single believer is equal with Christ, but every true disciple is part of the whole Body, and the whole Body is one with the Head and filled with all His fullness. No single one of us can hold all the fullness of Christ, but the whole Body of the redeemed shall hold it all, and Christ shall appear throughout eternity, not apart from us but as a part of us and we of Him. Therefore, it is not mere resemblance to Christ but identity with Christ, and joint heirship with Him of God and all His fullness. Therefore, He says, even of His Father's love, "the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them."

What is the practical meaning of all this? It is manifold and marvelous. It means that our standing and

acceptance are as complete as His own. It means that we may pray in His Name so that it will be even as if He were praying,—not we. It means that all His righteousness and nature and personal attributes may be imparted to us, and appropriated by us, so that He Himself will literally live in us. It means that we are entitled to all His strength and life. It means that we inherit all His glory, and shall sit with Him on His throne as He sat down on His Father's throne. Oh, it is this that makes our love perfect, even in the day of judgment, because "as He is so are we in this world!"

Beloved, shall we listen from the Resurrection Morning, to the echoes of that message which He bade Mary tell us all, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God," until from the Father's lips it whispers back to the rejoicing heart, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine?"

#### II. THE WALK TO EMMAUS.

It is the afternoon of the same bright Sabbath. Two simple-hearted men, who had been the friends of Jesus, are walking from Jerusalem to a little village in the country, and talking of the things that have lately come to pass in connection with Jesus. Soon they are conscious of a third, who has incidentally joined them. There is nothing in His manner to awaken special interest until

He begins to talk with them about the theme of their conversation, and gradually leads it awhile, as He opens up to them, as an intelligent Rabbi might be expected to do, the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Messiah. Still all they are conscious of is a warmth of their hearts as the light begins to break on their spiritual understanding. They are strongly drawn to their new companion and as they reach the gate of their little home, they earnestly press Him to tarry with them under their humble roof. He consents, and passing in sits down with them to their evening meal. Still acting as the stronger spirit, they allow Him to preside and bless the bread before they eat. But lo! as He breaks the bread before them, the spell that had bound their vision from recognizing Him is broken, and suddenly they behold in His face the old light and expression of Jesus of Nazareth; it grows bright with the halo of His heavenly glory for a moment, and then He vanishes out of their sight, and they look at one another with amazement and joy, and know that it is the Lord.

How we thank the dear Master for that scene! How near it has brought Him to our lives! How simple it has made His coming and communion! How glorious to know that He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever!

1. It teaches us of the incidental

and casual coming of our Lord to us in all the walks of life. This was no set appointment, but He just dropped down beside them and entered, without introduction, into their simple conversation. It tells us that still He is willing to come into the ordinary intercourse of our life, and is really with us, in the work-shop, in the kitchen, and along the busy street. Nor does it need that we should be illustrious and specially important, for these two disciples whom He thus honored are but little known. Only the name of one is left us, and this one cannot be certainly identified; the other we do not even possess sufficient light to speculate about. Thank God that we do not know them, for it hints to us that the most obscure and commonplace of God's children may count upon the recognition and companionship of Jesus in the most commonplace circumstances of their life.

"The busy mart, the communion task, May furnish all we ought to ask; Room to deny ourselves—a road To lead us daily nearer God."

2. It teaches us that He may be often with us unrecognized. This is not spoken of as their fault. We are told that "their eyes were holden" that they could not know Him, and later, that "He opened their eyes and they knew Him." There is much precious significance in this. The Lord is often present in our lives in things that we do not dream possess

any significance. We are asking God about something which needs His mighty working, and the very instrument by which He is to work is by our side, perhaps, for weeks and months and years all unrecognized, until, suddenly, some day it grows luminous and glorious with the very presence of the Lord and becomes the mighty instrument of His victorious working. He loves to show His hand through the unexpected. Often He keeps us from seeing His way until just before He opens it, and then immediately it is all unfolded, and we find that He was walking by our side in this very thing, long before we even suspected its meaning.

He wants us to recognize His pres-

ence where we cannot see it and where nothing seems to speak of it, but all about us is ordinary and human. Oh, it is in the faces and forms which seem just as ordinary to us as His did to them, that the Lord is often nearest to us. Let us therefore walk henceforth as though every sound was the foot-fall of His steps, and every person the embodiment of Himself!

3. It teaches us of a Christ who may be always recognized by His Word. For it was thus He spoke to them. He might have told them of much besides. He could have brought back with Him the secrets of the under world from which He had just come, but He gave no hint of its awful mysteries. He might have

amazed them by some picture of the celestial country to which He was going so soon, but He attempted not to dazzle them with such visions. He might have poured out some marvelous teachings like His own incomparable parables. But no! He simply takes the old Bible and interprets it in the light of the very things of which they had been speaking,—His own death and resurrection. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them from all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Thus, beloved, we can all have His fellowship still, and thus we can ever test every revelation and every mystery. Does it correspond with the Scriptures, and does it speak of the

things concerning Himself? How wonderful it must have been to hear Him expound the sacrifice of Abel, the offering up of Isaac, the Brazen Serpent, the Paschal Lamb, and all the wondrous types that speak so eloquently of Him! So He is willing to talk with us still, and make the Bible live and shine with heavenly illumination and vividness, until our hearts shall burn within us as He talks with us by the way. It is thus, beloved, that the presence of Jesus is revealed. The Bible becomes a new book, a book for our hearts, and a book full of our living Saviour. Oh, that He may come to us these forty days, and thus open to us its deeper mysteries of life and truth, and its meaning for our generation and our own life and work; for this book is something to you that it is not to another, and something for our day that it never was to the world before; and in order to make it so, we must have the living Christ Himself, to open it to us and to open our understandings to receive its light.

4. This incident teaches, however, something more than even the precious word of Christ, for it tells us of His actual manifestation to them. As He blessed and brake the bread "they knew Him." Oh, there is such a thing as this,—the actual revealing of Christ in His personality to the soul, until it knows for itself, with the consciousness that none can gain-

say, that He has been there. It is not simply the consciousness of His presence in the heart by the Holy Spirit, for this we may always have; but there is a direct revealing of Christ as a Presence greater than our hearts, or all hearts—a presence that sometimes is specially made manifest for His own wise purpose to the tried or waiting heart. Sometimes He comes a little nearer in His own glorious majesty, and makes the spirit feel that He has passed by in all His ascended glory, and laid His hand upon us and done something for us as mighty as His own omnipotence. So sometimes He came to the Apostles. Such was that day when He visited Paul on the way to Damascus and

conquered him by a look and word of love, and then sent him for ever more on his new and heavenly way, a flaming torch of light and love. So, too, He came in His great life work, occasionally, in hours of crisis, to the apostle and made him understand that the Master had been there for a brief moment and spoken the decisive word which turned the course of all the coming years. So He came to him at Corinth in the moment of his depression and said, "Fear not, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." So, again, He came to him in that dark hour when he had just passed through the awful scenes of his arrest in Jerusalem and

his trial before the Sanhedrim, and said, "Fear not, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem so must thou also bear witness of me at Rome." So, again, on the Adriatic, in that wild hurricane, He stood for a moment on the midnight deck and gave the word which brought all that crew to land. And so in the court of Nero, when all forsook him; and in the Coliseum, when the lions confronted him, he said, "The Lord" stood by me and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

So still He comes to us at times, just for a moment, perhaps, but that moment is enough to heal our bodies from the wreck of disease, to rescue us from some hour of extremity or peril, or to cover all the future with blessing and power. He knows when we need the mighty visitation. We may not see it with our outward eyes, but the soul will be conscious that He has passed by, and that things can never be again as they have been before, and over all our life is written Jehovah Shammah. Blessed promise for every loving disciple, -Lord, help us to claim it for ourselves, and do thou make it real to every one of us some time during these Forty Days,— "If a man love me he will keep my words, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him."

5. This incident teaches us that the manifestation of Christ's special pres-

ence is transient and is speedily withdrawn; and so the moment they recognize Him He vanishes out of their sight. Had He lingered, they would have been thrown off the former plane of faith, and disarmed for the simpler walk to which He called them. One glimpse was enough for the present, and in the memory of that look they must walk in simple trust, even as the mariner on the voyage catches one glimpse of the star and sails by that one glimpse for days on the pathless sea. For "we walk by faith not by sight," and "though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

# III. THE MEETING IN THE UPPER ROOM WITH THE ELEVEN.

This is the sequel of the afternoon and follows close upon it. It is intended, therefore, to teach still further lessons about the Risen Lord. It is the incident recorded by both Luke and John of the evening of the first day of His Resurrection. Through the closed doors of the Upper Room He quietly entered, and spreading out His hands in benediction He twice repeated the gracious word, "Peace be unto you;" and then added, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you;" and breathing upon them said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In this interview, also, He made His physical identity very real and certain to their doubting hearts. "He showed them His hands and His feet," and ate among them as of old. From this delightful incident we learn for our comfort:—

1. That Jesus Christ has physical life and has a real body just like our own, with every member and organ complete, even in His glorified humanity. This gives intense reality to the conception of our Lord. He is no shadowy apparition, but the actual flesh and even bones, which they could handle and see, and which could partake of food. This body was the real subject of the resurrection, for His spirit had never died; and this body is the type and pledge of our resurrection in the body, and the source of that physical healing which we now may draw from Him as the foretaste and earnest of our own future resurrection.

2. We learn, also, that His body is infinitely spiritualized and exalted above even its former state. It is the same body, but it is unspeakably finer, mightier and more glorious. The same piece of steel may be refined from the ordinary nail to the exquisite hair spring, but it is still the same. Nay, it could even be converted into vapor by chemistry. but it would still have the property of matter. It could become intangible to the touch, and invisible to the eye, and be simply an ethereal fluid, and then it could be transformed again to the solid state. We know yet but little of the convertibility of matter, and what we know is a coarse illustration, - almost unworthy of the subject before us,—of Christ's body. We may not understand all the properties of the Resurrection, but let us reverently believe the simple facts, and believingly receive the life of our glorious Head who has made us members of His body, His flesh, and His bones.

3. The Christ of this beautiful picture is the Messenger of Peace to our troubled hearts. The secret of rest is to receive the risen Christ and accept His two-fold peace. First, peace with God on the ground of His complete atonement; and, secondly,

"the peace of God which passeth all understanding," through His indwelling presence as the rest of our troubled hearts.

4. Not only peace, but power, is the gift of the Living One. "He breathed on them and said, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This was the beginning of Pentecost, but not its fullness. It is from the lips of Jesus that we must ever receive the fullness of the Comforter, even as His very breath; and so He waits to breathe on each of us, as oft as He touches us, the fresh anointing of the very same Spirit who dwelt in Him and who comes to us colored, softened, sweetened by His indwelling in the blessed Jesus and as the very Spirit of Jesus.

This is our power, and this power we must receive by appropriating faith, and its faithful appropriation to His service and glory.

5. The great commission for service of course accompanies the promise and touch of power. "As the Father hath sent me even so send I you." Indeed, this is the great object of all the manifestations of the Risen Christ To each of the disciples He either directly gives, or at least intimates, the same great obligation to bear to others the blessing which they cannot keep for themselves without losing it. Oh. let us realize that this Christ of the Forty Days is the Christ who is reaching out to all who know Him not, and who would be impatient of us if we were content to receive His blessing for ourselves alone. He sends us forth with His blessing, clothes us with His own authority, gives us His very own Name and power. The Lord help us to be faithful to Him below as He faithfully represents us before His Father above.

And so these three appearings represent three calls. The first is His coming to the individual; the second, His coming to the little company, and the third, to the assembled congregation of believers. So still He comes to us alone, comes in our friendships and family circle, and comes in the assembly of His saints.

Again, the first was His coming as a friend, the second as a teacher, the

third as a Master to send forth His disciples to His work. And, finally, the first emphasizes the Christ Himself, the second His Word, and the third His Spirit.

And now, in conclusion, what does all this mean for us to-day? Not only, beloved, that these forty days may be prolonged for us until His coming again, but, perhaps, that in these last times they may be specially repeated as the precursors of His Second Coming. For as He gradually and slowly withdrew from earth, lingering those forty days from the Cross to the Throne, so gradually will He return; and before we see Him in the clouds we shall be conscious of a nearer presence on the earth below.

It is said that a Russian Emperor used to visit incognito all parts of his realm, that he might know his people and be able rightly to rule them. Were it strange that blessed Christ should even now be passing to and fro about this earth, on many a special inspection, before He erects His Throne and calls His Cabinet around Him from the men and women whom He has proved and tried? We know that Nehemiah, as he returned to Jerusalem, went out alone and surveyed the ruined city, and then summoned his hosts to restore it; and so Christ, even to-day, in the dark night of the ages, is walking about Zion surveying her bulwarks and her ruined towers, and preparing for her

Restoration in Millennial glory. Oh, that we may know Him now and be with Him then, that we may not miss the Morning Star, and so be up in time to pass full-robed into the Wedding Feast with the Risen Sun of Righteousness on that Millennial Day which is drawing nigh! Amen.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE SECOND WEEK.

## THE UNBELIEVING DISCIPLE.

bath evening in the upper chamber had found one disciple absent. "Thomas called Didymus was not with them when Jesus came." The disciples seem to have sought him during the days that followed, and carried to him, in his discouragement and despondency, the joyful tidings of the Master's appearing. But his true and tender heart, just because it loved so much, was unable to take in

the message which seemed too good to be true; and with an obstinacy born not only of self-will and unbelief, but also, perhaps, in some measure, of a love that would not dare to trust its hopes to anything less than absolute certainty, he declared. "Except I shall see in His hands the prints of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." At length the week is past, and the following First Day evening finds them again assembled to talk about the one absorbing theme. Suddenly, as before, Jesus reveals Himself in their midst, and instantly approaching Thomas, He holds out to him His hands and opens His garment for him to thrust his fingers into His

once wounded side. The act is, doubtless, free from all severity or even suggestion of harshness and censoriousness. With tenderest condescension, He seems to entirely look over the obstinate unreasonableness of the disciple, and to be anxious only to remove his difficulties and to help him to believe, for He adds, "Be not faithless but believing." But Thomas is overwhelmed, not so much by the physical evidences presented to him, as by the heart-searching omniscience of his Lord and the tender grace that has so submitted to his proud and unbelieving demands; and refusing, it would seem, to accept the proffered evidence, he throws himself at his Master's feet, with one adoring cry, "My Lord and my God." And as Jesus beholds him He adds with gentle reproof, and yet benediction, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

What are the lessons of this beautiful scene for us, and how does the Lord still reproduce this incident of the Forty Days in our lives?

1. It reveals a Christ who specially recognizes and honors the Sabbath Day.

True, it was not the Hebrew Sabbath, but the first day of the week; but advisedly we call it the Sabbath, for it has undoubtedly taken the place of the hallowed Old Testament Sabbath, and surely the name is prefera-

ble to the heathen Sunday, called after one of the gods of the Anglo-Saxons. Of course, "the Lord's Day" is the sweetest name, but we cannot always force it into the phraseology of current speech; and between the two names which usually denote the day, it certainly is preferable to use the Bible name where we cannot, without pedantry, employ the simpler "Lord's Day" of the New Testament. Christ has undoubtedly taught us that He is Lord of the Sabbath Day, and as its Lord He has adopted it and modified it by a change of time and a change and elevation of its spirit and signification. There can be no doubt that among the instructions which he gave to His disciples during the Forty Days,

when we are told that "He spake to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," the Lord revealed to them abundant reasons and gave them authoritative commands for the change of the day, or their own practice would not have been changed, as we find that it was. So for us their conduct is conclusive of something back of it, namely, His own explicit injunctions.

We believe, therefore, that He took the Old Testament Sabbath, which had come down through the ages and passed through Judaism, a temporary dispensation that for a time linked itself with the Sabbath which was much older, and that he incorporated it into the New Testament

system, with the added significance of His Resurrection and the appropriate change from the day that only signalized the finishing of creation, to that which expressed the beginning of the new creation which the resurrection of Jesus has introduced; and as He designed it to possess a special significance, He Himself observed it with the most sacred emphasis.

It is very impressive that he should have held Himself from the presence of His brethren for an entire week, that He might mark the more emphatically His coming the second time on this day. All His previous appearings had been on the same day the previous week, and He allows the long interval of six days to pass, not-

withstanding all their longing to behold Him again, and the affectionate interest of His own loving heart to them, that He might come to them again on the first day and signalize their meeting in the upper chamber as the foundation of the permanent worship of the future church.

Wise and happy are they who thus imitate their Lord and separate this hallowed day from other days unto Him and His fellowship and service! The scrupulous observance of the Lord's day will always be found to be a test of consistent Christian living, and a source and channel of strength and grace for all the week. The countries that have desecrated the Lord's day are marked by irreligion, immo-

rality and national decline, and those that honor God's day are correspondingly blessed. And the individuals who hold this sacred day distinct from secular care and occupation will always find that it is the key to a happy, holy and successful week, and that they who rob it of its rest and sacredness rob themselves and not the altar of their God. Like the best room of our house, it should be kept apart from the work-bench and the implements and employments of our secular toil, and as we would not bring the kitchen and the shop into our parlor, so let us not take our bartering and bargaining, our secular cares and plans, our newspapers and our letterwriting, and all the confusion and tur-

moil of the week into its inner chamber, which, like the ancient Holy of Holies, should be for the Lord alone and the choicest blessings of His presence and communion. It is not the sanction of law that makes it sacred. but the higher law of love and blessing which Jesus has brought to it. It is the day we keep for Him, and we may be very sure it is the day that He keeps for us and the day in which He comes. above all others, to meet His own in His own sacred courts and in their secret closets. Let us remember, therefore, that the Christ of the Forty Days is still the Christ pre-eminently of the First Day, whose presence and benediction will still overshadow. until the end of time, the Christian Sabbath and make it the Day of days.

2. The Christ of the Forty Days is one who comes on the Sabbath to speak to the very hearts and consciences and experiences of His disciples.

He is one who knows what they have been doing all the week and what they have been thinking and saying. He had missed Thomas that former Sabbath evening, and knew well what it was going to cost Him. He had heard his willful words and unbelief during the week in answer to his brethren. He shows him that He knows all his sin and doubt. And so still He meets us on this day and in His house. Have we not often wondered as we felt our hearts unveiled and our inmost thoughts revealed by some message from His servant that seemed to show us all we ever did, and almost to be the echo of our own thoughts during the days that had passed before? Perhaps we had instinctively felt that somebody had been reporting our words or our acts to the preacher. Perhaps the very question that we have been asking and wishing somebody would answer, comes back to us in the light of His word, as spoken by one who knew not of our thoughts, and we wonder and adore, like Thomas, at the feet of Him whose "word is quick and powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do."

Nor is this always accompanied by a sense of reproof and condemnation, for it is most comforting to know that we are in the presence of One who has already diagnosed our disease and laid His hand upon the sore that He might heal it, and we feel like adding with the Apostle, "Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

It is very touching to notice how promptly the Master went at once to Thomas. The very first that He sought out was the one who was troubled and perplexed. And so this morning if there be a heart that has a single care or questioning, it is to this one that He is coming now with help and blessing. He has light for your perplexity, strength for your weakness, comfort for your sorrow, love for your loneliness and supply for all your need. For His blessing is always in season and exactly suited to the very need of the present moment. Let us, therefore, bring Him even our darkest doubts, our deepest despondencies, our most unworthy thoughts, the things we naturally would seek to hide; for He knows all already and has come to deliver us from them and bring us grace and help in the time of need; that is, the very grace we need to-day.

3. We learn from this story that the Christ of the Forty Days is a Christ of infinite patience and tenderness to the doubting and even to the sinning.

How gentle His treatment of Thomas,—how free from all upbraiding! how careful He was to avoid every irritation and offence, and to withold the gentle reproof He did utter until Thomas was restored! He even condescended to meet His imperious demand literally and fully, and conceded all that Thomas claimed. He knew it was not the highest kind of faith to give Thomas, but He gave him what he asked and then told him

how much better the higher faith would have been. How gently He has led us all! How many times He has answered prayer in temporal things for us as the sign of His willingness to do greater things, and given us evidences of His love and care, to nurture our faith to higher ventures and achievements! How tenderly He has borne with us in our backslidings and our unbeliefs! How much He has done for our imperfect faith! How often He has forgiven our unworthy doubts, and even, when our faith failed, did not suffer His faithfulness to fail, so leading us on gently until we had learned to trust Him in some measure worthy of His faithfulness, love and power. If there be only an honestpurpose, He will take the faith that is just as a grain of mustard seed, and cherish it into maturity and do exceedingly abundantly above all its deserving.

Even the honest sceptic is not rejected from His mercy, and held in so far as he will follow the light he already possesses. The prayer, "God help me if there be a God," if it is all the prayer the doubting can offer will not be in vain, as has been sometimes strangely proved. The soul struggling from old traditions into the fullness of the gospel, and slowly letting go its limitations and prejudices, need not be discouraged if it does not get all at once into freedom. The Master will take all that you can give and will

lead you further if you will follow on.

The suffering one, who has caught a glimmer of the light of the healing power of the Great Physician, need not fear that he will be rejected because he is struggling with doubts and fears. Only follow the light that is clear, and press on into all that is added, and "ye shall know if ye follow. on to know the Lord." "He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax," nor will he, amid all your fluctuations, "fail or be discouraged with you till He shall have brought forth judgment into victory. Blessed, patient Christ, how thou hast borne with us! How thou hast lifted us up when we were fallen, and brought us back from our stumbling and "established our goings!" Oh, help us to be more like thee in our gentleness and patience with them that are out of the way!

4. This incident teaches us that the true answer to all our doubts and difficulties is the revelation of Christ Himself.

Jesus healed Thomas of his scepticism, not by reasoning with him, but by showing him Himself. He reached out and showed to him the marks of the nails, and opened His bosom and said, "Reach hither your hand and thrust it into my side and feel, if you will, the very beating of my heart." And Thomas needed no more; he had seen the Lord, he had felt His living flesh, and, above all, he had realized

His heart-searching omniscience and he was satisfied.

This is the answer to all our doubts and questionings. This is the answer God has given. For "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Jesus Christ is God's last word to us. The sceptic is not going to be convinced by your reasoning, but by God's Christ. Show him the Lord Jesus, the marvelous though simple story of His life, the vivid picture of His death, but above all the testimony of His Resurrection, and the revelation of His living presence and power to-day among His people as the unchanging Christ of the Forty Days, and He, too, will say, "My Lord and my God."

Christ wants us to show Him to the world. Our argument is not our logic and theology, but our Lord Himself. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." This is all He needs, that we shall tell about Him and make Him real to men. This also is the solution of all the sinner's difficulties. You cannot save him by preaching theology to him, but show him Christ, his crucified, living, welcoming Saviour, and all his doubts have fled. This is the solution of all questions about sanctification. We may seek for blessings and experiences, for states and conditions, and find that we have to go over it all again and again; but let us only see Jesus "made unto us of God our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption," and we are satisfied, and go forth with the joyful cry, "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

This is the solution of all questions about healing. It is not enough to know the theory and doctrine: we must behold the life and receive it from Him. Let us but see Jesus as our Risen Lord and our Living Head, and ourselves as "members of His body, His flesh and His bones," and our physical being shall be baptized into His life and fullness, and go forth

with all-sufficient springs of heavenly life. This is the answer to all our difficulties with circumstances, in our work for Christ and our earthly trials. Let us but see the Master's hand in all, and above all let us only behold the Captain marching upon the field, and lo! our fears are gone, and we begin to shout, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Beloved, this Christ is standing by your side to-day, unrecognized so long. He cries to you, "Behold me standing at the door and knocking! If any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him and sup with him and he with me." Look away to Him from yourself, from

your troubles, from your doubts, from your theories! It is a person you need, and this person is the Christ of the Gospel, the Christ of the Forty Days, the Christ who is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever," and the Christ who is hovering over you now and waiting to possess your heart forever.

5. The Christ of the Forty Days is Divine.

"My Lord and My God" was the testimony of the man who had doubted, and whose doubts were in one moment turned into a testimony which would be blasphemy if applied to any one else than God. This expression, Lord, signifies the place of supreme control and government over

all nature and providence; and the other word, God, is expressive of the absoluteness of God in His Divine nature as the external and supreme Creator and All-sufficient and Almighty One. Thomas recognizes the glorious presence before him as no less than the eternal God, the God of the Old Testament in all the majesty of His revealing, the God of nature and providence in all the glory of Hispower and dominion. Oh, it is much for us to fully realize that this is indeed the name and character of our Christ! This was what Peter meant that day when he stood before the proud Sanhedrim and declared that "God hath made this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST." He saw

Him, that hour, the supreme and majestic Lord of nature and of men, holding in His hand the very lives of the men before him, and having all power in heaven and in earth. It is one thing for us to say these words; it is another, in our inmost being to realize, in our quickened consciousness, we are talking to One and intimately linked with One who holds in His hand this moment all events and destinies.

It is He of whom Isaiah says, "All nations before Him are counted as nothing; He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding." Oh, beloved, is this

Christ our Christ? Does He stand over against our difficulties and above our adversaries, and have we crowned Him Lord of all? The secret of this for us means that He has become our Lord and our God.

6. This Christ expects our implicit faith.

Two kinds of faith He speaks of here. "Thomas, thou hast seen and hast believed." This He does not despise; but accepts it, such as it is, but on it He pronounces no high benediction. It is the faith that has sprung from sight and reached its conclusion from outward evidence. But there is another aim,—a higher faith. Upon this He pronounces an everlasting blessing as He looks into

our faces in these coming ages, upon everyone who will meet this benediction: "Blessed is he who has not seen and yet has believed." doubtless means that it would have been better for Thomas to have believed the testimony of his brethren, even before he saw his Lord; then, indeed, would be have received a blessing which perhaps none of them had received. He had an opportunity, given perhaps to none other, of believing before he beheld a manifestation of Christ. All the others seemed to have beheld him for themselves before they believed. Thomas might have believed on their word, and had this mighty blessing, but he missed it and it passed over to us in

later times. Happy they that have claimed it! Happy we if we shall always claim it, and venturing out on the simple word of our God shall always dare to take Him by simple faith before we see the moving of His hand or the evidences of His power, and even shout with the Hebrew prophet, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, nor fruit be on the vine, yet will I rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation."

Is there anyone reading these words who is yet unsaved? Beloved, the greatest blessing of your existence is before you! Will you take Him at His word and dare this moment to believe that as you go to Him in your

unworthiness and helplessness, He does not cast you out, but now receives you and saves you according to His word? Blessed art thou at this very moment! Thou hast not seen, but thou shalt see, the glory and the grace of God. Is there any one reading these words, who has not believed His mighty promise of deliverance from sin and perfect keeping through His indwelling presence and Holy Spirit? Beloved, He bids you take Him this moment at His mighty word if you but yield yourself and claim it. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Now are ye clean through the word that I

have spoken unto you." "The blood of Jesus Christ (God's Son) cleanseth us from all sin." "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate and I will receive you. For I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments." Will you believe these promises just now without waiting for some internal evidences or some manifested fruit in your life? Will you dare to believe that God becomes this to you this very hour, and until your life-work is done? Will you press forward and

hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering? Blessed art thou! for thou hast not seen, and yet hast believed, and already He is about to answer your trust by the witnessing voice of His Holy Spirit and the joy of His full salvation.

Is there anyone reading these words who has longed to feel the power of His touch in your body, and been waiting for some external sign or manifestation before fully resting and abandoning yourself to His power? Beloved, will you not venture to trust Him who "Himself took our infirmities and carried our sickness?" Is not this enough? Will you not roll them on Him this very hour? "The prayer of faith shall

save the sick." Will you not spring to meet this promise, and dare to believe that the Lord does raise you up? "When ye pray believe that ye receive the things that ye ask." Will you so receive? Blessed art thou already, trusting one! blessed far more in the trusting than the answer that is coming, surely coming, for that is not the blessing; it is not that He is going to give you the thing that you trusted for but it is that He can trust you, that He can take you into the place of His confidential ones, and rejoice in you as one that can trust your God without reserve, and to whom He can confide the banner of His conflict and His testimony before the world.

Is there anyone reading these lines who has long been wondering why his prayers have not been answered, and waiting for some evidence in the providence of God? Beloved, God has delayed the evidence to give you the opportunity for your greatest blessings, but wants you to be one of the heroes of faith who will stand in the forlorn hope and the front of the battle, following at your Leader's command, although no other soldier may stand by your side and no way may seem possible through those ranks and foes. God help you not to miss your opportunity and your chaplet of victory! Press out to meet your Captain. "Said not I unto thee," He cries, "that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Lift up this very moment the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees! "Believe your God, so shall ve be established; believe His word, so shall ye prosper." Send forth the choirs of praise into the front of the battle. Claim your answer and declare your victory, and already your own heart will feel the march of the Conqueror and His benediction on your head. "Blessed is he that hath not seen and yet hath believed." This power to believe God, when we have nothing but God to believe, is itself blessing. It is said of Abraham that he was like Him whom he believed, who "calleth the things that are not as though they were." Faith is a kind of God-likeness.

Let us not miss our opportunity and God's expectation of us! Has He not a right, after all His patience, after His love, after all His power, after all His revealing of Himself to us, to expect our perfect trust, and shall He not have it henceforth from all our hearts in all our ways?



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE LORD'S MESSAGE TO THE UNBELIEV-ING CHURCH.

"Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Luke xyi: 14 16.

HIS interview was probably the sequel to the incident in connection with the restoration of Thomas. It could not have occurred on the first

Sabbath of the Resurrection, because we are told that "He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat," and there were not eleven disciples at the first interview. Thomas was absent. At the same time it was an early interview after the resurrection; and it, undoubtedly, seems to have been the one, the first part of which has been already described in connection with Thomas. The sentence with which it is introduced in Mark, respecting His upbraiding them with their hardness of heart and unbelief, because they believed not them to whom He had appeared after His resurrection, seems very significantly to apply to Thomas, and what the Lord said to him at that time. The words which

follow in Mark are probably the concluding messages of the interview, as, turning from Thomas to the other ten, He gave them this great commission, and the credentials of His power, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with 1\_ew tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."

This is His message to the Church under the Christian Dispensation. It

must be in force until all the world is evangelized, and it must be taken together and not piecemeal; and so long as the command to preach the Gospel to every creature is in force, so long, also must the promises of Christ's cooperating and supernatural power be, also, regarded as operative. And yet, the attitude of the Church has been one of chronic unbelief in regard to this matter, an unbelief in the promises equalled only by tardiness in obeying the command. As she springs, however, to meet the latter, she seems to be recovering and regaining her faith in the former; and it is, indeed, remarkable that the revival of the missionary spirit in our day is marked by the restoration of the supernatural gifts of the apostolic age. The unbelief of His Church in these things seems to be almost hinted at in the way the passage is introduced. It begins with the account of His upbraiding the eleven for their unbelief, and their spirit would seem to have been typical of the sin which was so easily to beset the ages which were to follow. May the Lord help us to rise out of this paralyzing influence, and fully to understand and enter into the meaning and the power of these mighty words, which He has left to us to the end of time, as His Great Commission!

1. We learn from this incident the nature and conditions of the Gospel.

The word "Gospel," of course,

means the glad tidings of salvation, through the finished work of Jesus Christ, to all the world and all the ages, in so far as the men who hear it are willing to meet the simple conditions. It is, indeed, "glad tidings." It tells rebellious men that God is reconciled, that justice is satisfied, that sin has been atoned for, that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked, the condemnation of the sinner cancelled, the curse of the law blotted out, the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide, the power of sin subdued, the guilty conscience healed, the broken heart comforted, the sorrow and misery of the Fall undone, the very King of Terrors himself destroyed,

and all the evils and miseries of ruined humanity completely overcome, and transformed into blessings more glorious and lasting than Adam ever lost, or unfallen man could ever have enjoyed. And the condition of all this blessing is stated in the simplest terms. There is no restriction in the terms, for the message is addressed to every creature, and the only condition is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is evident, therefore, that the rite of baptism is not a condition; its omission will not bring condemnation, though its acceptance is commanded wherever it is possible. The one essential condition, therefore, is simply believing; that is, believing the "glad tidings."

This is not spoken of as some abstruse and unattainable experience, but the simple, frank acceptance of the glad tidings as true and as our own. It is, in a word, to believe the facts respecting Jesus Christ and His finished work, and to accept and appropriate the salvation for ourselves, and simply believe that it becomes our own by virtue of our accepting it. The logical process is as simple as the alphabet. Christ offers salvation to me; I heartily accept it; there fore I have it, because I accept it, and because God has promised it to all who will accept it. There is no mystery about this, -no strain. It is as

plain as the untutored faith of the little newsboy, lying on a heap of filthy straw, who had caught a glimpse of the Gospel in a street-meeting, and sent for a missionary, in his dying moments, to ask him the broken question: "Missionary, is it true as how you said that Jesus Christ would save any feller who ax'd him?" "Yes," said the missionary, "it is true, He says so." "Then," said the little fellow, as he clasped his dying hands and looked into heaven with a face already shining with the heavenly light, "He saves me, cos I axes Him."

That is the Gospel, in its simplicity and its profundity—simply believing the glad tidings, and taking the benefit to ourselves without doubt or questioning. This is the answer that Paul had that night for the rude jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This is the simple message which the rudest, crudest minds of heathendom can always understand, and which they only miss whose self-sufficiency and earthly wisdom is looking for something higher and harder. It is the Gospel for the masses, the Gospel for the heathen, the Gospel for the child, the Gospel for the whole creation. Oh, that we might send it forth that there might be no son or daughter of Adam's race who has not heard the. glorious tidings, so free to all and so easy for everyone to receive!

He adds, "and is baptized," nor can we divorce this from believing, nor should we divorce the believing from the baptism.

It is a great mistake to make baptism a gospel or a theology which can in any measure detract from the prominence of Christ and the simplicity of faith. To every heart that truly accepts the Gospel, it is a sacred obligation and delightful privilege to make full acknowledgement in God's appointed way, of our Master and Lord, and, like Him, thus to fulfill all righteousness. And to those who have learned the deeper and sweeter meaning of the ordinance itself as the special symbol of death and resurrection with Christ, it is a joy unspeakable to enter with Him into the death of self and sin and rise into the fullness of the resurrection life; but when we have said this we have said all. Its absence did not debar the dying thief from the courts of Paradise, nor will it bring the loss of salvation, under this precious verse, to any believing heart; and they that make it a means of regeneration, a condition of salvation, or a rigid term of Christian fellowship, go further than the Lord Jesus intended here, or the Apostle Paul for a moment tolerated, when he said, "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel," and baptism is not the Gospel, although a most blessed symbol and seal of its reality and fullness.

2. Christ has made His people trustees of the Gospel for the world.

He never meant that we should keep it as a selfish luxury, but should receive it and pass it on as a sacred trust for all our sinful race. He might have sent it to the world by some other means. There is not an angel in heaven but would have been glad to bear such a message, and would have counted it high honor and Divine joy, but Christ has given this privilege to redeemed men, and in a great measure has limited its diffusion by the human instrumentalities which spread it. How disappointed and grieved His heart must be to see this precious trust withheld from those for whom He designed it,

and consumed for the selfish advantage of a few! How would a great benefactor feel if he gave a million dollars to relieve the poor of our city, and placed it in the hands of certain trustees, and then found that those men were spending it for the support and enjoyment of themselves and their families and friends, and that the hundreds of poor children for whom it was intended were getting no benefit from his generous gift?

Such has been, literally, the attitude of the Church of Christ for most of the centuries of the Christian age. It seems appalling when we stop to realize it! But here He does not allow the responsibility to be easily shifted off upon the abstract idea of

the church, for it is a personal responsibility with each of the eleven, and it has been transferred from them to every other disciple personally, until the ages shall end. His word was a distinct and individual message, which necessarily implied their individual action, for it was the command that scattered them, one by one, into all the world, and sent them forth unto every creature; and the same command rests still upon every follower of Jesus, up to the utmost measure of his ability to ful--fill it.

In this view of it, it is a very simple and a very awful responsibility, and looking in the face of every one of us, the Master simply asks, "Are you going to do what I tell you, or not?" There is no possibility of evasion. He simply says, "Go ye," and we must go or disobey. We believe, therefore, that every individual Christian is bound to his very utmost to spread the Gospel, and to go personally if he or she can, without absolutely neglecting obligations at home which are imperative, and which we can take as an excuse to the bar of God.

3. The extent of this commission is to the whole world and the whole creation.

All national restrictions are overswept by the broad and universal scope of redeeming mercy. Every race and country is included in the heart of God and the blood of Calvary; and, not only so, but every creature. This includes far more than every man and woman. The word translated "creature," means creation, and it certainly includes the material and lower orders of creation. "What!" you may ask, "are we to preach the Gospel to the beast of the field, to the forests, to the wilderness and to the mountains?" Yes, there is not a thing on earth, animate or inanimate, but is going to be benefited by the spreading of the Gospel and the coming of the kingdom of Christ. That is what He means. The whole material universe is to be made free through its uplifting power. How it has civilized the nations! How it has explored Africa and colonized and cultivated its desolate places! How it is to drive away barbarism, cruelty, malaria, disease, barrenness, and at last, death itself, from the whole creation which "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the time when the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God!"

Nowhere in the New Testament are we told that the whole world will accept the Gospel, but we are always told that the whole world will receive it, and Christ's purpose will never be fulfilled until all the tribes shall be evangelized and shall have

had the opportunity of accepting or rejecting the great salvation. As yet, a thousand millions of our race have not had the opportunity. One hundred thousand every day are passing into eternity, for the first time to know their Saviour and their God, and cry, as they meet Him, "No man cared for my soul." With every word of this sentence, as you read it, a sad and sinful human spirit is passing into the presence of the Saviour. who is now looking down upon you, and finding to its amazement that He died for its salvation, and that you knew that salvation, and might have helped that poor sad spirit to know it, too. What must Christ think of you, as He turns, this moment, from that poor, shrinking, astonished soul to listen to your prayers, and then the next moment beholds another come with the same sad cry? One would think that He must almost lose heart in the prayers of His people and in the tender ministries of His love to us, when He knows that our brethren are perishing through our indolence and neglect.

It is useless for us to lay the matter over upon His omnipotence and say that He has power to save them in some other way. Then, surely, He went to needless expense in preparing the costly machinery of the Cross and the Gospel, if there had been some other way of attaining the

same results. It is very certain that God would never have sent His Son to die if salvation could have been obtained in any other way. Doubtless, all that tenderness and mercy can do to alleviate and to modify the unspeakable loss and misery of ruined men, will be done, for "he that knew not and committed things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes," but to be beaten with few stripes is far less than to be redeemed, cleansed and made meet to be partakers of the nature of God and the glory of heaven. To stand outside those gates is hell enough to one who has looked within, and we know that without a new heart and the blood of Jesus, no son of the human race can ever enter heaven and share the prospects of God's redeemed. Whatever else awaits these myriads, it is not our salvation. Alas! alas! we know too well that most of them have sinned against the light of Nature, and have passed out of this mortal life with the consciousness already of unpardoned sin and the fearful looking for of judgment.

Oh, beloved, let us awake from all our dreams; and, for the sake of human pity and heavenly love, let us do what can be done to meet the simple, solemn, honest, imperative, irresistible command of Him who would not have spoken it if weaker speech could have sufficed.

The practicability of obeying this

command makes the duty more binding. Dr. Hudson Taylor has shown that, in five years, every human being in China can be evangelized by sending merely one thousand missionaries to that country; and if this be so, two thousand more would reach all other races beneath the sun who have not yet heard the Gospel. To do this, and support them for one year, would cost only three million dollars, and this would be less than the fortune of many a single Christian in this country. And to do it for five years would take only six millions more; that is, nine millions altogether in the next five years, or less than two millions a year. A smaller sum than the pettiest State in Europe could easily spend in some trivial war, would be enough to accomplish the most majestic campaign that the universe has ever witnessed.

May God help us each to understand the thought of our Captain, our Ascended Christ, and to meet it before this century shall close, faithfully and gloriously!

4. The commission is accompanied with majestic credentials—credentials worthy of so great a calling.

Sending forth His ambassadors, this Mighty, Anointed King, gives to each His signet ring and declares that the signals of His power will attend their ministry, if they will but fulfill the simple condition of that power. "These signs shall fol-

low them that believe. In my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." We have here, first, the source of this supernatural power: "In my Name." They were to recognize themselves as representing Christ: they were to stand as men with a Person behind them who was unseen to the world, except through His supernatural operation through their words. They were to be His representatives: He was to be their power. They were to be hands upon the dial, and He the force behind. They

were so to recognize themselves, they were so to introduce themselves to the world, they were ever to put Christ in front and stand behind Him, and then expect to see Him work. "In my Name" was the watchword of all this power.

How different this has been! The Church has got a name, and frequently it is not the name of Christ at all, but of some human founder or of some doctrinal phase. It goes to meet the world and the devil in the name of a Wesley or an Episcopate or a Presbytery, or a doctrine of Baptism or a method of Methodism. True, these are Christ's churches, but the very principle on which their distinctiveness is founded ob-

scures His name. The minister has frequently a name so great that it quite obscures the name of his Lord and renders it quite unnecessary. He is known for his learning, for his eloquence, or his influence, more than for the supernatural power that follows close behind him and accomplishes his ministry. Such workers cannot expect these signs to follow in His name. We must recognize ourselves as but figure heads, and all the power in the unseen presence that follows behind us and presses us forward as the expression of its working.

Again, the forms in which this power was to be manifested are specifically expressed. The casting

out of demons was to be one. This was, doubtless, meant to be the very same ministry which Christ had exercised for the deliverance of those possessed of evil spirits, a form of affliction which has existed in all ages and countries, and which still, undoubtedly, is the cause to which may be traced a great multitude of morbid mental conditions and forms of insanity. In the ministry of the Apostles this power was frequently exercised, and became a testimony of great weight before the heathen world. It was the most impressive form of Paul's work, both in Philippi and in Ephesus. It has been marvelously revived in these last days, and has been peculiarly prominent in

the work of the Mission Field, especially in China; although, of course, all that we have seen of the manifestation of Christ's power has been but fragmentary, compared with what we might expect if the whole body of His Church were united in faith and fellowship in the power of the Holy Ghost. The gift of tongues was also promised and marvelously realized in the Apostolic Church, although this form of spiritual and supernatural influence was more abused than any other, and less practical in its effectiveness, and seems to have been in a large measure withdrawn at an early period. The taking up of serpents, and the drinking of any deadly thing, seems to refer to the power to resist the element of poison where it comes from living or inorganic sources; and this has often been fulfilled in the protection of God's servants from wild beasts and reptiles, the counteracting of otherwise fatal stings from venomous creatures, and especially the influence of malignant contagious diseases and unwholesome air and climatic surroundings.

The most prominent of these forms of supernatural power, because that which seems to have the most practical application, and to be peculiarly manifest in the facts which are occurring in the church to-day, is the healing of the sick in the name of Jesus. There is no doubt that this

was regarded by the Lord as supernatural healing, and the laying on of hands designed as a symbolical act expressing His touch of power. The fact that this was promised is established by many other passages, and the evidence of its fulfillment is found in the whole Apostolic history, the allusions in the Epistles, the story of the first four centuries of Church History, and the records of the past two hundred years in Protestant Christendom, especially in the last twenty-five. Such healings are not always miraculous, although the design of those referred to here is of this character

There seems to be a double provision for healing: one distinctly mi-

raculous, and the other the more ordinary working of the Divine life and power in the believing disciple. All these manifestations mentioned in Mark are called "signs," and intended to be emphatic evidences to the world of the presence and power of Christ and the reality of His name. They are referred to, later, in the closing words of the Gospel, "the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following."

Dean Alford, in commenting on this passage, declares that the promise of supernatural power was not in tended to be limited to the first age of the Church; but should the occasion at any future time arise for the need of such manifestations, they may be reasonably expected in accordance with this promise. The good Dean neutralizes his valuable admission by saying, "Where the Gospel has been preached, as it has been in Christian countries, they are not needed now to establish the evidences of Christianity; and in heathen countries, where the power of Christian nations extends, they are not needed because of these nations."

This is certainly a very weak admission. In the most advanced Christian nations there is a deep need to-day for a real faith in something supernatural, especially in a religion which involves supernatural elements. Faith is becoming a sort of reasoning, and Christian life a baptized morality and

benevolent activity, but the expectation of anything actually supernatural, either in the hearts or bodies of men, is tabooed as fanaticism. Therefore Christ has spoken out in the heart of Christian nations by the exhibitions of His miraculous power, even in these last days. And as for the influence of Christian nations in heathen countries, the very name of Christian in China and Japan has usually been associated with the people who introduce licentiousness and rum, and whose morality is lower than heathenism. There is, indeed, a mighty need for the old credentials of the Gospel; and if Christ can find the faith He is seeking for, He is as ready as ever to manifest His power.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE THIRD WEEK.

THE SCENE ON THE SHORES OF TIBERIAS.

"This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after that He had risen from the dead."—John xxi: f4.

HIS passage makes it certain that the incident recorded in this chapter follows the scenes from which we have just turned in the previous chapters. It was probably the third week after the Resurrection. During the previous week, the disciples had gone up to Galilee, according to His

previous command and appointment, having only waited in Jerusalem the one week after His Resurrection in order that Thomas might be restored from his unbelief. They had doubtless returned to their former home, and expected soon to meet their Lord according to His appointment. But He did not come, it would seem, and as the days passed by and their means of livelihood may have failed them, for these were poor men, their faith and hope began to fade and their prospects to grow dark and discouraging. Then it was that the impetuous Simon proposed to several of their number to return to his former calling, at least for a time, and getting into his little fishing boat.

with six of his brethren, he cast the net into the sea and waited for the reward of his toil. All night long they stayed at their posts and perhaps battled with the waves of the stormy little sea, till their hearts grew weary and faint as they found that their labor was in vain. And as the cold gray dawn slowly crept over the earth their nets were empty still. Then it was that a human form was dimly seen upon the shore and a voice spoke to them in ordinary tones, "Sirs, have ye any meat?" and they answered "No." "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," was the somewhat startling but quiet response, "and ye shall find." Perhaps without fully realizing the right of

the speaker to give such a command, they immediately obeyed; and no sooner had they done so, than their nets were filled with fishes. quick heart of John at once recognized the Lord. As soon as Peter heard that it was Christ, he swam to the shore and drew the net to land filled with great fishes, one hundred and fifty and three. Then the Lord tenderly prepared the morning meal, of which they were in such sore need, and bade them bring the fish which they had caught, and partake of the food which He had already prepared for them. As soon as their hunger was satisfied He turned to Simon Peter and repeated the threefold question, "Lovest thou me?"

with such delicate allusion to Simon's fall, and such tender forgiving and restoring graciousness that it seemed less like a reproof than a renewal of His commission and a call to higher service than he had ever dreamed of before. With one added reproof in answer to Peter's impetuous and almost presuming question, and one gentle hint with regard to the disciple whom Jesus loved, the scene closes and the Master vanishes from their presence and our view, leaving this wondrous incident and its heart searching lessons imprinted upon our hearts forever.

1. It teaches us that the Christ of the Forty Days comes to deliver as when baffled and perplexed and to reveal Himself as our Wonderful Counsellor and our Mighty God.

Perhaps, like them, we have gone back a little to our own way and our old life; and the business has not prospered, the enterprise has not been successful, the painful struggle has been followed only by disappointment and the most trying extremities, and even disasters. God may let the sinful world succeed in their forbidden schemes, but, blessed be His Name, He does not allow His chosen ones to prosper in the path which leads them out of His holy will. He has a storm to send after every Jonah and an empty net for every unbelieving and inconstant Simon

But in their failure He does not fail. When they reach "their wits' end," and are ready to "reel and stagger like a drunken man," then "they cry unto the Lord and He heareth them and delivereth them out of their distresses." How cheering it is to hear Paul telling the discouraged crew that their troubles are all come upon them because they would not hear his counsel, but then adding the promise of the mercy and deliverance of God. Is there any one reading these lines who has been passing through such a night of baffled struggles? Stop and think, dear friend, if, perhaps, you have not got out of the will of your Father. Can you not recall some command

which has summoned you to His work in some other pathway of obedience, and you followed your own inclination and wisdom, and have been allowed to fail to bring you back like a lost sheep to His way. Only acknowledge your error and be willing to return, and lo! already He is standing at the shore to bring you out of your extremity, and place your feet upon the rock and establish your goings. Listen to the call of His providence and answer back, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly."

Sometimes, however, without any conscious disobedience or willful de-

parting from His paths, we all have such nights of struggling and disappointment. Everything seems to fail us. We acted with our best judgment and yet it came to naught. We patiently waited, but there was no change for the better; and the heart at last grows sick with suspense and stagnation and God seems to have forgotten to be gracious. Perhaps, we are in extreme circumstances, out of employment, it may be: without means, pressed on every side by difficulties and embarassments, and seeing no way of escape, so that we can truly say, "Oh Lord, we have no might against this company, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are on thee."

God allows His children to come into these straits oftentimes that He may work for them His greatest deliverances. And often He lets the trial linger to the very last degree of pressure and extremity. But He has not forgotten. All the night He has been watching and walking on that wave-beaten shore. Every sigh that the wind has borne across the sea has troubled His heart. Every pang of perplexity and suffering has found a sympathetic chord in His breast. He is only waiting until the night has run its course and the lesson has been fully learned, and the deliverance is ripe. Even now, perplexed one, He is standing on the shore of thy troubled His form may be a very simple sea.

one, and you may not recognize your Lord in the ordinary-looking man before you or the common-place circumstances coming to you, but "It is the Lord!" He has come to show thee what to do and to say. "Cast thy net upon the right side and thou shalt find." "He is the Wonderful Counsellor." He knows all the lines of influence, all the causes and effects in the realm of providence, and just where to bid you step and how to have you act so as to bring the result you require. "There is no searching of His understanding." "Counsel is His and sound judgment. He leads in right paths, and causes them that love Him to inherit substance and will fill their treasures." Happy the business man who follows His wise counsels! Happy the young man who makes Him the guide of his youth! Happy the soul who trusts Him with all the heart and leans not to his own understanding! Let us trust His wisdom, and wait His bidding, and follow His direction, no matter how all our experience may have contradicted it, and we shall find that it will bring us to the desired end.

But He is also the mighty God, Not only does He know on which side of the ship to cast the net, but He can command the fishes of the sea, and fill that net with shoals in a moment. Every creature in the earth and sea are subject to His bidding, and every human heart is in His hand. He can

change the counsels of men at His pleasure. He gave Laniel favor with the king of Babylon and Joseph honor in Pharaoh's house. He can make men to be at peace with us and become the instruments of His will concerning us. He can send a little spider to weave its web over the mouth of the cave where the old Covenanter is hidden from his pursuers, and lead them to reason, when they come on his track, "He has not entered there because that spider's web is unbroken and undisturbed." He can send a hen to lay a single egg every morning where Alexander Peden is hiding, and furnish the saint with his breakfast without a suspicion from his foes. He can bid the ravens feed Elijah, and

the bees wait on John the Baptist, and the quails come to the table of Israel's hosts, and the scorpion refuse to sting or harm the faithful missionary. He can prosper the honorable and consecrated merchant, and regulate the markets of the world, and consecrate the gain of men to Himself at His own mighty will

- "He everywhere hath sway,
  And all things serve His might."
- "Leave to His Sovereign will
  To choose and to command:
  With wonder filled thou then shalt see
  How wise, how strong His hand."
- 2 Our temporal deliverances are intended to lead us to higher spiritual blessing and service.

This wonderful miracle was an oc-

casion for something far more than the mere help it brought them in a time of perplexity and distress. It was a type, in fact, of the new life and work into which He was just leading them. It was the second draught of fishes which He had miraculously given them. The first, three years before, had called them to the first stage of their apostolic ministry, but this had been a comparative failure, something like the first draught of fishes, for then, it will be remembered. their nets brake and the miracle ended in confusion. And so ended the first three years of their service, in the wretched failure of the crucifixion days well nighthe entire abandonment of their new hopes and confidences.

But this draught of fishes was entirely different from the first. These were all great fishes and they were all brought safe to land. Such was to be their future ministry as fishers of men. The souls they were to bring to Christ were to be such souls, and their fruit was to remain and to growan hundred-fold until it filled the world and the heaven above. Henceforth they were to fish, with the Master on the shore, and casting their net, always on the right side of the ship. at His constant bidding, His wisdom and power were to attend their labors. and make the miracle of that Galilean shore perpetual in the years and centuries that were to follow.

And so, when He comes to us in His mighty providences, delivering us out of our distresses and manifesting His infinite wisdom and power, it means much more than the temporal deliverance. God intends it as a type of our future and a pledge of His wisdom and power for all our coming needs, and He is almost always calling us to learn some deeper spiritual lesson, to reach out to some higher experience, and to go forth to some larger service for Him. Back of our temporal trials and providential blessings there always may be traced a spiritual meaning, and out of them oft come our richest blessings. God loves to take the most commonplace thing and transform it by giving it a heavenly

meaning. So He took Jacob's trial that night at Peniel and turned it into the crisis of his life, sending him forth that morning with the new name of Israel, to be the head of the future tribes that bear that name. So Saul, when searching for his lost asses, found not only the asses but a kingdom, too, and went home from the prophet's house another man and to enter a higher sphere and service. So David's rescue of his lambs from the lion and the bear became the token and pledge of his being entrusted as the Shepherd of God's flock and the Captain of God's host,

And, therefore, beloved, if as you read these lines you recognize in your life the interposition of your Father's

hand and your Master's love and power, remember that your blessing is lost if it terminates upon itself, and that God is calling you through it to a higher service and nobler place than you have ever known. Arise and meet Him. Understand the meaning of His visitation, and do not miss the blessing of His coming into your life, but go forth from this hour to recognize your higher calling and to understand the presence which has given you the pledge of His own all-sufficient might for everything that His higher service can henceforth require at your hands. Has He healed your body? It is that the life restored may be glorious for Him. Has He delivered you out of pecuniary difficulties? Remember that your business is henceforth His and a sacred trust for Him. Has He marvelously answered prayer? Remember that He has given you the key to the Mercy Seat and called you to a ministry of prayer henceforth for others and for Him. God help you to realize your blessing as a trust, and consecrate it to His hichest will and the glory of His name!

3. He still comes to us as to them, not only to deliver us from our trials and call us to higher service, but to feed our souls with heavenly bread and supply all our spiritual need.

"Come and dine" is His word to us as well as unto them. Mere answered prayer is not sufficient for the soul's hunger, nor even Christian work, in its most successful forms. Amid outward prosperity and abounding activity, the soul may be starying, - often is, -and men and women break down in the Lord's work because they give out more than they replenish. They have not learned the secret of this simple call, "Come and dine," "I believe the secret of my frequent attacks of nervousness and physical suffering," said a friend, the other day, "is that I am doing too much work for the Lord and taking too little time for communion with Him," Probably this friend was right, God often has to knock a little rudely at the door of our sensitive nerves to call us to the hour of

communion and to the dining-room where He renews our spiritual strength. The meal was prepared by His own hands, and the bread and fish were brought by Him first. And so Christ Himself must feed us with His living bread,—by that spiritual process which only He can make plain and real.

But they, too, had something to do. "Bring of the fish which ye have caught." Why was this? Oh, the Lord wants us to minister to Him as well as receive from Him, and our service finds its true end when it becomes food for our dear Lord. He was pleased to feed on their fish while they were feeding on His. It was the double banquet of

which He speaks in the tender message of Revelation, "I will sup with Him and He with me." Beloved, are we feeding upon our Lord, and are we ministering to our Lord? Then, indeed, is the ancient peace-offering truly fulfilled in our blessed fellowship with Jesus, and our service truly consecrated when it ministers to His joy and glory.

4. The Christ of the Forty Days comes also to us still, to restore us from our failures, and turn them to blessed account by calling us to nobler services just because of them.

The exquisite scene with Simon Peter need not now be analyzed in detail further than to say that those three questions, "Lovest thou me?"

were not all the same. There was a shade of difference in each, and a cumulative force in all, which brought back most distinctly to his conscience the memory of those three denials, and the cause of those denials in his own self-confidence and his own vainglorious strength. And thus still the Master comes to us to recall the memory of our faults and failures so keenly that we shall not miss the lesson, but so delicately that we shall not be wounded by the recollection; and then so completely does He forgive and forget that we know that all the fault has been undone forever and all the failure more than restored by His grace and love. There is always something for us to learn out of

situations like theirs. The trial through which we have been passing has been intended, beloved, to show something imperfect in you and me, something in our life which the Master wants different, and yet, without depressing or discouraging, He wishes simply to hint at the defect and then to have us rise above it and forget it in a grander victory than we have ever dreamed of before.

No failure has been fatal and no fault need be finally injurious if your heart has been left undivided and your love is still loyal to your Lord, and you can answer back from the depths of your being, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!" It is not the vibration of the trembling needle

that He watches, but its trend stead. fastly towards the pole, and the fact that it can only rest when it points without wavering in that direction. For such He has a precious service, and the three commissions given to the great Apostle are also left for us in the largest measure in which our love will take them up and faithfully fulfill them. "Feed my lambs." is His call to the ministry of salvation, the finding of His lost ones and the nurturing of His little ones. "Shepherd my feeble sheep" is His call to the yet tenderer ministry of sympathy, instruction, sanctification and healing to which He sends us forth, for the multitudes in His church who are weak and broken in their Christian lives, and longing sincerely for a more satisfactory Christian experience. "Feed my sheep" is His call to labor for the most advanced Christians whom our own experience of the truth and the Lord may qualify us to help. But for all these, the chief qualification is a heart of love for the person of Christ, and without it all our words and works are "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

5. And finally, there is one lesson more, a very humbling but a very necessary one, "If I will, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

It is a lesson that silences our selfsufficiency, takes our eyes off all others, and leaves each of us alone with that Blessed One who passes from our view not only as the gentle loving Christ but as the mighty and eternal Sovereign of our life; with a supreme right to command our every choice and with a claim over each of us to the answering cry of Mary at the open tomb, the cry of absolute surrender, self-renunciation and entire consecration :- Oh! let each of us send it back as our answer to this solemn message this moment, "Rabboni, my Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou leadest."

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE GREAT COMMISSION.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—St. Mark xxviii: 18-20.

HE manifestation of the Lord Jesus here recorded, was, in some respects, the most remarkable of all His appearings during the forty days. It was the only one by special appointment, the others being merely incidental and mostly unexpected. This He had arranged for even before His crucifixion, saying to His disciples, "After that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee;" and this had been the message of the angel to the women on the morning of His resurrection: "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ve see Him: lo, I have told you." This also was the direct message of Christ Himself as He first met the women returning from the sepulchre: "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." This, then, had been the special appointment for His great meeting with all His disciples, and it seems a little strange, in view of the urgency and emphasis with which the message had been given that they were so slow in obeying it, and in meeting their appointment with Him. They tarried in the neighborhood of Jerusalem at least eight days after the resurrection, for there were certainly two Sabbaths in immediate succession in which He appeared to them there. Were they waiting for Thomas to join their number, or were they needlessly tardy in beginning their journey? Perhaps the cause of the delay was in order that all the disciples might receive the message and have time to attend the solemn convocation. The place

appointed we are not told; it was a mountain in Galilee. It would scarcely be Mount Hermon, the Mount of Transfiguration, for that would be more remote and difficult of access than was necessary. It may have been the same mountain where the sermon of Matt. v: 8, was delivered, the famous Horns of Hattin, where He had first proclaimed the principles of His kingdom to the world. It is probable that the five hundred brethren, of whom Paul speaks in the 15th chapter of First Corinthians as having all seen Him at once, were the persons present at this gathering. They formed the surviving few who still remained faithful after all the tragedy of the crucifixion.

At length they have come together and are waiting for His appearing. It was the first great missionary convention that the world ever held, and it is most remarkable that the only appointment that Jesus made with His disciples after the resurrection was a missionary one. What a solemn emphasis it gives to the great commission and the glorious work of evangelizing the world, to fully realize the dignity with which Christ has invested this great occasion! At length they were assembled, and the Lord appeared in their midst. His coming to them seems to have dif. fered in the form of its manifestation from any of His previous appearings. The Greek word, translated "came to them," has a special shade of meaning, implying the gradual approach—"He came toward them," becoming visible at first at some distance and majestically coming nearer, until at length He stood before them, coming down, perhaps, from the lofty mountain top which rose above their heads. His appearance was impressive enough to throw most of them upon their faces in adoring reverence; yet there were some, even here, who doubted His identity.

Then He addressed to them His great and important message, containing, first, the claim of His kingly power and prerogatives; secondly, His great commission to them to go forth and establish His kingdom

among all nations; and thirdly, the promise of His presence through all the days until the end of the age. Let us realize, as we dwell upon these three great themes, that this was not a message to the eleven but to all the disciples of Jesus Christ; to all the days until the end of the age; for the company He had in His mind's eve must have included all that gathered around Him and would take up His commands even unto the end of the age of which He spoke. It included us, if we will meet the conditions of His promise and the responsibilities of His great command

1. The Royal Proclamation, "All

power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

This is really the manifesto of our King, in assuming His mediatorial throne. In declaring that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, He does not refer to His primeval deity and His Divine rights, but to that special kingdom and authority given to Him in the eternal covenant of redemption on account of His finished work. It is something that has now been given to Him; it is the throne of the Mediator which He assumes at the Father's right hand, for the purpose of accomplishing His great work of redemption, for which He has already suffered and died. It is that of which He declared, "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand." "He must reign until He hath put all things under His feet; then shall He Himself be subject unto the Father to whom He shall deliver up the kingdom, and God shall be all in all."

The word "power" here more exactly means "dominion, authority," and has reference to the sceptre and sovereignty of a king. The Lord Jesus means that He has been appointed to administer the government, both of heaven and earth, until the consummation of redemption. It is, indeed, a glorious and transcendent claim.

1. He has all power to settle the standing and destiny of every sinner, and to control all our future prospects and our relations to God. He Himself could say, "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Through His Name and the acceptance of His words all sins are forgiven, and the guilty soul in a moment translated out of the kingdom of Satan and from the curse of sin and hell to the glorions liberty of the children of God and heirship of His everlasting kingdom. He has power, in a moment, to arrest the sentence of judgment and condemnation, and to proclaim the guilty acquitted, justified,

and joint-heirs with Himself of all the hopes of the Gospel.

The power of salvation is in His hands. Once, when visiting the Castle of Toulon, in France, the Emperor gave to a friendly king the right to set a single prisoner free, and he accepted it as a royal compliment; but the Son of God has received from the Father the right to emancipate every criminal under the sun from every curse of the law of God, if he will accept His mighty clemency. Well may we rejoice in the power of Jesus, - His power to save. Well may the prophet cry in wonder and admiration, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

2. He has all power to control the power of the Holy Ghost. mighty spirit of Pentecost is His gift. The power that convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment is from Him. The power that clothed the Apostles with such resistless might and Divine efficiency is the power of our risen Christ, for Peter said of Him, "Having received of the Father honor and glory He hath shed forth this which ve now see and hear; therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." He has power still to awaken the most insensible soul and break the most hardened heart. It was He who struck down Saul of Tarsus and broke his heart by a glance and word. It was He who convicted the rude jailer in the midnight hour. It was He who opened the heart of Lydia as the sun opens the blossoms of spring; and He still has power to draw the sinner, to melt the stony heart, to conquer the stubborn will, to sanctify the sinful soul, to consecrate the whole being to Himself.

Is there anything that we need in our own spiritual life or in our work for souls? Our glorious King has all power in heaven and in earth to accomplish it.

3. He has all power to give efficacy to our prayers. He is our Great High Priest as well as King. "Him the Father heareth always." His hands receive our imperfect supplications, and cleanse them from their defects, and add to them His own intercessions and the incense of His perfect offering, and then He claims them as the right of His redemption, and fulfills them by the might of His omnipotence. Therefore, there is nothing too hard for Him to grant to our supplications, or too difficult for us to ask of His Almighty faithfulness, when we remember that we are presenting our requests in the very name and character of Him who has "all power in heaven and in earth." "Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace." As we go forth in our work for God and in fulfillment, especially, of the great commission of this passage, our weapon is chiefly prayer; and in the light of this mighty manifesto, what may we not dare to claim for our own efficiency and the evangelization of the world?

4. He has all power in the realm of providence. The mighty and burning wheels of Ezekiel's vision all move at the touch of His hand; the chariots of the vision that Zachariah saw riding through the earth and putting all its conflicts at rest, go

forth at His bidding. The thrones of earth rise and fall at His command. The events of history are the out-working of His plans. The book with the seven seals is held by His hand and opened by Him alone. It is not true, of course, that He is responsible for the wickedness and willfulness of man, but His hand is over all man's ways and His providence overrules all events. We see this constantly in His earthly ministry, and in His government of the church in the Acts of the Apostles. How easily He could send Peter to the sea for the single fish which had the golden coin in its mouth, sufficient to meet His needs! How exactly He brought about the assembled multi-

tudes at Pentecost, at the right time, to receive the Holy Spirit, and then scattered them all over the world! How wondrously He brought together Philip and the eunuch in the desert at the right moment, and then sent the converted prince to evangelize a kingdom and a continent! How easily He could lay His hand on the life of the impious Herod, and protect the trusting Peter from His violence! How marvelously He guarded the life of Paul through perils of persecuting foes, through perils of waters and perils of every enemy, until his work for Him was accomplished! How marvelously the Old Testament illustrates His providences! He could send the child of a

Hebrew slave, doomed to death, into the house of Pharaoh, to become the child of Egypt's king, and the deliverer of Israel from the man who had sought his own life in infancy. He could lead an army of three millions for forty years through the barren wilderness, and sustain them without hunger or lack. He could send a Hebrew maiden into the house of Persia's monarch and make fair Esther the deliverer of her people. He could use a Cyrus, without his understanding it, to be the restorer of Israel's scattered tribes when the seventy years were literally fulfilled, and make Daniel's captivity the occasion of his life and testimony in Babylon and the subjugation of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius at the feet of Israel's God. He could give Jeremiah courage to be fearless and faithful for forty years, amid the perils of Jerusalem's last days, and then He could protect and guard his life, alone, of all others, in the hour of her fall and amid the massacre of her inhabitants. And He who did all this is Jesus, our Lord and Christ, with power undiminished, and only waiting for faith to claim its yet mightier victories in these last days.

What God wants to-day in His Church, and in His work, is not so much that the world shall see the power of the Church, as the power of her Lord and the presence of Him who goes forth with His weakest

servants and becomes their might and their mighty Victor. Oh, as we go forth to evangelize the nations and to represent our God amid the mighty forces of the world's last and, intellectually, highest days, let it be our supreme mission to realize and show forth the might of our Anointed King, and so to stand for Him that the world can see once more that He has "all power in heaven and in earth."

5. He has all power over natural laws and forces. While this material world is His creation, and He does not usually mar nor interrupt the uniform movement of the forces and laws that He has framed, yet He can suspend them at will and substitute

higher forces if He pleases, just as the engineer can stop the engine or reverse it at his will. And so the Lord Jesus holds in His control the elements of nature, and still can quell the storm or bid it come; can counteract the poisonous malaria or render it harmless; can vitalize these exhausted physical frames with His Divine life until "out of weakness they are made strong," and can carry and sustain us through all the difficulties and apparent impossibilities that may surround our work for Him. Let us go forth, especially in the work of missions, realizing this, that nature is subordinate to redemption, and the natural subordinate to the spiritual, and the kingdom of matter is under the control of the King of Saints.

6. Again, He has all power over the minds and passions of men. He can hold back the murderer of savage heathen from their design or render them helpless in their furious attack. Dr. Paton tells us how often the savages of Tanna assembled to take his life, and some chief was led to stand up in a critical moment, and by an unlooked for suggestion to turn them aside from their plan, and they dispersed without hurting a hair of his head; and then, again, more marvelously still, how he had gone scores of times through armed and furious crowds of naked savages, determined to murder him, and escaped their

hands; turning sometimes to them and commanding them, in the Name of the God of heaven to disperse and desist; and sometimes, seeing their muskets pointed and their spears poised, and yet in a few moments fall unused to the ground, and his life miraculously spared. Our blessed Christ has still this power in every place where His servants need His protecting presence, for He has "all power on earth." King's hearts are in His hand, and He can still say to all our foes, "Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm." He can still induce men to receive us, to accept our testimony, to help us by their influence, their means and their co-operation. It was He who gave Daniel favor with his masters in Babylon, and Joseph the confidence of his king, and Mordecai his place of power in Persia, and Paul the confidence of the Roman captain and Cæsar's household; and in every age He has shown how He can put His hand on men when He needs them, and call them in a moment to the place He means them to fill.

Oh, that we might know better and trust more fully our Almighty King! Then would we trust less in man and care less, either for his frowns or his favor, but moving on in the might of a Divine dependence, would know that God would bring to us all men that we need for His work, and help us, by many or by few, as He sees best.

- 7. Christ has all power over the lower orders of creation. "Behold I give you power," He says, "to tread on serpents and scorpions and nothing shall by any means hurt you." He that went with Daniel into the lion's den has gone many times since then with men like Arnot into the jungles of Africa, and paralyzed the fury of the savage beasts and made them slink away abashed before the keen and fearless eye of His trusting child.
- 8. Christ has all power over Satan and all our spiritual foes. We are so glad of this. We meet our adversary with the assurance that he is a conquered foe in the presence of our Lord. We may well fear him in our own behalf, but as we claim the abid-

ing presence of our Christ, he is but a toothless lion, a disarmed and humiliated foe and an empty shadow and sham. Let us not dread his power nor try to evade his fury, for he will do his worst against us; but with our Master in our midst we need not be afraid; his assaults will only end in greater victories, and in all these things "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Are we not afraid sometimes, and shrink from positions where we know we shall meet the adversary's wrath? Let us no longer dishonor our Lord, but know that the places of most peril are the places of the most absolute safety.

9. Christ has all power over angelic

beings. These mighty creatures who form the executive officers of the government of God, and throng the universe with their ceaseless ministries. all go forth under the orders of our Anointed King. Myriads of them crowd this earth and wait upon the saints of God, but they are all subject to our Master's order. Occasionally the curtain parts enough for us to see the shining form of one or two as they are engaged upon their ceaseless services, but when we see them not, they are doubtless ever near. The Old Testament is full of their interpositions in human affairs. and the New has many examples of it. It was an angel that opened the Redeemer's tomb; an angel that told Mary of the Resurrection; an angel opened Peter's prison and smote his persecutor; an angel stood on the tossing ship by the side of Paul and promised him deliverance. And, surely, their ministry did not end when the great apostles passed home. Unseen by mortal eyes they have still fulfilled their loving tasks through every generation; and when each of us shall close our eyes on the last human face, we shall find some shining companion by our side gazing upon us with a look of quiet recognition and tender affection, smiling at our look of wonder, and saying to us, perhaps, "I have known you for half a century, better than your mother, your wife or dearest friend. I nursed

your infancy, guarded your childhood, protected your manhood, hovered over your dying bed and now am waiting to guide your spirit home."

Who of us cannot remember some moment when we had just escaped a sudden peril, stood within a hairbreadth of death; and as our palpitating heart recovered its pulsation, a strange heavenly hush breathed over our spirit and a voice almost seemed to whisper, "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee to guard thee in all thy ways." Samuel Rutherford tells us, how when a child, he fell into a deep well. For a long time he struggled to hold on to the slippery sides and called in vain for help, and at last began to sink. Just as he

was perishing, he says, a beautiful man slipped quietly down into the well, lifted him out without a word, and left him safely on the ground above and immediately disappeared. The glorious old saint did not doubt that it was, literally, an angel of the Lord.

How often they have interposed for the visible deliverance of God's servants we cannot tell. Who knows but they come in human guise sometimes, when all other help has failed. Enough to know that when we need them they are at hand in the most lonely place, and they are all under the command of the Son of God; for it is said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him," and in the Book of

Revelation we see them going forth at His bidding to fulfill His mighty purposes in these last days.

10. Finally, our Risen Christ is yet to have all the power of earth's kingdoms under His Sceptre and to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God will overturn and overturn and overturn, until He come, whose right it is, for the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. This is Christ's covenant right and reward, and the Father's heart will never be satisfied for His Son until His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We shall yet see our blessed King wearing the crown of all the world, and we shall see every knee bowing to Him, and every tongue confessing that He is Lord.

"He shall reign, from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway;
He shall reign, when like a scroll
Earth and heaven shall pass away."

Oh, let us realize the vision and haste its fulfillment in His glorious coming!

II. The Great Commission: "Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations."

Because of His power, and because of His right, He bids His disciples go forth to establish His kingdom among all nations.

1. We must be struck, first of all, with the boldness and majesty of this command. He did not send them now simply to individuals, but to na-

tions. He looked upon the mighty communities of earth as not too great for the conquest of His kingdom, and the mission of His followers to win. He sends us forth as ambassadors to earth's great powers and as His soldiers against the mighty hosts of humanity. The work of foreign missions ought to deal very directly not only with individuals but with nations. God has a purpose in the tongues of earth. He wants them all represented in the great triumphant song which is to echo around the throne, and we ought not to be satisfied while a nation or tongue is not evangelized. Indeed, His coming is directly connected with the evangelization of all nations, not necessarily

all individuals. The Church of to-day ought to lift up her eyes upon the fields and see how far and how faithfully she has fulfilled this commission with respect to neglected nations and unevangelized races and peoples. It would seem to be the special call of Christ to-day to each of us to see, so far as in us lies, that every community that has not yet received the Gospel is specially visited with the message of our King. There are still many tribes of earth who have not received the message. There are scores in Africa and several in Asia, who have yet no part in the Chorus of Redemption, and were the Lord to come to-morrow, their tongue would not be heard in the great millennial Psalm, which shall arise at His coming, when

- "All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice."
- 2. The universality of the commission is sublime. It sweeps the circumference of the world. It spreads its royal sceptre over an empire more magnificent than Nebuchadnezzar claimed or Cæsar saw. It reaches far beyond the narrow limits of Jewish patriotism or imperial ambition. Never Empire so grand and universal as that which, bye-and-bye, shall join in the chorus of Coronation,

"While every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
Shall join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all."

Oh, as we have already said, let each missionary burn to make the victories of the Gospel as universal as the commission which He has given, and may each of us have the holy aspiration to add one other tongue or one other tribe that none have reached before, to the glorious song which is soon to burst forth when the ransomed hosts from every land shall, with songs, surround the throne, and it shall, indeed, be true,

"Ten thousand thousand are their tongues, But all their hearts are one."

3. The Commission given is an aggressive and progressive one: "Go ye." It does not imply, by any means, the idea of settling down in comfortable repose and consolidating

great ecclesiastical institutions; but It is a ministry of itinerance, and we very much doubt whether any church or servant of the Lord should cease to go in this sense of aggressive and progressive work. The missionary is to go until all regions are visited and all tribes evangelized; the Church is to go until all who are at liberty have become the messengers of the Gospel. In the early church we find not only Paul and Barnabas going, but Aquila and Priscilla, working people, Gaius and Aristarchus, and many of Paul's companions constantly moving with him from place to place, evidently men and women from the ordinary walks of life, who counted it their

commission to share in the toils and tasks of the Gospel. The time has come when the heathen world needs more than stereotyped millisters to meet its awful needs, and Christ is calling a whole army of plain and practical men and women to cover its needy fields. Good Bishop Taylor has suggested the true method to a great extent. Good Pastor Hearns long before suggested perhaps even a better; one namely, the missionary colony, and to-day in Africa and India thousands of happy native Christians are the fruit of a humble missionary movement, in which a whole parish almost moved bodily to the heathen world and settled down among them, to teach them how to

live as well as how to know the Lord. God grant that the next ten years may put such a go in the hearts of thousands of the consecrated children of God that they cannot longer stay at home, and a great army of thousands of picked men and women, who fear no hardship and seek no rest short of the Master's coming, shall spread over all the neglected fields of the heathen world!

'4. The first process in this great work is denoted by the term "disciple all nations." This is not "teach," which is an incorrect translation, but rather evangelize, and bring to the knowledge of Christ and the fold of Christ. It is, in a word, the work of evangelization, the quick and

world-wide proclamation of the Gospel in every land, with a view to the gathering out of all who are willing to confess the truth and follow the Saviour. This is the first work of missions, and until this is done the work of costly organization and education should be held in sub-ordination. Too little has this been the object of Missionary Societies and too much the building up of elaborate establishments. Some of the more recent Societies have struck the true keynote and are sweeping over the world with a success unparalleled in modern missions. Little wonder that the Master blesses a method so in keeping with His own command. This was the Apostolic method. In

his great missionary journeys Paul swept over vast fields. In a few months he had itinerated over Cyprus, Iconium, and Central Asia Minor, and then was ready to go over these fields again and establish them more formally. On his later journeys he swept with similar celerity over Svria, Cilicia, Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia in, perhaps, two or three years, preaching the Gospel in many countries and gathering multitudes to Christ. This is the world's great need to-day. In a single generation its entire population will have passed away, and what has to be done must be done at once. It has been shown already that one thousand men and two and a half million dollars would

evangelize the whole of China in five years; the same number of men, and the same amount of money would accomplish the same for Africa, provided that all sections of the country could be safely penetrated, and doubtless God would open the way as fast as the Church is ready to enter. And the same number of men and amount of money would cover all other neglected fields. A small army of picked men, with the trifling expenditure of seven and a half million dollars, less than the fortune of a single Christian man, would evangelize the entire world long before the century is finished, and yet such a campaign would be sublimer, even if looked at only from a human standpoint, than any that the world has ever seen.

The other night, in Albert Hall in London, the royal family of England and the most distinguished men and women of the nation assembled and stood up upon their feet to receive and honor Henry Stanley because he had successfully penetrated Africa and rescued a brave man from isolation and peril. Oh, what honor will heaven pay to the men and women who will penetrate these dark regions for a nobler purpose and rescue their millions from the tyranny of Satan and the curse of despair! Surely all heaven will stand up some day to receive them and the Son of God Himself will make them sit down and will serve them with His own Royal hands. God help us to understand the meaning of our times and magnificence of our opportunity!

5. The work of evangelization is to be followed by the work of organization. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." This is the ecclesiastical part, but there is a notable absence of all ecclesiasticism. We find no name of modern church is this organization. The only name into which they are baptized is that of God. Thank God the best missionary work of to-day is undenominational! Thank God the churches of the mission field are growing weary of denominational names, and

finding the necessity of presenting to the colossal wall of heathenism the mighty front of the united Church of Christ. And so we find the "United Church of Japan," and the struggle for the same united form in India and other mission fields. There must of course b organization: the public confession of Christ in baptism; the uniting of the little flock in the name of Christ, and the proper discipline and government of the Church, but this should be as simple and as like the primitive Church as possible, and adapted in each case as to its form to the leadings of the missionary himself and the exigencies of the case.

6. The last direction respecting this

great work has reference to what we might call the edification of the Church. It includes the building up of the Church of Christ in truth and holiness; "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This, of course, includes the deeper instruction and the higher training of the Church of Christ, and this is proper and scriptural both in the Church at home and abroad, and should be carefully provided for, that the flock may be fed, not only with milk but with meat, and prepared for the highest Christian living and the most effective work for the Master. But it is not in the traditions of men that it is to be taught, but in the commandments of Christ; and not even so much in the theological lore of the academies and school; as in the practical observances of His will and the duties and experiences of holy living, the one simple rule of life being His word and His commandments.

Such, then, is the Master's Great Commission; the one message which He gave on this great occasion, this most important meeting with His flock after His resurrection.

Beloved, what hast thou done with this message? What art thou going to do, reader? What does this mean for thee? Thou shalt soon meet Him in His Kingly glory. What wilt thou then say about this last word which He has left for thee? Art thou sure thou hast an excuse that will meet His smile in that glerious day, and that He will say, "Thou hast done thy best to glorify me and to accomplish my will for a lost world." But unless we are sure we can meet Him thus, let us be very slow to take the comfort of this last promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age," for it is very certain that it is linked with the commission and our obedience to it, as the Son is linked with the Father, and as obedience is ever linked with blessing. Unless I am sure I am doing more at home to send the Gospel abroad than I can do abroad, I am bound to go, and if He

wants me I am ready to go whenever He calls and makes it plain. This and this alone is the attitude of fidelity on the part of each of us to this sacred word of our departing Lord. And with the most awful solemnity would we lay it upon the heart of every reader of these lines, and we feel sure that the Holy Ghost will carry it home to the consciences of men with irresistible authority, as the mandate of the Master Himself to many who have not thought of it before.

III. The Abiding Presence, "Lo! I am with you all the days even unto the end of the age."

There is something very emphatic in the note of exclamation, Lo! It implies that they would be likely to forget it. It is intended to call perpetual attention to it. No matter how improbable it may appear, and how many other presences may seem to crowd it out, yet lo! I am with you. Look more closely and you will see Him.

There is, also, special emphasis in the present tense, "I am with you." Had He said, "I will be with you," it might have implied a presence different from that which they now enjoyed—that there was to be a break in His abiding with them, and then a subsequent appearing. But He says, "I am with you." I shall not cease for a moment to be with you. I shall be as truly with you the moment after my ascension as I am

now while I am speaking these words to you.

It would seem as if this word I AM had hidden in it an allusion to the Old Testament name which God used in speaking to Moses and sending him forth to lead Israel from bondage to freedom. "Thou shalt say to them, I AM hath sent me unto you." Our Lord means to have us understand that He is the same Almighty One who sent forth Moses to inaugurate the history of Israel—who is now sending them forth to inaugurate the history of Christianity. What a blessed fullness that name suggests! It is just an infinite blank, which each of us may fill up with all we need Him for. "I am," He says, and we may finish the sentence. Is it health, "I am the Lord thy God that healeth thee." Is it spiritual life, "I am the Living Bread." Is it guidance, "I am the Light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life."

And then He tells us He is with us all the days, not "always" merely, but "all the days," day by day, for each day's needs and duties as it comes, suiting His help and blessing to every changing day.

There is one more thought which lingers in the Master's last words with the light of a glorious hope. It is "the end of the age." It points us forward to the Second Coming of our blessed Lord. It is very beautiful to see the blending of His departing and His coming in these words. Like the Northern twilight, which almost meets the opening of the dawn, so His departing and the hope of His returning blend in these blessed words.

Oh, how blessed to believe that the dawn is near and that already the day star has arisen in our hearts, and the Presence that is with us now unseen is soon to burst upon us in the glory of His appearing!

### CHAPTER VII.

### THE LAST MEETING.

"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

HE scene of the last two interviews with the Risen Lord was in Galilee. We find Him now again at Jerusalem. There the last of the Forty Days were passed, and they were marked, it is probable, by many interviews, as He taught them of the things concerning the Kingdom

of God with a fullness of which John says, "If they should be every one written, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Some day we shall know those unwritten words: meanwhile we may be sure that they were sufficient to authorize all that the Apostles afterwards themselves did and said, and that while we may not have an actual word of Christ for all that we are expected to observe, yet we know, if we have their example for it, that they had a sufficient word from His own lips. Thus, for example, the observance of the first day of the week, and many other things for which we have apostolic practice and example without explicit teaching, were, no doubt, fully explained and authorized in the Master's patient and ample teachings.

At length they meet for the last time and the interview is one of great importance, and the message more distinct and far-reaching than any that had preceded it.

## I. THEIR ERRONEOUS QUESTION.

All through these days they seem to have been expecting 'Him constantly to manifest Himself in the restoration of the old theocratic kingdom, and as, again and again, He met them and vanished without fulfilling their expectations, they talked together and wondered why He did

not publicly manifest Himself as the promised and kingly Messiah. Now at length they ventured to ask Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" His answer is a very faithful and vet tender one. He does not rebuke them or even intimate that their desire is wholly without foundation in the purpose of God. He does not deny that He will restore the kingdom to Israel, but He simply turns them away from this expectation to their proper and present work, and gently reminds them with a shade of reproof "that the times and seasons are not for them at all, but reserved by the Father in His own power." Very solemnly does He hint to us

that there are a great many questions with which we have nothing to do, and which are really keeping us back from our highest service for Him.

## II. THE COMMAND TO TARRY IN JERUSALEM.

Although He had for them a practical and urgent work to do, yet even this they were not to rush into unprepared, but to tarry for Divine power to fit them for their great calling. He meant them to thoroughly understand that they were utterly unfit in themselves for the work to which they were called; that they must not attempt to do anything until they received the Holy Ghost or they would surely do it amiss.

And so, when they began to weary of the ten days' waiting, and, at Peter's suggestion, undertook to set in motion the machinery of the Christian Church by electing a new apostle by lot, their premature work simply came to naught, and the Lord quietly ignored their chosen apostle, and in His own time and way called Saul of Tarsus to take the vacant place.

This is a lesson that none of us can learn too well. We are utterly unfitted for the work of Christ by mere natural qualifications and preparation. All that we do before we receive the Holy Ghost counts for little or nothing. All our intellectual gifts, all our stores of accumulated learning, all our experience and practice

in Christian work will prove but cold, dead wood on the altar of God until kindled by the heavenly flame of Pentecost. There is, in the structure of the human mind, a reason for this tarrying. It prepares the heart for receiving the fullness of God. The spirit of waiting is a discipline of self-crucifixion and stillness, which is necessary to the deep and full reception of the Divine influence. And it is also true that at each successive stage of our life and work, and at each new departure, there must be a tarrying for power. God's first word to His people, as to Israel of old, always is, "Stand still and see the salvation of God," and then "Go forward."

How long are we to tarry? Untive we receive the power from on high. And when we do we shall not be able to tarry longer, but the fire in our bones, like Jeremiah's, will weary with forbearing, and burst all barriers in testimony and service.

# III. THE PROMISE OF POWER, THROUGH THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

He had already spoken of His power in heaven and in earth; now He tells them of the power in which they are to go forward and do His work. This is a different power from that to which He had already referred in connection with His own person and presence, for this is to be in them and upon them as a personal endue-

ment. And yet it was not to be their power, but the power of a personal presence that was to be in them; the true translation being, "ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you." There is a great difference between our receiving power from the Holy Ghost and our receiving the Holy Ghost as our power. In the latter case we are as insignificant and insufficient as ever, and it is the person who dwells within us who possesses and exercises all the gifts and powers of our ministry, and only as we abide in Him and He works in us are we able to exercise this power.

The Lord thus introduces to them and to us that glorious Person who ever since has been the substitute and successor of Jesus Christ in the personal life and work of every believer. There is no doubt whatever about His meaning and the importance attached to it. It is of a Divine and living person He is speaking, a Presence as mighty as the Father and the Son, as actual to us as the presence of Jesus with the disciples of old. The Holy Ghost has been given to the Church as the present God of the Christian dispensation, nearer even than the Saviour could be to His earthly companions, because He dwells within our inmost being and communicates directly with our innermost consciousness. He is the power for all true Christian work, and only

as we are possessed and anointed by Him, are we able to accomplish spiritual results that can be acceptable to Him or lasting in their results.

The book of Acts would be the best answer to this question. We need only look at Peter as he had been a month before, and Peter as he was at the day of Pentecost, to understand the promise and its import. ance. It was a power that imparted such heroic courage and boldness that the man who fled from the servant girl could defy the whole Hebrew Sanhedrim and rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his Lord. It was a power that illuminated their minds and enabled them to understand with marvelous clearness, and expound with overwhelming conviction, the Scriptures and the Gospel. Possessed with this power Stephen could face the whole synagogue of the Cilicians, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and might with which he spoke. And all the sermons recorded in the Acts of the Apostles are marked by the most marvelous depth and fullness of scriptural teaching and spiritual truth.

It was a power that inspired them with overcoming faith to claim the promises of God in all their omnipotence, and trust Him amid all situations of need and danger, for His supernatural working. It was power to understand the will of God and know His guidance and follow His plan in

founding the Church of Christ on earth and fulfilling their various ministries. It was the power of love that made all their hearts one. It was the power of patient suffering which enabled Stephen and others to face their persecutors with a spirit that turned even their blood into a mightier witness for God than all their words or deeds. It was the power to produce conviction and conversion in the hearts of men, the power that made men feel their sins and realize their need of a Saviour and accept Him. It was the power of supernatural and miraculous working that could rise above the laws of nature and the powers of disease and demoniacal possession, and work in the name of Jesus as Jesus Himself had worked. And it was the power that brought the providence of God to work upon their side, controlling the elements of nature, and the great movements of human life, so as to advance the Kingdom of their Risen Lord.

That blessed Holy Spirit is still the same unchanging power, and willing, in all our hearts, to work with His ancient might if He can find a vessel empty, cleansed and yielded, which will be fully responsive to His touch and will. Oh, let us tarry until we be endued with His power; and then at each new step let us tarry until we go forth in Him and in His perfect will and power!

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THIS ENDUEMENT.

"Ye shall be witnesses unto me." This word happily describes the work to which Christ calls His disciples. It is not to be the founders of sects and systems of theology, not to be witnesses of great principles and truths. but to be witnesses unto Him, to make Christ real to the consciences of men. Of course, He must be real to us first. for the witness can only tell what he himself knows. This was ever the great theme of apostolic testimony. and as we go back to it in these last days more fully, we shall see the spirit of primitive piety revived. The church has too often been a great theological seminary rather than a place of simple testimony and the revelation and lifting up of Jesus Christ. Notice, how in all their addresses which are recorded, they invariably tell the whole story of Jesus! The words may be brief and few, but the story is all told: His incarnation, His earthly ministry, His works of love, His Mediatorial reign, His coming again, His readiness to receive and save sinful men.

Some one has humorously said that the word "exegesis" might be slightly transposed to read "Exit Jesus;" and certainly a good deal of preaching is this sort of exegesis; but no messenger who, with a loving heart, goes forth to tell about Jesus and make Him real to sinful men will ever return with empty hands. This is the testimony God will bless. He wants it from our lips and He wants it from our lives; He wants us so to speak and so to live that men shall be conscious, not of ourselves or of our words, but of some One behind us whom they recognize by our testimony as the source of all our life, and the One who is just as willing to impart the same blessing to them.

Beloved, are we so witnessing to Him as we move among men or minister to others? Are we "a savor of Christ to them that believe and even unto them that perish?"

## V. THE SCOPE OF THEIR MINISTRY.

Their field was to be the world. Their plan of campaign was distinctly outlined. They were to begin at Jerusalem; to extend their work among the scattered Jews through all Judea; to reach out, next, to Samaria, an intermediate race, kindred but not one with them; and then they were to embrace the entire Gentile world and carry the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. Their commission, therefore, includes the whole work of Home and Foreign Missions, and most faithfully did they fulfill it. The Book of Acts is the best commentary on this verse, as it records the planting of the church at Jerusalem, through Peter, James, John and Stephen; the ministry of Peter and others to the scattered Jews; the work of Philip and others in Samaria; and then closes with the splendid sketch of the planting of Christianity and the inaugurating of the great work of foreign missions through the lips of Philip, Peter, and especially Paul and Barnabas. The larger part of the book is occupied with this last section, the Gospel among the Gentiles, and over every section and every stage of this four-fold campaign, the Master's promise seems to hover as a cloud of glory, "Ye shall receive power and ye shall be witnesses unto me "

So it was in Jerusalem, so it was in Judea, so it was in Samaria, and so it was in the uttermost part of the earth. At every stage of their wondrous work it was manifest that the work was supernatural and Divine. The power of God was constantly manifested in it, and His wonderful direction, protection, interposition and blessing marked every page of the Book of Acts and every step of their glorious work.

1. Glance for a moment at their work in Jerusalem. How marvelously the power of the Holy Ghost came upon them! How simply and faithfully they witnessed unto Him before the multitudes at Pentecost, before the Sanhedrim on trial, before the cripple at the temple gate and the crowds that gazed upon his healing! How wonderfully God crowned their work with His power; the power

that came in the tongues at Pentecost; the power that carried Peter's sermon home to the hearts of three thousand men and the multitudes that followed in the same work of faith: the power that smote the false Ananias and Sapphira; the power that rendered their persecutors powerless to gainsay their words; the power that gathered the multitudes by thousands into the infant church; the greater power that fused their hearts into a holy oneness and melted down all selfishness and worldliness in a heavenly flame of love and consecration; the power that enabled Stephen to speak to the learned and practised sophists of the synagogue of Cilicia with a might which

they could not gainsay; and then the power that enabled him to meet their murderous hate with a face like an angel and a fortitude and love so sublime that the victory of his death was mightier than all the triumphs of his life, and the very man who had been chief witness against him was turned to God by his martyrdom and his dying prayer.

And so the whole story of the planting of the church in Jerusalem was the story of the power of the Holy Ghost, and the testimony of Jesus through the lips of weak and humble instruments. The same power is still ready to crown our labors with success and establish Christ's kingdom in our midst.

2. The same supernatural presence and power may be traced in the next stage of their work,—the witnessing for Jesus through all Judea. record of this work is chiefly connected with Peter. The story of his labors at Lydda and Joppa is but a specimen page from the unpublished book of God's remembrance. The healing of Eneas and the raising of Dorcas from the dead were not only mighty and majestic,—the mightiest in the apostolic story—but were followed by still mightier results in the conversion of multitudes of whom we are told that "all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him and turned to the Lord;" and of Dorcas' restoration it is said, "it was known through all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord." We do not know from the sacred narrative of all Peter's labors. but doubtless he carried the Gospel. along with others, through all parts of Palestine, and it seems certain that he afterwards visited Babylon and other places outside of Palestine where great numbers of his countrymen resided. 'We also know that Paul always presented Christ to the Jews wherever he went, and the little synagogue in every place became the nucleus and starting point for the entire community. God often worked wondrously among His own chosen people before their brethren so rejected the truth that the apostles had to turn to the Gentiles.

3. The Gospel in Samaria was planted and established through the mishty power of God and the witnessing of Jesus. The simple story is given in Acts viii: 5, 6: "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them, and the people with one accord gave heed to the things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." The whole community seemed moved with one accord, and even Simon Magus, the wicked leader of a Satanic ring of sorcerers and magicians, himself had to yield to the transcendent power of Jesus' name. We cannot withhold our attention from the fact that in all this new aggressive moment of Christianity the Lord Jesus sealed His word with signs and wonders; and we certainly have a right to expect such manifestations in every new stage of Christian work to-day, as well as such other times as His glory and truth require the special manifestation of His almighty presence.

But it was not the miracles that established Christianity; they simply awakened the attention and secured the confidence of the people; and then it was the power of the Holy Ghost upon the simple preaching of Jesus which brought the spiritual results in every case. It is most marked that after the acceptance of the testimony of Jesus there was a personal baptism of the Holy Ghost

upon the converts, bringing to them the actual and conscious experience of the Lord's presence and the salvation which they had claimed, and being to them an evidence which all the reasonings of man could never gainsay and from which all the intimidations of persecution could not move them.

4. But the great work of the apostles was to be the planting of Christianity among the Gentiles and the witnessing of Jesus to the uttermost part of the earth. At a very early period in the Book of Acts we find the Holy Spirit leading out into the great work of missions. First, we have the call of Philip from his work in Samaria to meet the Ethiopian eunuch

in the desert of Gaza. And this is as supernatural and marvelous as any of the steps that we have already traced, for over every step the message seems to re-echo, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me." It is the Spirit's call that sends him. It was a strange message. He was busy at Samaria and the work never seemed so promising. But the call was imperative to leave this fruitful field and go down into a desert. It seemed the most unlikely place in the world to find work for Christ, or results that could repay such a sacrifice of time and labor, but he simply obeyed and went.

Let us remember, beloved, that this was the founding of Christian missions, the first page in the wonderful chapter of the world's evangelization, and the pattern, therefore, for our missionary call. And, therefore, if we have received the power of the Holv Ghost and are called to the world's evangelization, the summons will most likely come when we are otherwise occupied with work which it seems we must not leave. The call may summon us to what may seem a spiritual wilderness, and the wasting of our energies upon a barren desert, as would seem to be the prospect for many a missionary who is plunging to-day into the heart of Africa or the remote regions of China.

But lo, as he obeys, the desert becomes alive with the presence of God and the working of His mighty Providence. The prince of Ethiopia with all his train, at this very moment, is returning to his land, hungry, sad and disappointed because he has not found the answer to his heart's deep questions, or the light he is seeking upon the strange book he holds in his hands without being able to break the seal. The Spirit's work is not left half done. The message "Go, join thyself to his chariot," is quickly obeyed; and lo, a soul is saved, a new voice consecrated, and no doubt a mighty work of evangelization begun for the great continent to which the prince was just returning. And then, lest man should have too much to do with it, Philip is instantly caught away and the eunuch goes on his way rejoicing, satisfied with His Master's presence and filled with the same Holy Spirit which had led Philip to him.

So the first Gentile convert was an African, and the first missionary to Africa was a native, and the power which brought it all about was the simple power of the Holy Ghost and the ascended Christ, working in methods and through instrumentalities which seemed weakness in themselves but which became mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. So still we may expect His power to direct and confirm our

efforts in His name to evangelize a lost world, as we dare to obey every call of the Spirit in humble obedience and simple faith.

The next chapter in Gentile Christianity is no less marked by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the story of Peter and Cornelius. First, we see the Holy Spirit leading Peter aside for prayer, and then giving him a vision which prepared him to break through the old ceremonial barriers of Judaism and go among the Gentiles with the gospel. Next, we see the same Spirit working at that very moment in the heart of Cornelius and bidding him to send for Peter; and then we see the Spirit and the providence of God operating together, as the messenger calls at Simon's house at the very moment that the Spirit has prepared him for the message. And then, as he obeys, like Philip, and simply goes with the men to Joppa, we cannot fail to trace the wonderful working of God which had prepared the mind of this influential Roman for the gospel, by all his previous history. So God is preparing the hearts of heathen men to-day and giving them a hunger, which they do not understand, but which will make the gospel welcome to them when, at last, the messenger of Jesus reaches their land.

The message of Peter is true to the apostolic commission. He simply witnesses of Jesus. It is a wonder-

ful message, and tells the whole story of the gospel in as few words as were ever compressed into so short a space. It is the story of His life, of His death, of His Resurrection, of His Second Coming and of His gracious message of forgiveness and salvation to all who believe on His name. And as the witness was simply given, the Holy Spirit finished the work and fell upon the people in Pentecostal power. And so this might be called the second Pentecost and the inauguration of Gentile Christianity, in correspondence with the planting of the church in Jerusalem. Here we have again a pattern chapter from the story of the early church, and why may not we expect the same mighty power to direct and confirm our work for the evangelization of the world, as we depend upon the same Holy Ghost?

The next great step in witnessing for Jesus to the uttermost part of the earth was the establishment of the work in Antioch. It was necessary that there should be a new centre for Gentile missions. The church at Jerusalem was too conservative and too much bound by the traditions of the past to be adjustable in the hands of God for so bold and world-wide a work, and therefore the Holy Spirit called together, in the most simple and spontaneous manner, a company of simple-hearted cosmopolitan believers, free from all narrow bigotries and exclusive views, many of them laymen, most of them provincial Jews or Gentiles, and representing all social stations, from Simeon, the African, to Manaen, a courtier in Herod's family, Barnabas, the princely and generous man of wealth, and Saul of Tarsus, the cultivated and profound philosopher and scholar. They had just the elements to form a church of the largest sympathies and the most world-wide adaptations. And so, without apostolic hands or ecclesiastical agency, they just grew into a mother church, until the apostles' hearing of it, sent the right man to develop without dwarfing them—the noble-hearted Barnabas--and ere long a new Jerusalem has grown up in Syria, which God is henceforth to use as the mother of Gentile missions, and the spring from which the waters of life shall flow forth to the uttermost part of the earth.

And so to-day, it does seem that God is preparing new centres for foreign mission work. Tenderly, but boldly, we are constrained to say that the ecclesiastical lines of our day have grown so rigid and the machinery of Christian work so elaborate and conservative that they have ceased to be fully adjustable to the world's great needs. Missionaries sent forth from such atmospheres carry with them to the foreign field the complexion of the home church, and reproduce

abroad the features which, in the church at home, neutralize her highest usefulness. And therefore God, in these last days, is gathering a great number of His consecrated children in all the churches into closer fellowship in Him, and from their midst is sending forth new missionary movements, undenominational, independent, simple and spiritual, which will carry to the heathen world the spirit of separation from the world, holiness of heart and life, entire consecration, self-sacrifice and simplicity in Christian living, and a full belief in the supernatural power of God and in the speedy coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, all of which must bring about a new phase of missionary life and

work, and a corresponding seal of the Holy Ghost upon the work and the workers.

Such, indeed, has been the case, and to-day scores and even hundreds of such workers, sent forth by no ecclesiastical body but by warm-hearted circles of consecrated men and women at home, are laboring, in the power of God, in many of the fields of Africa and China. Indeed, most of the effective missionary work of our time has sprung from such centres. The time has gone by for elaborate ecclesiastical missionary movements. We are in the day of spontaneous and simple Christian effort under the direct superintendence of the Holy Ghost, and through men and women who are wholly baptized with His power. We believe most solemnly that the great movement to-day, which is calling together the consecrated children of God in every land in a closer fellowship of holiness and deeper spiritual life, is just the preparation of new missionary centres which are to cover the world before the close of the decade with an army of simple self-denying messengers through whom the whole world will be evangelized and the coming of our Master hastened

The last great agency in the evangelization of the world was the calling of Saul of Tarsus and his wonderful missionary life and work. Surely, above all else in the book of Acts this is an expression of the power of the Holy Ghost. It was His power that called him on his way to Damascus, in a moment, to his Master's feet. It was His power that sent him forth as a minister and a witness, and clothed his lips and illuminated his mind with such marvelous messages and conceptions of the gospel. It was this power which trained him for his work alone in the deserts of Arabia and taught his inmost spirit the secret of the Lord. It was the Holy Ghost who called him to his great missionary work, and who went forth with him into it at every stage as the directing presence and enduing might of his own ministry. Mightily He stood by him in Cyprus as he confronted Elymas the sorcerer and

claimed the soul of the governor for God. Mightily He vindicated His servant in the heathen mob of Derbe and Lystra as He healed the cripple and then raised up the apostle himself from the heap of stones, healed him of his bruises, and sent him forth to finish his work. Mightily he opened the hearts of the tribes in Asia Minor to receive the gospel, and enabled him to plant the churches of Asia which afterward became such centres of life and power. With unerring wisdom and a strong Hand, that Holy Presence guided him in all his plans, held him back irresistibly from Bithynia and Ephesus, and sent him over into Macedonia to commence his great crusade in the new continent which was afterwards to become the chief theatre of Gentile Christianity.

How supernaturally and triumphantly the Lord carried his servant through the perils of the Philippian mob, opened the soul of Lydia and broke the heart of the jailer! How gloriously He defended him at Corinth from the fierce and teacherous foes who sought to destroy him, and gave free course to the gospel in that great metropolis of business and of sin! How divinely He led him at the right moment to the Oriental capital, Ephesus, and gave him his splendid triumphs there over the might of Satanic power, and established the great church which was afterwards to be the home of Timothy and John!

How gloriously He led him forth to Jerusalem and Rome, and carried him through all the perils of waters and of treacherous foes, until at last He enabled him, from a prisoner's chain in the Roman barracks, to so preach the Gospel that the mighty Roman empire was shaken to its foundations, and before two hundred and fifty years had passed, was wholly turned to Christianity.

The great truth that we feel impressed to reiterate and emphasize, and which seems to shine out from our Master's message to His disciples, is that the work of the Apostolic Church was to be supernatural and divine; and at every stage, the Master kept His promise literally and

gloriously as they met His simple conditions, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses for me." The men themselves were as weak as we: the difficulties of their work far greater than our own. All the advantages of modern civilization and the means of transit to every portion of the world were wanting in their case; and yet, notwithstanding all, as they went forth in their weakness and simple fidelity to the Master's work, the cloud of His Presence was as manifest as in the days of Moses or the campaigns of Joshua.

Why should it ever have ceased to be? Why should it not be restored again? Has the living energy de-

parted from the promise? Has the Son of God grown old? Has His power or His wisdom decayed? Is the Holy Ghost exhausted with the centuries that have drained the ocean of His love and power? Or is He not waiting for the opportunity to manifest His presence and His might, and longing only for instruments and vessels through whom He can work with such simplicity that Christ can have all the glory, and that men shall see, not the workers, but the power that worketh in them? Oh, that we may tarry long enough to get right with Him, and then go forth until He come in His glorious exaltation, and in His mighty Name and power, and, perhaps, before our tarrying is over, some of us will find that we have been working without our armor and that we do not yet even know the Holy Ghost.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE ASCENSION.

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Acts i: 9.

The forty days are ending. He who has lingered so tenderly on the threshold of earth is ready to depart upon that journey from which, some day, we shall see Him return. Tenderly has He chosen the sacred spot on which He shall last look—the little home of Bethany. Tenderly perhaps has He said farewell to its little home

circle; or, it may be, they are in the company of His disciples this hour. He has just finished His last message. The sounds are lingering upon their ear, "to the uttermost part of the earth," when lo! His form begins to rise Not as before does He vanish into the impalpable air, but visibly, distinctly, does He ascend before their eyes, gently borne upward without an effort. As He rises His hands are still extended in the benediction which He has just pronounced upon their heads. His face is lighted up with tenderest love, and His gaze is fixed no doubt upon each in turn, with one personal and penetrating look of recognition and farewell which they never shall forget.

Higher and higher He ascends, while they gaze as though they would go with Him if they could, until the strain is broken by a soft cloud, which floats between and hides Him from their view. But still the cloud ascends and still they gaze upon it, until a voice awakens them from their absorbing view, and two angels, by their side, gently recall them to earth as they leave His last message, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." -

It is past! The cloud has gone, the angels have departed, and slowly and solemnly they return to Jerusalem and wait for the next great chapter of Christianity—the descent of the Holy Ghost,

The scene which they had been beholding is the theme of many an inspired picture. Two other allusions are made to it in the Gospels. Luke himself refers to it in the closing verses of his Gospel with some further details: "He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Mark tells us that "He was received up into heaven, and sat on

the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere. the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." Some of the Messianic Psalms have shed a glorious light on the facts of His Ascension. The twenty-fourth Psalm sounds like a responsive chorus especially prepared for the angelic choirs that accompanied His Ascension; the processional choir demanding as they approach the celestial portals, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in," while the chorus standing at the heavenly gates respond, "Who is this King of glory?" and the answering shout breaks forth,

"The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle.) Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift toem up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The sixtyeighth Psalm tells us of the chariots of God and the twenty thousand angels that accompanied His Ascension, and then it gives us the picture of the long procession of rescued captives from the prisons of Sheol, who followed His triumphal march and entered as the first company of ransomed from the ranks of the Old Testment believers, into the open heavens. Other conquerors marched in triumph with their captives dragged behind, but the only captives that graced His glorious ascent were those that He Himself had set at liberty.

And then the Psalm tells us of His Ascension on high and His receiving gifts for men that the Lord Jehóvah might dwell among them, which was fulfilled in the mighty gift of the Holy Ghost and the abiding presence of God with His people in the Christian dispensation, through Christ's ascension. New Testament is full of this theme. Peter tells the multiudes at Pentecost that "Christ-hath received of the Father honor and glory, and being exalted to His right hand hath shed forth the Holy Spirit." And again he speaks of His ascension, "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things." Paul, again and again, refers to it in his epistles. In Romans viii he says, "It is Christ that died; yea, rather that has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." In 1 Corl xv: "He must reign until all His enemies are made His footstool." In Ephesians, chapter i, He prays that the disciples may know the exceeding greatness of His power who raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

He tells the Colossians that they are "risen with Christ, and they are to seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." In Phil., ii, after describing the self-sacrifice and humiliation of Jesus, he adds, "Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

The epistle to the Hebrews is full of this subject. "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." And again, "For He hath put all things under His feet. For in that He hath put all things under His feet he left nothing that is not put under Him." "Seeing, therefore,' he adds, "that we have a great High Priest that has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace. that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Still later he speaks of Him as the One who "hath entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," and declares that "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." "For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

Peter speaks of Him as having gone into heaven, "angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." John declares that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

righteous. And finally, in the Apocalyptic vision, we behold Him, again and again, in His enthronement, grace and glory. In the first chapter we have a vision of Him as our Priest, "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength. And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

In the fifth chapter we behold Him as the Priest-King, the Lion and the Lamb together, combining almightiness and mercy, as He takes the book to open the seals, and administer the mediatorial kingdom. And in the nineteenth chapter we behold Him in His royal majesty about to leave the heavenly throne and assume His millennial kingdom on earth.

Such are some of the scattered rays

of light which shine from the excellent glory, upon the exalted person of the ascended Christ. Let us gather up into a simple and practical focus some of their lessons. What was the purpose and value of Christ's ascension?

1. It was the reward of His sufferings and obedience. What an eclipse those thirty-three and a half years had been! What an awful descent for the Son of God! What a depth of humiliation, what a strange baptism of agony and shame! What an awful shadow of sin and the curse of a Holy God and of a broken law! Oh, how sweet heaven and home must have been to His heart! What a joy Divine and Infinite to return to

the bosom of His Father and His own Primeval place of dignity and glory! Well might He say to them, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I go unto my Father." Well may we join in the welcome home of our suffering Redeemer and cry,

- "Jesus hail! enthroned in glory,
  There forever to abide;
  All the heavenly hosts adore Thee,
  Seated at Thy Father's side."
- 2. It was the seal of God upon the finished work of redemption and the final token of His full acceptance of Christ's great sacrifice. He had gone forth from heaven on a mission well understood, to assume the guilt of a fallen world and undertake the task of its reconciliation to God. He had

stood on earth, under the eyes of God and of angels, and solemnly assumed in His baptism the sins of man. He had hung on the cross of Calvary, under the astonished gaze of the heavenly world, in the name and on behalf of sinful men, as the embodiment of sin and the representative of lost humanity. Had He failed in His mighty task, He never could have entered heaven again as a Victor. But now we see Him returning in majestic triumph, all angels waiting upon Him in loving homage, and the Father setting Him at His own right hand in the place of the highest honor and kingly power; and we know that His work must have been accepted and His great undertaking gloriously accomplished. For He still occupies this place in our name and nature, and takes His position, not alone, but in our behalf. Therefore His glory is the seal of our salvation, and all His triumph proclaims our triumph sure.

3. Christ's ascension was the exaltation of man to the right hand of God. It was as Man He entered heaven and sat upon His throne. It is as the Son of Man, with a human face and form, that He is sitting there to-day. It is in our behalf that He has gone up to God. He claims our place there, and keeps it till we come. What an honor to the once lost human race was the ascension of Christ! It was the entrance

of a Man to the highest place in the heavenly world, with the first-fruits of this new race following in His train and taking a place with Him that angels could not claim. Lord, what is man that Thou hast set Thine heart upon him and so strangely redeemed and lifted him up for ever? Oh, let us rejoice and shout for joy as we see the Son of God ascend and write our names upon the seats of glory, as our great Forerunner! God has recognized man's right to enter heaven, to enter it as a King, to enter its highest place of dignity and blessing through the ascension of the Son of Man.

4. The ascension of Jesus brought the expulsion of Satan and the settling forevermore of every question affecting our standing in the presence of God. In the twelfth chapter of Revelation there is a fine picture of the Man Child, born of the symbolical woman, and caught up to the throne of God from the devouring fury of the Dragon. There is no doubt that this Man Child represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and the picture referred to His Ascension. This is followed in the chapter quoted, by a description of the conflict which followed in heaven, and the casting out of Satan and his angels, who had hitherto enjoyed access to the presence of God to accuse the saints. as we find him doing in the Old Testament in the case of Job and Joshua. But now the Advocate of the saints appears with the evidences of the settlement of all claims against them. He lays His own precious blood at the foot of the throne, and, by His finished work claims the settling and silencing forever of every charge against them, and immediately the case is settled. The sentence of the Court is publicly declared, and the accusing counsel is dismissed forever. The case is over, and never again may a word of accusation be heard against them. The police of heaven are commanded to drive the accusers from the judgment seat, and Satan is hurled from the Holy Presence, while heaven shouts for joy, "Rejoice, ye heavens, for the accuser of

our brethren is cast down who accused them day and night before God." Henceforth no charge against us can come to His ears, and all we need to keep us in victory is to apply the blessed verse that follows, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony." If we are in Christ we may truly "read our title clear to mansions in the skies," and shout with the great apostle of faith, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather is risen again and is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

5. Christ's ascension was the beginning of His work of intercession as our great High Priest.

This glorious ministry had been set forth by its most perfect type, the Hebrew high priest, as he entered into the holy place through the parted curtains of the mystic vail and represented the people in the immediate presence of Jehovah and beneath the Shekinah glory which symbolized the Father's presence. On this great ministry our beloved Lord was now to enter. It is of this the Apostle says, that, "Christ hath not entered into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Seeing we have a Great High Priest who

is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." "It is Christ who died, yea, rather is risen again who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

The full significance of this work leads us into one of the most comforting and inspiring themes of Holy Scripture. As our High Priest, His business is to represent us constantly to the Father, to guard our interests, to keep us ever in the Divine favor and fellowhip, to cover all our sins with His precious blood, to render our persons accepted in His person and name, to present His merits and righteousness in our behalf, to offer our petitions at the throne of grace

and claim our requests on His own account, and then to transmit to us the assurance of the answer by the Holy Spirit, and to ask for us Himself, ten thousand things that we know not enough to ask for ourselves, and constantly to guard our every interest with watchful and unsleeping love and care. As our great High Priest, it is His to deal with the whole question of our sins and failures, and settle every matter respecting our salvation and our spiritual interests. It is His to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," to sympathize with our sorrows and to send us comfort and relief in time of need. This intercession is most tender, unceasing and

personal. Like Aaron, who bore the tribes of Israel engraven upon his shoulders and upon his breast, so Jesus bears us individually upon His heart and upon His hands, and holds us up as part of Himself to His Father's love and blessing evermore.

Where high the heavenly temple stands, The House of God, not made with hands, This Great High Priest our nature wears, The Guardian of mankind appears.

He, who with men their surety stood,
And poured on earth His precious blood,
Pursues in heaven His mighty plan,
The Saviour and the Friend of man.

Though now ascended up on high, He bends to earth a Brother's eye, Partaker of the human name, He knows the frailty of our frame. In every pang that rends the heart, The Man of Sorrows has a part; He sympathizes with our grief, And to the sufferer sends relief.

Oh, may we not well rejoice in that blessed Ascension that has given us such a Friend at our Father's side! It it not so much that the Father did not love us, or that we needed Him to propitiate an angry King; but we need this human channel of communion with the Sovereign Deity and glorious Father, whom, apart from Jesus, we could never have known and never have dared thus boldly to approach. But in His name, who touches both God and man in His double nature, we are brought into union and fellowship with the Deity

Himself, and "we, who sometime were afar off, are made nigh," and "have access through Him to the Father."

6. The ascension of Christ was necessary in order to His assumption of His kingly place on the mediatorial throne. For, like Melchizedeck of old, He is both Priest and King. His Ascension has exalted Him to a literal throne of absolute sovereignty over "all power in heaven and in earth." The Son of God to-day has supreme sway over all this mighty universe. He has ascended up "far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named," and has become "Head over all things for His church."

There is no natural law but is now perfectly subject to His control. There is no physical force but He can use or restrain at His Sovereign pleasure. There is no created intelligence but He can move at His will or destroy at His command. His ascension has forever challenged the absolute despotism of natural law and physical force, and placed at the command of faith the highest force, which will be employed whenever His kingdom requires it, in defiance of every natural and ordinary principle. True, He does not ordinarily need to act in a manner contrary to existing laws and principles, any more than the entry of the young king of Germany upon the administration of the empire requires him to change the machinery of the government. He usually works in a line with it, but is always supreme above it. So the Son of God, sitting upon the throne of providence and grace, does not constantly assert His power by coming into collision with the existing machinery of the natural world, but works in harmony with it and uses it for His own higher purpose.

But He is perfectly at liberty to suspend it and contradict it when He so pleases. The ascension of Christ, therefore, has given us the right to expect His interposition, even to the utmost extent of the miraculous and supernatural, when the interests of His kingdom truly requires it; and yet His power may be no less mighty when it is working along lines of perfect simplicity and naturalness.

Christ is King of nations. Strange as it may seem, yet He has been controlling for eighteen centuries the dynasties and kingdoms of earth in accordance with Daniel's prophecy, and along the lines which are to develop to His own Second Coming. He is King and Head of His Church. Christ is King of nature and providence. His hand makes all things work together for good to them that love God. His power appears in every chapter of the story of the Apostolic Church. We see Him working in the miracles of Pentecost, in Samaria, Joppa, Lystra and Malta. We see Him opening Peter's prison and subduing Paul with one kingly glance of love and power. We see Him carrying the great Apostle, as with a charmed life, through the perils of Asia Minor, the prison of Philippi, the mobs of Corinth and Athens, the murderous Jews of Jerusalem, the conspiracies that surrounded him at Cæsarea, the wild Euroclydon of the Adriatic and even the terrors of the Coliseum; until at last the Apostle could say, as he recalled that glorious Presence that had covered him with its shelter in all his marvelous life, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom."

Is He our King? Have we enthroned Him above every difficulty. adversary and circumstances, and placed on His head many crowns? It was for this that He ascended. He holds the reins of universal power for our sake and on our account. He is Head over all things for the church which is His body. Not for Himself but for you and me does He sit above the circle of the stars and hold the reins of universal government. Oh, let Him be our "Wonderful Counsellor, our Mighty God," and "of the increase of His government and of His peace there shall be no end!"

7. Christ ascended to the right hand of God that He might lift us up into an ascension life.

His ascension is the type of our highest spiritual life. Not only would He have us risen with Him from the death of the past, but also ascended with Him over this present evil world and the power of the natural and temporal. For we are seated with Him in heavenly places, and we are to recognize ourselves as actually there, just as much as if the judgment was past, and we were already seated, in the ages to come, upon our kingly thrones.

This is a very important matter and the true key to victory in our Christian life. Everything depends upon the standpoint from which we look at things. Contemplating our troubles from our present apparent condition, they seem to be above us, but if we look at them as Christ sees them, and as we shall see them in a little while, they will cease to alarm or distress us. Our faith will raise us above them, and enable us to see them as more than conquered, and simply as occasions for greater good and grander victory.

Climbing a cloud - encompassed mountain, a party of travelers became discouraged and begged their guide to take them down. They could not see a step before them through the mist that surrounded them with its damp and dreary folds, and they feared that they should lose their way and be involved in ruin. But the guide only answered,

"Nay, friends, let us not go down, but let us go up a little higher and we shall be above the clouds." And, sure enough, a few bold strides in his footsteps up the steep declivity, and lo! the full sunlight of heaven burst upon them, and below them lay the billowy landscape of beautiful and many-tinted cloudland, a spectacle of glory.

And so the true victory over trial is to rise above it. A little higher, beloved, and you shall dwell, like Joshua, in Timnath-Serah, in the City of the Sun, and "thy sun shall no more go down, but the Lord shall be thy everlasting light."

It is possible to look at everything as Christ is looking at it, and see it

as you shall see it when all is ended. It is possible to pray as Christ prays from heaven, and to be conscious that our glorious Great High Priest is commanding and executing it from on high, and that all things must give way before His power and will. It is possible to recognize ourselves in the light of a few years hence, when we shall be sitting with Him in the seats where our names are already written and our place prepared, and where God ever regards us as already seated. Oh, what dignity and triumph this will give to the humblest career, and we shall walk through earth as the children of a King; the heirs of God and jointheirs with Jesus Christ. For He who sitteth there is but the other part of our personal life, and as we enter into closer union with His person, we shall rise into the constant realization of His glorious power, and learn to shout with the most tried and yet the most triumphant of mortals, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

And now, beloved, the forty days are past. What have they been to us? How much more have they brought us of His living reality and ceaseless presence? And shall they

now lift us up with Him into a yet higher place of fellowship, exaltation and victory? Let us arise! Let us ascend! Let us dwell on high! The veil is rent. The Holiest is open. The Holy Ghost is come. The heavens are opened, and the angels of God are ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Come ye, O house of Jacob, and walk in the light of the Lord.

Go up, go up my heart, Dwell with thy God above, For here thou can'st not rest, Nor here give out thy love.

Go up, go up my heart, Be not a trifler here; Ascend above these clouds,— Dwell in a higher sphere.

Go up, reluctant heart,
Take up thy rest above;
Arise, earth-clinging thoughts,
Accend, my lingering love.









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